

Report to: Business, Economy & Innovation Committee

Date: 5 January 2022

Subject: **West Yorkshire Innovation Festival**

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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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To seek input into the scope, scale and remit of the West Yorkshire Innovation Festival 2022.

2. Information

West Yorkshire Innovation Festival 2021

- 2.1 The West Yorkshire Innovation Festival was created in 2021 by the West Yorkshire Innovation Network with two overarching ambitions: to raise the profile of innovation and innovative businesses in the region and showcase the range of support available in the region. It did this by creating a platform for organisations to showcase the opportunities for innovation and profile some of the regions great success stories: 14 virtual events were hosted by 21 different organisers – primarily members of the WYIN – with over 1,485 attendees.
- 2.2 The idea of a festival was proposed by the WYIN to ensure the region isn't left behind in terms of its profile and visibility as a hub of innovation. Other regions have successfully delivered innovation festivals for a number of years

including the North East Innovation SuperNetwork who provided advice to West Yorkshire.

- 2.3 From panel discussions on the impact of innovation in our economic recovery post COVID-19, to inspiring stories from businesses who have transitioned, grown, evolved and shifted, to academic research into how crisis is a driver for innovation, to lively discussions on embedding change in businesses.
- 2.4 The festival aimed to inspire innovation and open up the conversation, connect people with the right resources, expertise and support to bring their idea to a reality. Innovation starts with an idea and our regional ambition is to better connect the SMEs who need the help and want the external support, to be able to access it and know what is available for them. A focus for the region moving forwards is to stimulate and embed an entrepreneurial and innovation led recovery and this festival helped to galvanise the ecosystem to this mission.
- 2.5 The first year (2021) ran on the format of headline coordination and facilitation by the LEP, with partner organisations running their own events under the banner of the WYIF (a similar model to the Leeds Digital Festival). This was entirely virtual.
- 2.6 In addition to creating the platform and facilitating the events, the CA/LEP also hosted a number of its own events including a thought leadership round table chaired by Sir Roger Marsh and LEP Business Support surgery.

Comments from the 2021 evaluation are included below:

“It’s been an excellent jam packed week.... May it be the first of many! Delighted to have been involved and thank you...”. **Mandy Ridyard, Produmax**

“Couldn’t agree more with what has already been said. I have really enjoyed being involved as well as further learning about what an amazing innovation eco system we have. We have a lot to be proud of and shout about!” **Natalie Allen, Leeds Beckett University**

“We’ve certainly enjoyed a full week of interesting innovation events with very positive contributions from businesses of all kinds joining in. Thanks to you for having the ambition to make it happen and the whole team for pulling together a brilliant programme”. **Sue Cooke, 3M BIC**

“It really was very nicely organized with the introduction of what we are doing in the region. Great points made. Excellent kick off”. **Sir George Buckley, former CEO and Chairman 3M**

“What a fantastic event. Well organised. Very pleased to be part of it. Congratulations to all involved. Excellent work..!” **Richard Hall, PDM**

“Having attended a good few events this week, it's been a huge testament to the innovation services and offerings we have in the region. Hugely impressed”. **Deb Hetherington, Bruntwood**

Andrew Wright, chair of the BIG Panel commented on the ‘buzz’ on social media around the festival.

2022 Planning

2.7 The Mayor has agreed that the delivery of the sub pledge to ‘turn the Leeds Digital Festival into a West Yorkshire wide festival’ should be realised through the delivery of the WYIF – incorporating more digital innovation and skills/SME transformation aspects than were evident in the 2021 festival.

2.8 There is therefore an aspiration to increase the profile of the festival and run additional CA/Mayor led events whilst retaining the original partnership concept of a range of organisations running events via a joined up platform.

2.9 *Outcome for the 2022 festival to include:*

- Increased profile for the region and its businesses and an increased external recognition of our critical role to play in levelling up
- Promotion of the range of support available in the region for businesses to innovate (including LEP support)
- Opportunity for businesses to network and learn from great examples of innovation
- Profile for the Mayor as a champion of business and innovation

2.10 Planning is starting for the 2022 festival and committee members are asked to provide input into the scope and remit of the festival. It is envisaged that a delivery partner will be commissioned to deliver the festival, working closely with the CA’s Connecting Innovation team and West Yorkshire Innovation Network. A steering group will be established to oversee the plans and volunteers from BEIC are sought.

2.11 Questions for the Committee:

- What content would be most useful for a business audience?
- Should the focus be on promotion of the region and its innovation strengths and potential or on supporting businesses to innovate more/showcasing support?
- How would the committee like to be involved throughout the planning and delivery?

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

3.1 The 2022 festival will continue to have a focus on innovation for societal good, in particular with the climate emergency challenge competitions.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 4.1 Ensuring greater diversity of participation in the WYIF and the challenge competition process will ensure greater opportunities in support of inclusive growth across a range of communities in the region – both in terms of engagement and involvement in the process and the solving of some of the region biggest societal challenges

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.1 The 2021 festival provided a platform for the Innovation Framework and its ambitions around innovation for everyone. The 2022 festival will continue to focus on this and provide increased opportunities to deliver against this (eg challenge competition). With additional resources in 2022 there can be more focus in ensuring diversity of participation.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 A proportion of pledge funding will be used to support the delivery, in addition to Local Digital Skills Partnership (LDSP) funding (£40k in total).

7. Legal Implications

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

8. Staffing Implications

- 8.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

9. External Consultees

- 9.1 Discussions have taken place with the West Yorkshire Innovation Network.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1 That Committee members provide input into the festival 2022. Volunteers are also sought to be part of a steering group.

11. Background Documents

There are no background documents referenced in this report.

12. Appendices

None.