

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BUSINESS, ECONOMY AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 12 JULY 2022 AT MEETING ROOM 1,
WELLINGTON HOUSE, 40-50 WELLINGTON ST, LEEDS, LS1 2DE**

Present:

Councillor Shabir Pandor (Chair)	Kirklees Council
Councillor Jane Scullion	Calderdale Council
Councillor Eric Firth	Kirklees Council
Andrew Wright (Deputy Chair)	LEP
Paul Price	
Simon Langdale	
Deb Hetherington	Bruntwood
Fara Butt	Shire Beds
Mandy Ridyard	LEP
Martin Booth	Witt UK Gp
Richard Paxman	Paxman Coolers Ltd
Sue Cooke (Advisory Representative)	LCR Universities
Derek Whitehead (Advisory Representative)	West Yorkshire Consortium of Collegues
Karl Oxford (Advisory Representative)	African and Caribbean Business Ventures Ltd

In attendance:

Brian Archer	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Liz Hunter	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Sarah Bowes	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Thomas Purvis	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Jennifer Robson	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Kate Thompson	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Philip Witcherley	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Ben Kearns	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

36. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllr Ross-Shaw, Cllr Mason, Amir Hussein, Asma Iqbal, Bobby Thandi, Alan Williams, Simon Wright, Peter O'Brien, Nick Plant, Lee Viney and Simon Mellon.

37. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary interests

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests at the meeting.

38. Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved – That in accordance with paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Appendix 1 to Agenda Item 12 on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

39. Minutes of the Meeting held on the 29 March

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 March be approved.

40. Chair's Update

The Chair welcomed new members to the committee and wished to thank Derek Whitehead, who was leaving the committee, for all his hard work and contributions.

The Deputy Chair also provided an update on the launch of the manufacturing taskforce report.

41. Governance Arrangements

Members considered a report which outlined the governance arrangements agreed by the Combined Authority on the 23 June.

Resolved: That the governance arrangements approved by the Combined Authority at the Annual Meeting on 23 June 2022 be noted.

42. Economic Reporting

Members considered a report that provided an update on the latest economic and business intelligence.

Members had the following questions and comments:

- That resource efficiency audits could be used to help businesses reduce energy usage and save money.
- That it would be useful if digital footfall could be captured in the same way as physical footfall. Members noted that this information was not available on a regional basis, but an update was provided on the national picture.
- Members expressed concern about some of the disparities between the districts, especially around pay and vacancies.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

43. Investment Priorities

Members considered a report that provided an update on the work to develop the investment priorities for business growth and innovation. The proposed investment priorities were included at appendix one to the submitted report.

Members were supportive of the investment priorities and had the following questions and comments:

- The need for grant applications to be simple to make funding more accessible for business.
- That seed corn finance was hugely positive and there was an opportunity to address the funding gap through EDI and better engagement across the region.
- The importance of export support as well as leadership and management skills for businesses in the region.
- That more could be captured in the priorities around Healthtech and innovation support, particularly with regard to the role that the better role higher education sector could play.
- That the Productivity Programme was essential and should be continued and that it was particularly crucial for the manufacturing sector. Members noted that the Business Productivity Programme would be out to tender shortly to get a delivery partner on board.
- The role of challenge/pitch competitions to promote innovation and encourage young entrepreneurs. Members discussed Masood Entrepreneur Centre at Manchester University.

Resolved: That the investment priorities be endorsed for further development.

44. Future Business Support Model

Members considered a report that provided an update on work underway to reshape the Growth Service.

A revised growth hub delivery model was in development and the key themes were outlined in the submitted report. The delivery model had been taken through the early stages of the assurance framework and a more detailed business case was in development.

Members had the following questions and comments:

- Members were very supportive of the growth hub, and especially the role of growth managers.
- That a sector approach would be helpful to be more proactive in engaging with businesses
- That it was important to encourage SMEs to provide feedback on the service with a view to promoting its work.
- That the digital portal should be used as a one stop shop to make the service easy to use and clear for people to navigate.
- The use of a database management system to hold the diagnostic information for business who have engaged with the growth service to avoid duplication.

Resolved: That the Business, Economy, and Innovation Committee endorsed for the Growth Service to continue to progress through the Combined Authority's Assurance Framework.

45. Innovation Activity

Members considered a report that provided an update on activity and development for innovation support.

Members noted the work underway in the 2022 West Yorkshire Innovation Festival and the ongoing delivery of Connecting Innovation.

There were two future programmes outlined in the submitted report. The Regional Innovation Programme proposal would aim to help business innovate through a streamlined offer focussed on diagnostics and signposting. Members noted the early work underway on a proposed seedcorn fund to address the lack of early stage finance to help innovation and commercialisation.

Members discussed the role of universities in innovation and asked for a programme of engagement with the higher education sector when designing future innovation programmes.

Resolved: That the development the proposals for a regional innovation programme and seedcorn fund be endorsed.

46. Digital Skills Plan

Members considered a report that provided an update on the West Yorkshire Digital Skills Partnership and Digital Skills Plan.

The plan would be further refined before being taken to the Combined Authority for approval

Members had the following questions and comments:

- That there was a significant amount of provision to help with digital skills, but it needed to be simplified.
- That innovation and digital skills were intrinsically linked and improving digital skills in the region presented further opportunities for innovation.

Members discussed the ‘no individual left behind’ priority and whether the coordination of the regional digital inclusion network through a hub and spoke model of advisors would be correctly scaled to meet the need in the region.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

47. Growing Places Fund

Members considered a report that provided an update on the Growing Places Fund.

Resolved: That the update on GPF repayments and changes to GPF Loan 209 be noted.