

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
BUSINESS, ECONOMY AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE  
HELD ON MONDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2021 AT NEXUS, DISCOVERY WAY,  
UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS, LEEDS, LS2 3AA**

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**Present:**

Councillor Shabir Pandor (Chair)	Kirklees Council
Andrew Wright (Deputy Chair)	LEP
Councillor Jane Scullion	Calderdale Council
Mandy Ridyard	LEP
David Sidlow	BorgWarner Ltd
Philip Wilson	Slipstream Design
Karl Oxford (Advisory Representative)	African and Caribbean Business Ventures Ltd
Sue Cooke (Advisory Representative)	LCR Universities
Simon Mellon (Advisory Representative)	Department for International Trade
Sandy Needham (Advisory Representative)	Chamber of Commerce
Derek Whitehead (Advisory Representative)	West Yorkshire Consortium of Colleges

**In attendance:**

Jacqui Gedman	Kirklees Council
Brian Archer	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Liz Hunter	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Sarah Bowes	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Alexander Clarke	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Henry Rigg	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Ben Kearns	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor Firth, Councillor Pryor, Councillor Byford, Councillor Ross-Shaw, Councillor Waller, Amir Hussain, Martin Booth, Mike Danby, Richard Paxman, Andy Peterson, Simon Wright, Lee Viney, Dr Peter O'Brien, Neville Young and Professor Nick Plant.

**2. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Sue Cooke wished to declare that the University of Huddersfield was a partner in a Made Smarter bid.

### **3. Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public**

There were no items which required the exemption of the press or public.

### **4. Governance Arrangements**

Members noted a report which set out the governance arrangements for the Committee as agreed by the Combined Authority at its annual meeting.

Members considered the role of the Committee and its focus on supporting businesses in the region but emphasised the importance of the Mayor's skills pledge as well as the need to link up with the other Committees.

Members discussed their shared commitment to inclusive growth and the need for it to be interwoven through the work of the committee.

Resolved: That the governance arrangements be noted.

### **5. Economic Reporting**

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

Members emphasised the importance of good data to identify the base performance in the region in order to target interventions and monitor performance.

Members had the following questions and comments:

- That there was a chance to focus on the retail, leisure and tourism sector as new funding no longer prohibited intervention in the business to consumer sector.
- The need to define part-time work and consider it differently. Some have chosen to work part-time during the pandemic for a better work/life balance.
- The widespread impact of the reversal of the Universal Credit uplift in the region – with up to 56% of families in the region to be affected.
- The need to understand what new working patterns, e.g., hybrid working, will mean for the region.
- The increase in people categorised as 'inactive' – those not employed, not retired, and not looking for employment.
- That the resilience of businesses in the region was vital – particularly the interplay of attracting new staff and promoting a hybrid working offer to become an employer of choice.
- The need to reach BAME businesses with business support offer.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

### **6. Mayoral Pledges**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on Mayoral

pledge activity in relation to the Business Innovation and Economy Committee. £500,000 had been approved by the Combined Authority to progress work to support the supporting local businesses pledge.

Members made the following comments:

- Member were very supportive of the pledges and looked forward to working with the Mayor to meet the targets.
- That possible areas to support with development funding was the leisure and tourism sectors.
- Another possible intervention was to improve broadband in towns and rural areas. The Committee noted that broadband was nationally funded, so would require a lobbying function from the Committee.
- The interplay between the two pledges of supporting businesses and on skills and training and consequently the importance of joining up the work of the corresponding committees.
- A focus should be maintained on innovation. It was suggested that work could be undertaken to measure the uptake of R&D tax credits across the region and broker support to SMEs to aid their application for R&D tax credits.

**Resolved:** That the Mayoral pledges and the Committee's feedback be noted.

## **7. Business Support Initiatives**

The Committee considered a report that provided an update on the delivery of the current business support and innovation programmes.

Members noted that the Business Accelerator Fund was nearing completion of a detailed procurement exercise. The Made Smarter pilot for the Yorkshire and Humber area was also in the process of a procurement exercise and delivery was expected to commence in November 2021.

The Committee noted the Entrepreneurship Programme with workstreams 1 and 2 in delivery and workstream 3 to commence shortly. Members also noted the Asian SME Growth Programme which aimed to build capacity and value within an underrepresented group.

Members made the following comments:

- Whether the region could do more to retain recent graduates and help SMEs recruit graduates.
- That the business support programmes over the last 7 years had been a brilliant success and provided a foundation for further interventions.
- It was noted that there was a high level of uncertainty around funding. The Combined Authority was awaiting announcements from the comprehensive spending review and the community renewal fund.
- Members discussed the possibility of looking at other sources of funding to plug any gaps in government funding.

Resolved:

- (i) That the progress on the delivery of Business Support and Innovation services be noted
- (ii) That the position on the development of the West Yorkshire Business Accelerator Fund be noted

## **8. Business Productivity Programme**

Members considered a report that provided an update on the development of a potential new business productivity programme. A strategic outline business case would be developed to secure funding for delivery from April 2022 onwards.

Members supported the continued development of a new business productivity programme. Productivity was a key driver for business growth as well as the creation of strategic and resilient jobs which could provide people in the region with a platform for growth and development.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted.

## **9. West Yorkshire Trade Strategy**

Members considered a report set out the purpose and scope of an emerging trade strategy.

The strategy would focus on empowering SMEs the region to access international markets. The trade strategy would be presented to the Combined Authority for endorsement

Members discussed the complexity of international trade and the need for specific technical advice. Members also discussed the higher education sector as being a key strength in the region which could be brought out more in the trade strategy.

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the West Yorkshire Trade Strategy be endorsed.
- (ii) That the progress made to date on the delivery of trade and investment activity be noted.

## **10. Healthtech Strategy**

The Committee considered a report that provided an update on the development on the regions Health Innovation agenda and the emerging Healthtech Strategy.

The draft Healthtech strategy was attached at appendix 1 to the submitted report and members recognised that the region was well placed because of

the strengths of its industry, university, and health assets.

Members discussed the need to narrow in on specific assets to maximise advantage. Members noted the launch of the Healthtech catalyst, a networking programme aimed at providing support across the system and brokering connections across and between the ecosystems.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted.