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**Report to:** Business Innovation and Growth Panel

**Date:** 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**Subject:** **Local Digital Skills Partnership Update**

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## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 To seek feedback on the development of the Local Digital Skills Partnership (LDSP) and its Board, the key focus areas across West Yorkshire and its immediate priorities and how it interacts with this Panel.

## **2 Information**

### Background and rationale

- 2.1 In the Digital Strategy, published in March 2017, the Government set out its commitment to improving the digital skills capabilities of individuals and organisations across England. It was recognised that a partnership approach was required to drive up digital skills. As a result, the Government announced the formation of a National Digital Skills Partnership bringing together public, private and charity sectors and key regional stakeholders to develop a more collaborative, coordinated, and innovative approach to meeting the digital skills challenge.
- 2.2 The West Yorkshire Combined Authority is the seventh area to secure funding for a Local Digital Skills Partnership (LDSP) through its ambitious devolution plans. This partnership will bring together the region's leading employers, SMEs, digital entrepreneurs, representatives from the Combined Authority and LEP, DCMS, as well as universities, colleges and other training providers.
- 2.3 This public-private partnership will help identify what digital skills provision is needed across the West Yorkshire and, importantly, encourage partners to work together strategically to address these and emerging needs, and to attract and retain investment and talent in the region. The aim is to deliver maximum, sustainable impact at scale and to ensure that local people form the talent pool needed for local business, with key themes focused on:

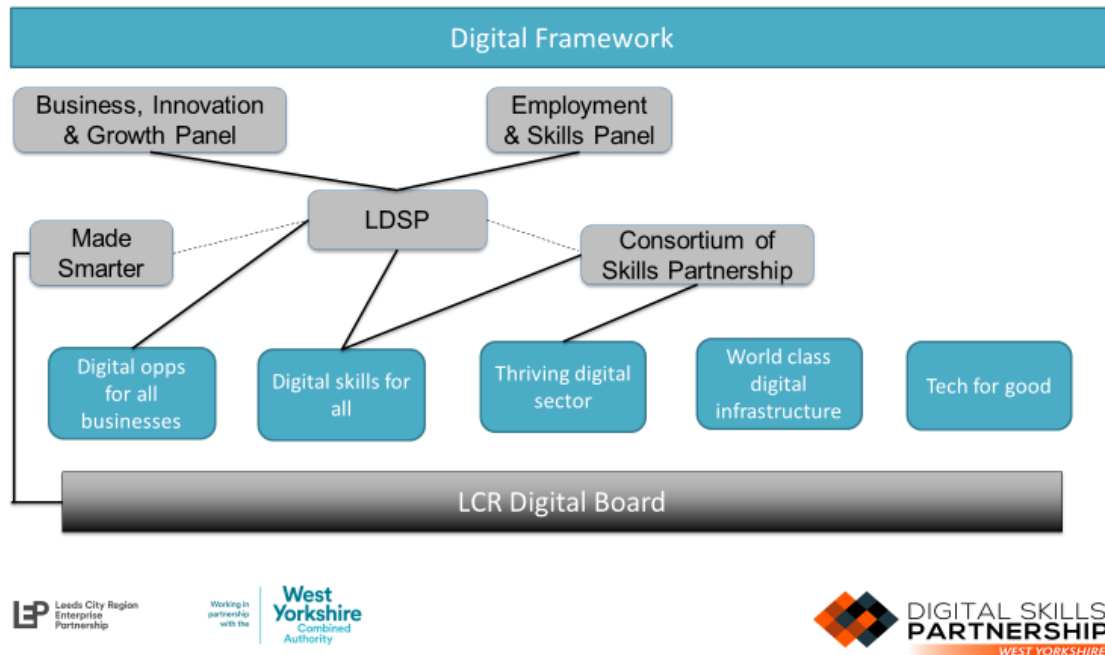
- To inspire the growth of digital skills across West Yorkshire by reducing the digital divide with opportunities for all
  - To transform digital skills through adoption across SMEs of West Yorkshire to grow the local economy and boost productivity
  - To inspire and influence the workforce of the future by collaborating with education providers and employers to ensure the future generation have the skills to meet the needs of the economy
- 2.4 The West Yorkshire LDSP was formally launched on 15 October 2020, with over 90 attendees and including an introduction from the Minister for Digital & Culture Caroline Dineage, and keynote speeches from Councillor Hinchcliffe, Kersten England, Andrew Wright, Amir Hussain and contributions from Lloyds Banking Group, BT, and Good Things Foundation.

### Context

- 2.5 The challenge was significant prior to the current pandemic but has been amplified as a result. We now have the opportunity to develop sustainable programmes to enhance digital skills growth, support the recovery, and contribute to a more sustainable and inclusive economy. The following statistics highlight both the challenge and the opportunity:
- 11.9m people in the UK do not have basic digital skills
  - 1.9m households in the UK are still without connectivity and therefore increasing isolation
  - 22% of adults within West Yorkshire do not have Essential Digital Skills for Life
  - Only 42% of adults in West Yorkshire have Essential Digital Skills for Work
  - £84.5bn could be added to the UK economy if all SMEs attained Basic Digital Skills
  - SMEs with only basic digital skills benefitted by an additional £103k in turnover in 2018, this had increased to £262k in 2019
  - 51% of businesses have pivoted online through the pandemic to engage with customers more
  - 46% of UK businesses have increased automation, post lock-down. However, only 46% expect their use of digital to increase in the future.

## **3 Governance & Board Formation**

- 3.1 The LDSP will align with Business, Innovation & Growth Panel and Employment and Skills Panel, and Made Smarter Board, with close alignment to Consortium of Skills Partnership and Digital Board.



### Board Formation

- 3.2 Development of a formal LDSP Board is the next stage in the evolution towards tangible action to build upon the great local work ongoing within West Yorkshire.
- 3.3 The Board will be formed of both large businesses (national and regional), SMEs, sector experts, skill providers, educators, third sector, as well as CA engagement in alignment with wider strategic aims. The Board will be underpinned by additional partnerships engaged to support “task and finish” activity to deliver specific programmes of intervention and support.
- 3.4 The LDSP Board will meet bi-monthly initially, to develop priority focus areas (skills gaps), methodology of delivery and evaluation, as well as measures of success. Priority focus areas will be developed by building regional evidence of need and opportunity of impact. Specific and detailed actions will be formulated following the first Board meeting in November.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Engagement of “partners” post LDSP launch	September/October 2020
Development of Terms of reference for LDSP Board	October 2020
Formal engagement of LDSP Board	October/November 2020
Initial meeting of LDSP Board	November 2020
Development of priorities- data gather	November 2020-January 2021
Approval of priorities	March 2021

## **4 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 There are no immediate financial implications directly arising from this report.

## **5 Legal Implications**

5.1 There are no immediate legal implications directly arising from this report.

## **6 Staffing Implications**

6.1 There are no immediate staffing implications directly arising from this report.

## **7 External Consultees**

7.1 No external consultations have been undertaken, specifically on this report.

## **8 Recommendations**

8.1 That the Panel provides feedback on the progress to date, and how best to align engagement with the Business, Innovation & Growth Panel in the future.

## **9 Background Documents**

None

## **10 Appendices**

None