



Report to:	Business, Economy and Innovation Committee
Date:	31 January 2024
Subject:	Private Sector Engagement
Director:	Felix Kumi-Ampofo, Director Inclusive Economy, Skills & Culture
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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 feedback on the development of the CA's Business Engagement Framework.

2. Information

- 2.1 The CA is committed to strengthening engagement with the private sector and harnessing these relationships to grow an inclusive economy.
- 2.2 This work is already underway, as shown by the transition of the LEP Board into the West Yorkshire Business Board (WYBB) - a more discussion-based, policy-focused version of its predecessor, and the appointment of the Mayor's Business Advisor.

A Framework for Business Engagement – Stronger Together

- 2.3 To formalise this new direction, the CA is currently developing a new Business Engagement Framework.
- 2.4 Whilst business engagement has always been an important feature of CA policy and intervention design, current arrangements are sometimes sub-optimal and do not always

allow business views/insights to be harnessed effectively across the whole range of CA agendas.

- 2.5 In addition, current business engagement does not always represent the entire business population and reflect the views of a representative cross-section of West Yorkshire businesses.
- 2.6 More diverse business engagement not only results in better policy design and programme development aligned to the needs of all our communities, but also provides the opportunity to develop a shared narrative across the public and private sectors for West Yorkshire.
- 2.7 At a private sector members engagement event on 15th November, this was discussed and the following recommendations/principles proposed:

Areas of focus include:

- Providing clear reasoning as to why businesses should engage with the Combined Authority e.g. key sector strengths, economic health of the region.
 - Look to existing networks and strengthen our connections rather than begin everything from scratch.
 - Appreciate the value of building relationships with the third sector, academic institutions and government departments.
 - Learning lessons from the successes and challenges of previous iterations of regional private sector engagement.
 - Developing a clear value proposition and “elevator pitch” for the region for business leaders, ambassadors and other allies to promote West Yorkshire.
 - Making sure there are workable actions for both the Combined Authority and private sector representatives.
- 2.8 In parallel, consideration is being given to the strategic relationship between the Combined Authority and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector, with discussion ongoing. A Memorandum of Understanding will be explored with the sector to define and agree roles and responsibilities and ways of working.
- 2.9 In developing a new Business Engagement Framework, the following principles have emerged and are being considered further:
- Keep the conversation relevant to business. Talk about what businesses want to talk about.



- Do not use jargon – for example, talking about ‘productivity’ can sometimes be unhelpful, depending on the audience.
- Focus on quality and diversity not quantity of engagement.
- Put time, effort and resource into business engagement. Engagement should be deliberate, planned, ongoing and a long-term process of relationship building.
- Help people connect. Convene and organise sessions that add value to businesses, e.g. networking with others that might lead to business opportunities, share best practice, as well as providing input to their work.
- Use the process itself to build networks that last. E.g. get firms in a growing cluster together and then ask if they want to keep meeting or if there are things on which they want to work together.
- Make it easy for businesses. Engagement can be difficult for businesses – especially SMEs. Think about interesting places to meet that perhaps offer networking / commercial opportunities, and venues that are convenient to get to. Try and put events on at different times of the day – breakfast sessions don’t work for parents doing the school or care run before work. Consider when in-person events are necessary or if online/hybrid is possible.
- Utilise an appropriate CRM system to keep track of relationships and key issues of importance to different businesses.
- Be mindful of not over-engaging, possibly by merging multiple meetings on similar topics into one meeting.
- Proactively feedback actions taken as a result of business views and ideas, moving away from the perception of a ‘talking shop’, demonstrating actions and explaining decisions.

2.10 The following engagement mechanisms are being explored to enact the above principles:

Formal mechanisms:

- West Yorkshire Business Board
- Mayor’s Advisory Council
- Business Representative Groups
- Thematic Committees
- Surveys and Consultation

Informal mechanisms:

- Private Sector Sessions
- Key Account Management (KAM)
- Business Visits
- Festivals, conferences, and other events

- Speaking & discussion invitations
- Joining existing networks, panels and groups
- Marketing, publications, and celebrations

2.11 Views are sought from committee members around the following areas:

- How to ensure active participation and representation of diverse businesses in shaping both policy/strategic direction and programme design?
- In your business experience, what methods of engagement have brought about the best results with public sector activity?
- Are there specific communication channels or methods that businesses in the region find most accessible?
- What can be added/taken away from the above principles and mechanisms?
- Are there any examples of good practice elsewhere?

2.12 The will have an opportunity to scrutinise the draft Business Engagement Framework at its March 2024 meeting.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

3.1 Tackling the climate emergency will remain a key priority for private sector engagement.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

4.1 Inclusive growth will remain a key priority for private sector engagement.

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

5.1 The focus on equality and diversity within the LEP constitution will remain a key priority for the WYBB and wider private sector engagement.

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 No external consultations have been undertaken.

10. Recommendations

10.1 That the Committee notes progress being made to produce a Business Engagement Framework and offers feedback on the emerging guiding principles and engagement mechanisms.

11. Background Documents

There are no background documents referenced in this report.

12. Appendices

None.