

Report to: West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Date: 22 April 2021

Subject: COVID-19

Director: Brian Archer, Director of Economic Services

Author: Alex Clarke, Policy Manager, Business Productivity and Resilience

Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	
Are there implications for equality and diversity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide the Combined Authority with an update on developments concerning the COVID-19 crisis, including on the development of products and services in response to the economic impacts of the pandemic.
- 1.2 To provide an updated on the West Yorkshire Economic Recovery Plan, including on implementation of elements of the plan.
- 1.3 To outline a number of issues with regard to the roadmap out of current lockdown restrictions, including supporting the safe operating of businesses and the role of public transport.

2. Information

- 2.1 Since the last Combined Authority meeting in March 2021, the local authority areas of West Yorkshire have moved into the second step of the UK Government's roadmap out of lockdown, with restrictions due to be in place until at least 21 June. Regulations published by the Government in March provide for the possibility that some areas of England could find themselves in different steps, depending on the circumstances regarding virus prevalence.

2.2 Against this uncertain backdrop, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and the five local authorities, continue to support residents and businesses in West Yorkshire, and the following sections outline some of the support available and the progress made, before turning to issues of economic recovery and some further issues for the roadmap out of lockdown.

Business Support and Engagement

2.3 Government support to individuals and businesses has been made available through each stage of the pandemic, and this section outlines the progress made on delivering that support since the last Combined Authority meeting. The support available brings together both nationally and locally funded projects, ensuring comprehensive support for businesses.

2.4 At a West Yorkshire level, delivery continues on a number of schemes, with the table below detailing the progress.

Project	Funding	No. of Businesses Supported	Delivery Partners
Local Authority Grants (Nov 20 onwards – end linked to ongoing restrictions)	£200m actual	70,000 payments	Local Authorities
Additional Restrictions Grant	£20m actual	6,000 payments	Local Authorities
COVID-19 Recovery Grants (ERDF & LGF)	£1m actual £2.8m committed	1114 actual	Umi Commercial
Digital Resilience Vouchers (up to £5,000)	£1.06m	400 actual Project complete	Leeds City Council
Peer Learning Project	£90,000	60 actual	University of Leeds Business School
Small Business Membership Scheme – allowing access to legal, HR, financial and wellbeing support	£300,000	1350 actual	W&NY Chamber, Mid-Yorkshire Chamber, FSB
Cyber Security Support Scheme	£100,000	160 actual	North East Business Resilience Centre

Business Resilience Webinars	£15,000	180 actual	Biskit
------------------------------	---------	------------	--------

2.5 Businesses across the City Region are also being impacted by the need to adjust to the new requirements brought about by the end of the transition period of the UK's exit from the European Union at the beginning of the year. The Combined Authority has put in place a wide range of support for businesses, all of which was in place to 31 March 2021, the progress of which is summarised in the table below. A number of the schemes will continue to deliver for the second quarter of 2021.

Project	Number of Businesses Supported	Timeline	Delivery Partner(s)
EU Transition support service (regional service across Yorkshire and Humber, commissioned by the CA/LEP)	278 (delivery began 11/01/21, extended to end of July 21)	31/07/21	Enterprise Growth Solutions (EGS), & other Y&H LEPs
Telemarketing outreach service (Leeds City Region, Y& NY)	324 referrals 1322 survey completions (delivery began 11/01/21)	31/03/21	Blueberry Ltd
EU Exit legal advice & support (Leeds City Region, Y&NY)	8 (delivery began 22/01/21, extended to end of April 21)	30/04/21	Squire Patton Boggs
Series of EU Transition webinars (Yorkshire and Humber)	119 (delivery began 18/01/21)	31/03/21	Greenborough Management Ltd
Series of webinars to help businesses internationalise their marketing activity	211 Additional 1:1 support – 22	31/03/21	UMi Commercial

(Yorkshire and Humber)	(delivery began 23/02/21)		
Trade related documentation support and advice through the EU Transition (Leeds & Bradford, plus Y&NY)	224 (delivery began 18/01/21)	31/03/21	Chamber International
Trade related documentation support and advice through the EU Transition (Wakefield, Calderdale & Kirklees)	129 (delivery began 22/01/21)	31/03/21	Mid Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce

Employment and Skills Support

2.6 The Combined Authority and LEP continues to support individuals to better equip them in the labour market as part of our economic recovery activity, including through the £13.5m strategic employment and skills package agreed by the Combined Authority on 27 November 2020. Since the last Combined Authority in March the following updates on employment and skills support is provided for information:

- **Employment Hub:** There has been ongoing discussion and planning with each individual local authority about how they could effectively utilise the extension of the Employment Hub provision which has caused some start delays (although the delivery of the repurposed offer continues). Funding Agreements are currently being finalised with each Local Authority with a formal start of 1 April.
- **ReBoot:** Along with the funding allocated by the Combined Authority to extend ReBoot, within the region there is also bootcamp funding to support training offers to individuals. It was agreed that a procurement process will be followed to identify lead providers against key themes which would allow us flexibility to procure responsive provision, and procurement for this went live end of March.
- **Marketing** of the offer is currently being procured to create a high impact/focused campaign driving traffic/enquiries to the FutureGoals portal.

Economic Recovery Plan and implementation

2.7 As reported previously, the longer-term planning for economic recovery for West Yorkshire is being overseen by a West Yorkshire Economic Recovery

Board¹, which is a working group of the Combined Authority and brings together the five West Yorkshire Leaders and LEP Chair with partners from the private sector, trade unions, business representative organisations, public bodies and the third sector, to develop robust plans for the region's economic recovery and to help build an inclusive and sustainable economy for the future.

- 2.8 At the last meeting of the Combined Authority a refreshed version of the West Yorkshire Economic Recovery Plan was endorsed, alongside a new distinct proposition on Culture and Creative Industries. All of these documents will remain live and be updated as required. The Combined Authority will continue to work with the Economic Recovery Board and local authorities to refine as necessary, and to ensure ongoing complementarity to local recovery plans.
- 2.9 Alongside the recovery plan update, work continues on implementing elements of the recovery plan within existing local and regional resources. The March Budget did not provide any specific funding for regional recovery plans, and therefore in the absence of Government support the Combined Authority is prioritising actions that will have the biggest impact on key issues identified in the plan.
- 2.10 At the last meeting, the Combined Authority gave its support in principle to three programmes outlined in the report: on entrepreneurship, a net zero carbon pipeline and on health innovation. These are currently being developed in detail, in line with the Combined Authority approval and the Assurance Framework, to ultimately be formally approved at a future meeting of the Investment Committee.

Issues related to the roadmap out of lockdown

- 2.11 On 5 April 2021, the Prime Minister announced that the government's "four tests" for further easing restrictions has been met, allowed England to move to Step 2 of the government's roadmap on Monday 12 April. This means that outdoor hospitality can now reopen, alongside parts of the indoor economy (including non-essential retail, personal care premises and indoor leisure facilities) and some other outdoor settings (including zoos and theme parks).
- 2.12 Restrictions around size of gatherings, including the rule of six or two household limit, remain in place. The Government is also considering and piloting options for longer term restrictions and requirements to allow further international travel, as well as larger events and gatherings with less social distancing.

Transport implications of the roadmap

- 2.13 Use of bus services has increased since the return to education on 8 March with patronage rising to around 45% of normal in the week before the school holidays. Moving to Step 2 of the roadmap is expected to further increase

¹ Further details on the full membership and terms of reference: <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/erb>

demand for travel; bus patronage on 12 April had risen to 55%. As the capacity of buses is constrained by social distancing, this may mean some passengers could be left behind by “full” buses at busy times especially around school start and finish times. Arrangements are in place with bus operators to provide sufficient buses at busy times to mitigate this risk and the real time passenger information system will tell customers how full the approaching bus is.

- 2.14 Members will be aware from previous reports that, during the pandemic, bus services have been funded by a combination of grants from Government and LTAs continuing to pay concessionary travel costs at pre pandemic rates. Government published its National Bus Strategy on 16 March which sets out the next steps for Covid bus funding. The current funding arrangement is expected to continue until August and will be replaced by a new arrangement aimed at providing tapered financial support for the remainder of the financial year as patronage recovers following the lifting of restrictions. At the time of writing, fuller details of this funding are awaited.
- 2.15 A detailed report regarding the National Bus Strategy will be presented to Transport Committee on 14 May. Government requires LTAs to commit to the adoption of the partnership provisions of Bus Services Act by 1 July 2021 to gain access to funding made available through the National Bus Strategy. A full report will be provided to the Combined Authority meeting of 24 June setting out the options and recommending a course of action.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1 Clean Growth will continue to be supported through the products delivered in response to COVID-19 and is at the heart of the Economic Recovery Plan as an overarching goal.
- 3.2 Businesses will continue to be supported to apply innovation and digital technologies to adapt their products and services to meet current and future demand and reduce their carbon emissions.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 4.1 Inclusive Growth is embedded as an overarching goal in the Economic Recovery Plan.
- 4.2 As part of the West Yorkshire Inclusive Growth framework, any businesses that receive grants from the above products would be required to contribute to Inclusive Growth actions and outcomes via their funding agreements.

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.1 There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report. However, following the March 2021 Budget where no further funding was allocated for local COVID-19 economic recovery plans, further delivery implementation of the West Yorkshire Economic Recovery Plan will require new sources of funding.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

8. Staffing Implications

- 8.1 Delivery of the products included in the Economic Recovery Plan may require changes to current staff roles and/or additional staff to be recruited, which is being considered through the detailed development of individual proposals.

9. External Consultees

- 9.1 No specific or official external consultations have been undertaken in relation to this report. However, it has been informed by ongoing dialogue and consultation with LEP Panels and wide range of partners, including local authorities, the West Yorkshire Economic Recovery Board, universities and colleges, business representative and membership bodies, and direct with some individual businesses.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1 That the Combined Authority notes the updates in relation to COVID-19.

11. Background Documents

- 11.1 West Yorkshire Economic Recovery Plan – March 2021 version.
<https://westyorkshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s18944/Item%205%20-%20Appendix%201.pdf>

12. Appendices

- 12.1 None