

Report to: Employment and Skills Committee

Date: 24 January 2022

Subject: **Mayoral Pledges**

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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 provide an update on the development of the mayoral pledge workstreams and its alignment with the Employment and Skills Framework.
- 1.2 To seek the Committee's recommendations on the next steps for pledge development.

2. Information

Create 1,000 well paid, skilled, green jobs for young people

Overview

- 2.1 The Mayor pledged to create 1,000 well paid, skilled, green jobs for young people, supporting progress against the Combined Authority's commitment to a net zero carbon economy for West Yorkshire by 2038, with significant progress by 2030. The pledge also recognises the disproportionately negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth unemployment over the past 18 months.
- 2.2 At their meeting on 24 June 2021, the Combined Authority indicatively

approved £500k funding to support scheme development relating to employment and skills support for 16-30 year olds. Following recommendation from the Programme Appraisal Team, final approval for the development funding proposal was received from the Combined Authority at their meeting on 22 October 2021.

Green Jobs Taskforce

- 2.3 In August 2021, the Mayor announced the creation of a West Yorkshire Green Jobs Taskforce, which will bring together experts from business, education and training, and the third and public sectors. Its goal is to position West Yorkshire as a leader and set out a roadmap to deliver the skills and jobs needed to address the climate emergency. The Green Jobs Taskforce will meet for the first time in early 2022.

Prioritise skills and training to ensure everyone in West Yorkshire has the skills they need to secure work

- 2.4 Under this pledge, the Mayor made specific commitments to the following activities. Updates since the last meeting are then provided below.
- Spearhead a campaign to make West Yorkshire a Living Wage Region, boosting the number of businesses paying the real living wage.
 - Spearhead a **Digital Academy**, supported by business and academics to ensure our young people have the skills required to be the entrepreneurs, innovators, engineers and creatives of the future.
 - Establish a West Yorkshire **Digital Skills Partnership** to develop digital skills programmes, tackle digital exclusion and maximise the potential of the region.
 - Widen the Leeds **Digital Festival** to a West Yorkshire wide festival, showcasing the talented workforce needed.
 - Support a 'Gold Standard' **West Yorkshire wide Careers** Advice Service delivered in-line and in person, using mentors and businesses to excite and inform the next generation about the exciting opportunities available to them.

Gold-Standard Careers

- 2.5 The Mayor committed to supporting a 'gold-standard' West Yorkshire wide careers advice service, delivered online and in-person, using mentors and businesses to excite and inform the next generation about the exciting opportunities available to them.
- 2.6 Young people were disproportionately affected by the negative impacts of the pandemic, including marked effects on unemployment and apprenticeship opportunities, significant learning loss, and reduced opportunities to gain work experience as part of a study programme or in a part-time capacity. Young people are also much more likely to face long-term 'scarring' effects of unemployment, in terms of subsequent lower pay, higher unemployment, and

reduced life chances.

- 2.7 The Local Authority Directors of Development and Directors of Children's Services have commissioned a review into NEETs and youth unemployment, led by C&K Careers. The work will help identify priorities at the individual local authority and West Yorkshire level with a focus upon addressing the unequal outcomes of specific groups. The commission emphasises the requirement to co-produce these proposals with the West Yorkshire Local Authorities and Combined Authority.
- 2.8 Productive discussions have been held between officers from the five Local Authorities and the Combined Authority, in which all parties have come together to share best practice, learning, and challenges.
- 2.9 Discussions will continue to agree recommendations that are aligned with existing strategies, take into account different levels of investment across the region and contribute to long-term ambitions for progress in reduction and prevention of NEETs.

Digital Academy

- 2.10 The Mayor has pledged to spearhead a Digital Academy, supported by business and academics to ensure our young people have the skills required to be the entrepreneurs, innovators, engineers and creatives of the future. Work is underway to consider the options.
- 2.11 West Yorkshire Combined Authority have agreed to partner with IBM to utilise the "SkillsBuild" platform to provide a learning and careers pathways for all West Yorkshire residents. This provision is progressing through due diligence and should be accessible in Quarter 1 of 2022.

Digital Festival

- 2.12 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 West Yorkshire Innovation Festival – incorporating more digital innovation and skills/SME transformation aspects than were evident in the 2021 festival. The aim is to showcase the amazing talent and level of innovation within the region. In addition, the festival will provide an opportunity to place a focus on the need to grow digital skills across West Yorkshire and the impact both elements will have on residents, SMEs and the wider economy and provide a platform to showcase West Yorkshire as a driving force nationally and internationally as a centre for innovation.

Local Digital Skills Partnership

- 2.13 The Local Digital Skills Partnership (LDSP) was created as part of the West Yorkshire Devolution deal. The LDSP brings together skills provision, acts as

a testbed for offers, and is a conduit to bring together stakeholders and partners to add value to the region's digital skills growth.

2.14 The LDSP's aspirations support the Mayoral pledges to:

- Prioritise skills and training to ensure everyone in West Yorkshire has the skills they need to secure work
- Support local businesses and be a champion for our regional economy

2.15 The Digital Skills Plan will support the development of these Mayoral pledges and deliver the agreed priorities in the Combined Authority's Economic Recovery Plan.

2.16 The Digital Skills Plan also supports the delivery of the Employment and Skills Framework and its cross-cutting themes, as well as the Digital Framework, particularly the 'digital skills for all' priority.

2.17 The Digital Skills Plan has been developed through consultation with the LDSP board, with the support of key workstream groups which have included a diverse and broad membership.

2.18 Further consultation with senior employment and skills officers in local authorities has also supported defining the key priorities and actions.

2.19 This activity has supported the LDSP in shaping the plan, which is defined by the following vision statement and high-level priorities.

2.20 The vision statement for the Digital Skills Plan is: "Creating a fully inclusive society and a thriving economy through the growth of digital skills for all." This means making West Yorkshire a region where:

- There are no barriers to people taking up, progressing and succeeding in learning and work, a place where they are supported into "good" jobs through the provision digital skills learning
- Where no individual is left behind and all are supported to engage in an increasingly digital society through accessible and inclusive provision of digital skills training
- SMEs realise the potential of digital to transform our economy and build economic resilience and growth
- Where people are inspired and driven to engage in STEM learning to succeed and progress to be the workforce of the future into the "jobs of the future"
- That works collaboratively to create and deliver digital skills provision that is both accessible and meaningful to all.

2.21 The following thematic workstreams have been established to focus on high level priority areas in the Digital Skills Plan:

- Workstream 1 SME and Charity Digital Growth
- Workstream 2 Social Digital Inclusion

- Workstream 3 Workforce for the Future
- Workstream 4 Simplifying the Digital Offer

2.22 A final version Digital Skills Plan will be shared with the Committee ahead of its publication.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

3.1 The Committee has a lead role in considering the employment and skills strengths, challenges, and needs in tackling the climate emergency and meeting the ambitious target of net zero by 2038.

3.2 This includes through oversight and support for the development of the Green Jobs Taskforce and Gateway, which will provide 1,000 well paid, skilled, green jobs for young people.

3.3 The Digital Skills Plan will support growth of digital skills and therefore movement into “better jobs” and more productive jobs within the region. This will include growth of skills across the region to enhance innovation across green sector to support climate challenges.

3.4 The Digital Skills Plan will also support ‘digital first’ business growth through greater social digital inclusion provision. This will support climate challenges by enabling customers to make first contact online, reducing the need to travel.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

4.1 The Green Jobs Gateway was launched in August 2021 to support local employers to provide well paid, skilled, green jobs for young people in West Yorkshire, in support of the Mayor’s pledge. As part of its review, the Green Jobs Taskforce will also consider the development of the Gateway and the potential to maximise impact on disadvantaged or underrepresented communities.

4.2 Young people were disproportionately affected by unemployment during the pandemic. Both the Green Jobs Taskforce and the commissioned review into NEETs and youth unemployment will consider the potential to maximise impact on disadvantaged or underrepresented communities.

4.3 Digital skills development will positively contribute to recovery from the impact of the pandemic.

4.4 Delivery of the regional Digital Skills Plan will support inclusive growth across West Yorkshire. We expect to demonstrate progress in the following areas set out in the Strategic Economic Framework:

- % Qualified below level 2
- Unemployment rate
- % of employees in quality work
- Apprenticeship starts

- Jobs paying below Real Living Wage
- Employment rate gap for disadvantaged groups
- Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.1 Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken as part of scheme development within the pipeline for the supporting employment and skills pledges to ensure that, as schemes progress through Assurance Framework, equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded. This will also ensure that engagement takes place prior to commencement of delivery, and involve engagement with potential end user beneficiaries from underrepresented Groups.
- 5.2 In 2020, 23% of the adult population within Yorkshire & Humber lacked essential digital skills for life, with 17% of the population lacking Foundation digital skills. 11% were unable to turn on a digital device.
- 5.3 The pandemic has accelerated the rate at which our lives have moved online, increasing our reliance on access to digital services. The close association between digital exclusion and other dimensions of inequality exposes the urgent need for greater digital inclusion.
- 5.4 The Digital Skills Plan seeks to directly address socio-economic inequalities facing our population. Digital Inclusion is a central tenant of the plan, to be achieved through the growth/provision of digital skills and supporting the resolution of data poverty and the ongoing challenge of accessibility and connectivity.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 At their meeting on 24 June 2021, the Combined Authority indicatively approved £500k funding to support scheme development relating to employment and skills support for 16-30 year olds. Following a recommendation from the Programme Appraisal Team, final approval for the development funding proposal was received from the Combined Authority at their meeting on 22 October 2021.

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 No external consultations have been undertaken.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1 The Committee is asked to comment on the progress made on the skills-related Mayoral pledges above.

11. Background Documents

There are no background documents referenced in this report.

12. Appendices

None.