

Business Economy and Innovation Committee and Business Communications Group Workshop

Thursday 15 June

Meeting Notes

Cllr Pandor, Chair of the Business Economy and Innovation Committee welcomed attendees to the meeting. Combined Authority officers provided updates on the following areas of work:

- Devolution and ongoing talks with Government,
- Policy development of the West Yorkshire Plan and Economic Strategy,
- Current business support provision and approaches to targeting, and
- Progress on the development of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

The following points were raised in the subsequent group discussion:

Business Support Simplification

- The business support landscape is more confusing than it has ever been. Important to have as many points of entry as possible.
- We need to feature Combined Authority support within the wider business ecosystem including banks and accountants.
- Public sector business support needs better links with accountants as the first point of entry to improve accessibility, this could include a crib sheet of information / support available and ways to access.
- Making use of professional services networks should feed into this.
- Utilise stakeholders to maximise accessibility of services and reinforce those entry points.

Actions:

- Explore opportunities to better engage with professional services as point of entry to business support system.
- Crib sheet of support developed to share with networks and stakeholders.

Approaches to targeting

- Would welcome specific mention of social enterprises / cooperatives including better awareness and targeted support.
- Would welcome scope for area-based targeting of provision.
- The creative industries are a huge area of potential for the region, can we tailor support to these.
- Fair work / poverty - how we can help bring people out of poverty as a focus.
- Retail and hospitality as sectors are in great need of support and haven't been able to access services in the past.
- Need to make sure we don't create unintended barriers which might conflict with desire to support for diverse businesses.

- Trading 50% outside the region could be challenging as a criteria to measure support.
- Having fewer than 100 employees captures nearly all businesses in the region, unlikely that larger businesses would need support from the Combined Authority.
- Could there be specific support for scaling businesses?
- Avoid barriers around job creation and match funding in previous support programmes.
- Need to ensure that there are opportunities for shaping programme support.
- What are we trying to achieve? What does success look like and how do we measure it including on EDI targets.

Actions:

- Group members to be updated on programme development and opportunities for further engagement identified.
- Stakeholder map of existing groups and feedback points for engagement to be shared with the group.

Equality Diversity and Inclusion

- Look to other regions for best practice examples e.g. West Midlands Race Equalities Task force. York motion passed to make York a racism-free city with clear delivery plan.
- Utilise the North Starreport as part of consideration of the evidence.
- Need more regional data so we know what it means for West Yorkshire e.g. lack of attainment in schools. People, economy, education - all intersecting, when overlay social class becomes more complex.
- Can we get regional breakdown of national reports e.g. Time to Change, Rose Review - who engaged from West Yorkshire and what can we learn from this?
- Need to commission a West Yorkshire piece of research in order to get clarity on EDI baselines
- Open innovations can provide info on who is starting businesses which could be used to inform decision-making.

Actions:

- Share existing data including State of the Region EDI report and service level data with attendees and identify existing gaps in the evidence base.
- Look at possibility for State of the Region reporting to incorporate further analysis to understand West Yorkshire specific issues.
- Liaise with contacts of national reviews e.g. Rose Review, CREME to identify West Yorkshire intelligence that might be sharable / what could be replicated at a regional level.