

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUSINESS INNOVATION AND
GROWTH PANEL HELD ON TUESDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2020**

Present:

Andrew Wright (Chair)
Martin Booth
Mike Danby
Amir Hussain
Will Roebuck
Simon Wright
Andy Peterson
David Sidlow
Richard Paxman
Councillor Naheed Mather
Councillor Alex Ross-Shaw
Councillor Jane Scullion

Reliance Precision
Witt UK Gp
Advanced Supply Chain Lead
Yeme Architects
E-Radar
Yorkshire Bank
Communis
BorgWarner Ltd
Paxman Coolers Ltd
Kirklees Council
Bradford Council
Calderdale Council

In attendance:

Kersten England
Brian Archer
Alexander Clarke
James Hopton
Henry Rigg
Ian Smyth
Natalie Allen
Mark Temple
Louise Birmingham
Jennifer Isles
Ollie Jones

Bradford Council
West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Leeds Beckett University
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Leeds Beckett University

47. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Stephen Baker, Councillor Byford, Mark Robson and Marie Gilluley.

48. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Andrew Wight and Martin Booth wished to disclose that they had been approached by the University of Huddersfield to be manufacturing champions.

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

There were no items that required the exemption of the press and public.

50. Minutes of the Meeting of the Business Innovation and Growth Panel held on 8 September

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 September be approved.

51. Chair's Update

As it was Liz Town-Andrews last meeting the Chair wished to thank her for all her hard work and contributions to the Panel.

It was noted that the Combined Authority had created a devolution booklet which would be circulated to members.

An application had been made for Leeds City Region to become a Space Hub.

52. Economic Reporting

The Panel considered a report which provided an update on the latest economic and business intelligence in the region.

Panel members made the following comments:

- Whether the new bank account metric was a good measure of start-up businesses. Given the difficulty in opening new accounts during the pandemic may mean that some business activity in the region was not being captured.
- If it were possible to find the tax code for new businesses as well as the sectors which the new business are in. Members noted that it was possible to provide a breakdown of the sectoral make up of new start-ups in the region and this would be circulated after the meeting.
- That banks had been focusing on existing customers and working through the bounce-back loans.
- That the closure of hospitality and the knock-on effect on their supply chain was a significant concern especially given that the discretionary grant was set not to be renewed by Government
- That the closure of hospitality sector disproportionately hit younger workers.
- The Panel wished that the discretionary grant be renewed and for the tiers to be renewed as quickly as possible.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

53. Business Productivity and Resilience Plan

The Panel considered a report that set out proposals to develop a Leeds City Region Business and Productivity Plan.

That mental health and wellbeing should be factored into organisational resilience as it could have a significant adverse impact on productivity.

The status of the Local Industrial strategy with Government was unclear and there was a gap in the strategic economic framework regarding the Combined Authority's approach to productivity.

Members wanted to ensure that the Plan built on and aligned with other frameworks.

Members endorsed the work and felt that productivity was essential to economic growth and it was vital that the region addressed its productivity gap. Members asked for a focus on measurable outcomes.

The Business and Productivity Plan would be brought back to the Panel at its meeting in February.

Resolved:

(i) That the Panel support the timetables set out in the report.

(ii) That the Panel's feedback be noted.

54. Business Support (Including COVID-19 Response) and Productivity Pilot

The Panel considered a report which provided an update on business support activities.

The Panel noted the continued high demand for business during the pandemic as well as the ongoing delivery of the Covid-19 recovery grants.

Members noted that £80000 had been allocated to the City Region to help prepare businesses for Brexit. Additional resource had been requested from Government as it was felt that £80000 would not be sufficient given the amount of enquires from businesses relating to Brexit.

Members discussed the array of business support on offer but wondered if more could be done to promote the services available to businesses. The Panel considered the possibility to create a platform for intermediaries to signpost the offer.

Natalie Allen and Olly Jones from Leeds Beckett University and Steve Gregory from the University of Huddersfield were in attendance and gave a presentation regarding the evaluation of the first productivity pilot.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

55. Trade and Investment

The Panel considered a report that provided an update on the Trade and Investment activity since the last meeting.

Members welcomed the news that several inward investment opportunities had materialised and were being pursued.

It was noted that there was a desire for a technical support line to help businesses prepare for Brexit, but this was dependant on further Government funding.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

56. Innovation Framework

The Panel considered a report which provided an update on the development of a new Leeds City Region Innovation Strategy.

Members noted the eleven draft priorities set out in the submitted report and in particular the focus on Health tech as a sector priority. As a result of the work on the local industrial strategy health tech had been identified as a significant opportunity for growth within the region.

Resolved: That the priorities be noted, and the public consultation from the 25 November be supported.

57. Connecting Innovation and the West Yorkshire Innovation Network

The Panel considered a report that set out the new Connecting Innovation programme.

Members welcomed the new programme noting that innovation ecosystems were difficult for many SMEs to navigate and the Connecting Innovation scheme would prove vital.

Resolved: That the introduction of the new Connecting Innovation programme and its role in facilitating the Devolution Deal ambition to establish a West Yorkshire Innovation Network to expand and deepen the impact of innovation support across the City Region be noted.

58. Employment and skills plan

The Panel considered a report that provided an update on the Employment and Skills plan.

Members notes the key findings from the public consultation and engagement as set out in paragraph 2.7 of the submitted report.

Further engagement with stakeholders was underway and a working group between the Business Innovation and Growth Panel and the Employment and Skills Panel would be arranged in the new year.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

59. Local Digital Skills Partnership

Members considered a report which set out the development of the Local Digital Skills Partnership.

Members noted the development of the Local Digital Skills Partnership board and the plan of actions and timescales.

Resolved: That the work to date be noted.