
Report to: Business Economy and Innovation Committee

Date: 26 July 2023

Subject: **Economic and Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Progress Update**

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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 update members of the committee on progress towards developing an Economic Strategy for West Yorkshire putting our ambitions for Equality Diversity and Inclusion at the heart of our approach.

2. Information

- 2.1. The [West Yorkshire Plan](#) was formally endorsed by political leaders at the Combined Authority in May, followed by a launch event in Leeds. The West Yorkshire Plan sets the trajectory to 2040, with a high-level vision and five ambitious mission to shape our programme of activity and focus.
- 2.2. Work is ongoing to develop an Economic Strategy to reflect the West Yorkshire Plan vision and missions. The Economic Strategy will provide a framework to maximise opportunities from the new flexibilities that devolution enables as well as reflecting the changing economic landscape resulting from Covid-19 and the cost-of-living and doing business crisis. It provides an opportunity to look again at our economic challenges and explore innovative solutions to support inclusive sustainable growth. Our strengthened ambitions on tackling the climate emergency and equality diversity and inclusion will be central to the approach.

- 2.3 The Economic Strategy will focus on delivery of mission one of the West Yorkshire Plan to deliver **a prosperous West Yorkshire, an inclusive economy with well paid jobs** and will align with our existing policies and strategies including the Employment and Skills Framework, Business Productivity and Resilience Plan, Innovation Framework, Digital Blueprint and the Culture Framework. A new inward investment strategy is being commissioned to align with overarching ambitions of the Economic Strategy, to update our approach to inward investment post-Brexit and sit alongside the West Yorkshire International Trade Strategy approved last year.

Updating the evidence base

- 2.4. Current activity is focusing on updating the evidence base including the West Yorkshire Economic Assessment (2019), procurement of a new Regional Economic Model for updated forecasts and scenario planning, and a call for evidence working with West Yorkshire Universities and the Y-PERN Network of academics. Mapping work to understand clusters of high-growth potential tech-enabled companies to complement our approach to sectors is being undertaken via a recently purchased Data City dashboard.
- 2.5. At the last meeting of the committee, members were updated on plans to commission an inward investment strategy to update our approach to inward investment in line with Brexit, Covid-19 the West Yorkshire Plan / Economic Strategy. An invitation to tender has been drafted and will be put out to contract over the summer with work commencing in the autumn.

Consultation

- 2.6. Consultation activity is underway including engagement with local authority officers, universities, and private sector representatives. This includes a recent joint workshop with members of the BEIC Committee and the Business Communication Group to understand principles for future business support and future provision in the context of further devolution and ambitions for equality, diversity and inclusion (see below). The notes from the workshop are included in Appendix One and members are supporting follow-on activity arising from the discussions. A prospectus setting out the background to this work has been shared with a range of stakeholders and is included Appendix Two of this paper.

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

- 2.7. At the last meeting of the committee, plans were discussed for an Equality, diversity and Inclusion Strategy. The Strategy was proposed as a way of better providing access to Combined Authority services and programmes for typically under-represented communities, to promote Inclusive Growth across the region.
- 2.8 In order to better provide strategic fit, the decision has been taken to elevate and incorporate the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) strategy - discussed at the last meeting - into the Economic Strategy.

- 2.9. Given the importance of the Economic Strategy as a key framework for the delivery of the West Yorkshire Plan, embedding the EDI Strategy within the framework of the Economic Strategy will ensure a fully inclusive delivery of Mission One.
- 2.10 This will provide a framework & specific actions that are primarily focussed on engaging with and providing access for the diverse communities across West Yorkshire.
- 2.11. To align the EDI Strategy and the Economic Strategy, activities are focused on the following:
- Mapping regional stakeholders to undertake further engagement.
 - Reviewing the existing evidence base and identifying gaps.
 - Strengthening engagement with under-engaged groups through outreach and events.
 - Organising training and learning opportunities to develop expertise and confidence in speaking about EDI with businesses.
 - Building a repository of information on the barriers to starting and scaling a business faced by individuals with protected characteristics and from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.
 - Working with the marketing and communications team to develop strong and innovative marketing campaigns that can reach new audiences.
- 2.12. Wider engagement will be undertaken as part of the ongoing consultation activity for the Economic Strategy (see 2.6). Sessions are being planned to understand actions that can remove barriers.
- 2.13. An online survey is being developed to understand what respondents consider key areas of challenge and opportunity, both in the remit of EDI, and for the wider West Yorkshire economy. Officers would be grateful if committee members would be happy to share this survey, to enhance the possibility of a diverse group of respondents. Further engagement opportunities will be identified to build on the responses to the survey.
- 2.14. Since the last BEIC meeting in March, the Combined Authority has published an Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Plan for 2022-2025¹. The plan outlines the Combined Authority's intentions to meet and exceed the statutory requirement to comply with the Equality Act 2010. The Economic Strategy will directly support the desired outcomes of the CA EDI Plan 2022-2025 by:
- Integrating and embedding the tenets of EDI across a key outward-facing function of the organisation

¹ <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/10130/edi-plan-2022-2025.pdf>

- Ensuring consultation with diverse communities to ensure a range of needs are identified and met.

This provides further opportunity and a framework to explicitly champion EDI as part of external-facing delivery and within our wider policy framework.

Timeframe

2.15. The table below sets out an indicative timeline for the stages of work described in the paper.

Key Task	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
Evidence Collection							
Survey goes live							
Stakeholder engagement							
Report drafting							
Engagement on the draft							
Final draft for approval							

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

3.1. Tackling the climate emergency aligns with mission three of the West Yorkshire Plan and will act as a cross cutting theme across all areas of activity arising from the strategy.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

4.1. Mission one of the West Yorkshire Plan is for an inclusive economy which will be a guiding principle of the Economic Strategy.

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

5.1. EDI is a cross cutting theme for the economic strategy demonstrated by alignment with the proposed EDI strategy.

6. Financial Implications

6.1. There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

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. A programme of external engagement is being undertaken as this strategy is being delivered.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1. That members of the committee provides comments on the proposed approach and not progress being made so far.
- 10.2. That members of the committee note the intention to incorporate the EDI Strategy into the Economic Strategy, to ensure EDI is prioritised as a key aspect of intention to deliver Mission One of the West Yorkshire Plan.

11. Background Documents

There are no background documents referenced in this report.

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Notes from the Business Support principles workshop
Appendix 2 – Economic Strategy prospectus