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Report to: LEP Board

Date: 16 January 2018

Subject: Business Communications Group (BCG) update

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide LEP Board members with an update on business engagement, marketing and communications and activity undertaken since the last Board meeting.
- 1.2 To outline the planned activity for the coming months, in line with the agreed communications and marketing strategy.

2 Information

Business engagement

- 2.1 The last Business Communications Group (BCG) meeting took place on 6 December. This was the last meeting with Rashik Parmar as Chair, with Joanna Robinson confirmed to take over as Chair in the New Year.
- 2.2 Following the recent LEP recruitment exercise, there are two new members of the BCG: Lisa Buck, who works for YCF Ltd – a not-for-profit trade association for the process industries, and Nasser Malik, entrepreneur and founder of the Yorkshire Enterprise Network which has a database of over 20,000 members.
- 2.3 A key focus of discussion at the 6 December was productivity. BCG members received a presentation on Leeds City Region's performance on productivity from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's (WYCA) policy and research and intelligence teams. The following key points were noted in subsequent discussion:
 - Further research would be welcome on the impact of forced self-employment (particularly among those aged over 50 who establish lifestyle businesses due to redundancy or other forced self-employment) on Leeds City Region's productivity and how this benchmarks against other areas, and on how the City Region compares to other, similar regions globally. WYCA's research and intelligence team are to look into this.
 - There was discussion on what BCG members and the LEP can do to raise awareness of the need to improve productivity, highlight the positive impact for

businesses that invest in research and development (R&D) and expand the availability of peer-to-peer mentoring for businesses in the City Region.

- Greater understanding is needed of the specific capabilities of local universities so that businesses can be referred to the right support for them. Many businesses still find it difficult to navigate higher education support.
- The language around productivity needs to be simplified so that businesses are clear what it is and how they can respond.
- Difficulties in recruiting new staff with relevant skills is leading to some businesses retaining less productive staff.
- BCG members have been invited to take part in research being led by WYCA's research and intelligence team to assess the reasons for variable rates of productivity among SMEs.
- The Chamber is looking to bring Sir Charlie Mayfield to Leeds City Region in early 2018. It will keep the LEP informed on progress, so that it can explore how to engage City Region businesses in the productivity-focused "Be the Business" campaign.

2.4 June Smith from the EEF (the manufacturers' organisation) gave a presentation on what manufacturers are doing to improve their productivity, focusing on "smart automation". Major competitor companies are already investing in smart automation, but according to EEF research around 56% of UK manufacturers have little or no understanding of the concept, and 67% have no plans to introduce it. The EEF has produced a number of case studies of manufacturers that are taking action, and established an online "problem-solving network" that has attracted interest from over 400 manufacturing professionals and 200 businesses. This network is available to all manufacturers, not just EEF members.

2.5 Jeremy Wright, who represents the construction industry, noted that a report is being published in the New Year on recommendations for the sector to improve productivity and adapt to macro-economic changes. Although demand for housing is high, a lack of skills and people is requiring the sector to change and adapt.

2.6 BCG members gave general updates on issues and opportunities highlighted by their members. The key points raised were:

- Input costs continue to rise with steel up 25% and paper up 40%. Many businesses can no longer absorb these increases so prices to customers are rising.
- Brexit uncertainty is leading to more businesses looking to trade in new, non-EU markets but there have been reports that relevant support and advice is not readily available.

- Many rural businesses (and some in non-rural areas) remain hampered by a lack of broadband and mobile connectivity.
- A recent poll by the Chambers across the whole of West and North Yorkshire noted that 48% of businesses surveyed would like to see a devolution settlement that took in the largest possible Yorkshire geography.
- Many businesses across all sectors are facing recruitment difficulties, a situation exacerbated in some sectors by overseas labour returning home.

Communications and Marketing

2.7 The Board is asked to note the below updates in relation to the LEP's key communications and marketing channels for November and December. As noted in previous Board updates, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Communications and Marketing team now covers the full breadth of the Combined Authority/ LEP agenda and the media statistics presented below refer to coverage across this full range of activity.

Media coverage (November 2017)

Media mentions:	1,097
Estimated reach:	46,458,715
Estimated Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE)	£1,468,265

Media coverage (December 2017)

Media mentions:	678
Estimated reach:	44,877,080
Estimated Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE)	£1,343,404

2.8 Select recent media highlights are included at **Appendix 1**.

2.9 Website (November)

	www.the-lep.com	www.investleedscityregion.com
Primary audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Region businesses (primarily SMEs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential investors in the City Region
Sessions	5,898	2,550
Page views	17,974	5,444

December:

	www.the-lep.com	www.investleedscityregion.com
Primary audience	• City Region businesses (primarily SMEs)	• Potential investors in the City Region
Sessions	4,309	1,982
Page views	12,057	3,578

2.10 Social media

Twitter – November:

	@LeedsCityRegion	@InvestLCR
Impressions	43,900	85,300
Profile visits	3,101	854
Follower growth	131	90

December:

	@LeedsCityRegion	@InvestLCR
Impressions	58,600	32,300
Profile visits	2,139	283
Follower growth	65	33

2.11 Key communications and marketing highlights

- A **‘Professionals Perspectives’** breakfast meeting was held in November, bringing together 15 intermediary partners from the private sector including banks, lawyers and accountants from across Leeds City Region. There was an update on the latest product offers from the **LEP Growth Service** and a discussion on the inclusive growth agenda to gain thoughts and feedback on proposed changes to grant and loan fund criteria.
- **Two surveys** to gauge businesses’ views on proposed changes to grant and loan fund criteria to reflect inclusive growth priorities have been undertaken, with further survey work planned for the New Year. These surveys will inform any future changes to criteria as well as how these are communicated and marketed. Survey results will be communicated to the LEP Board via the Business Innovation and Growth Panel.
- A telemarketing campaign to increase the number of businesses accessing support through the LEP’s **Resource Efficiency Fund** kicked off in November, with all targets met in the pilot phase. Additional campaigns will follow during 2018.
- Two new **‘Ask the Expert’ blogs** were published as part of the **Let’s Talk Real Business campaign** offering top tips and useful insights for SMEs on marketing

and new product development – two areas frequently cited as barriers to growth by SMEs. The blogs were published in partnership with the Chartered Institute of Marketing and Translate Medical Technologies.

- Marketing and media support to promote an **SME supplier opportunities event** on 6 December in partnership with Department for International Development (DFID) attracted the attendance of 63 local business people. It resulted in an increase in sign-ups from Leeds City Region based businesses to the DFID supplier portal, where government tender opportunities are announced.
- The **marketing campaign to bring Channel 4 to the region, #4sparks**, has continued throughout November and December. This includes two weeks of digital advertising in The Guardian targeted to a London geography with a focus on the digital strengths of the region, a press release, a blog from Cllr Hinchcliffe and social media activity. The campaign has resulted in positive feedback from Channel 4 and a significant increase in visits to the campaign page on the investleedscityregion.com website.

Forthcoming activity:

2.12 The Board is asked to note the following activity planned for the coming period:

- **#4Sparks** - The #4Sparks campaign to attract Channel 4 to relocate to Leeds City Region will continue into the early New Year.
- **WYCA brand development** – the project to streamline and simplify WYCA’s brand identity to improve transparency of the organisation’s activities and save money will be completed by February. Work will then begin on making minor modifications to the LEP brand, as reported at previous Board meetings, to better communicate the relationship between the LEP and WYCA.
- **MIPIM 2018** – Details are included in the Business, Innovation and Growth (BIG) Panel report (item 4B).
- **Innovation campaign** – a campaign to encourage more companies to innovate and improve productivity is being planned for early in the next financial year.
- **Careers campaign** – a campaign targeting young people and providing information on opportunities in key growing sectors will launch in early spring.
- **Labour market report and LEP business survey** – planned communications on two recent LEP research projects – on the Leeds City Region labour market and comprehensive biennial business survey respectively – will be issued early in the New Year once final results have been fully analysed.
- **Apprenticeship Week** – a week-long programme of activity is being planned for this year’s national Apprenticeship Week in March.

- **Growth Deal and other key media stories** – following significant recent media and other communications activity related to Growth Deal-funded projects, stories are planned for early in the New Year on projects including the topping progress on Growth Deal-supported innovation centres at the Universities of Leeds and Huddersfield, flood alleviation schemes in Leeds and Kirklees and the anticipated launch (subject to funding announcement) of the Energy Accelerator programme, which will help bring forward low carbon energy schemes across the City Region.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That the LEP Board notes the feedback from the BCG in section 2.1 to 2.6 and consider how this feedback may inform the work of the LEP Board and related WYCA panels and committees.
- 3.2 That the LEP Board notes the highlight report in section 2.7 to 2.11 on recent communications and marketing activity.
- 3.3 That the LEP Board notes and comments as appropriate on the planned activity in section 2.12 onwards.

4 Appendices

- 4.1 **Appendix 1:** select communications and marketing highlights for November and December 2017