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**Report to:** Business, Innovation and Growth Panel

**Date:** 24 May 2018

**Subject:** **Business Heroes**

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## **1 Purpose of this report**

To outline the proposal for recruiting and utilising “business heroes” as part of the private sector-led productivity revolution. Panel members are asked to provide thoughts and feedback on the approach and expectations for the work, and the routes to identification of potential heroes.

## **2 Information**

### **Business Heroes**

- 2.1 There has been an ambition from the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership to create a flexible pool of business advocates from different sectors that would be willing to provide some of their expertise and experience to support the promotion of the city region for investment at a national and international level. The region’s productivity challenge, as is outlined in the report for item 6a, has provided an additional opportunity to develop the concept, with the proposal that business leaders could draw on their own experiences of improving productivity to challenge and demonstrate what other businesses might do. These elements have been combined to form a single “business heroes” programme proposal, recognising that heroes could be utilised in various campaigns/ initiatives depending on their expertise and experience.
- 2.2 Significant business engagement is at the heart of LEP activity. This includes 28 private sector members of the LEP’s Board and Panels who shape strategy and maintain an overview of project delivery; 160 enterprise advisors who voluntarily provide careers advice in schools; business representative groups that provide intelligence and views on current challenges and

opportunities, and hundreds of businesses that form case studies<sup>1</sup> showing how they have directly benefited from LEP support, or who champion inward investment opportunities in the City Region.

- 2.3 On the productivity angle, it is intended that relevant business heroes will be at the core of a private sector-led productivity revolution contributing to the region's local inclusive industrial strategy. To make this genuinely private sector-led will require strong business advocates, or business heroes, to be at the heart of any communications or activity. By using straightforward, personal experience to demonstrate the approaches individual businesses have taken to improve their performance and competitiveness, it is hoped that the business heroes programme can result in:
- More firms understanding that productivity is important, their current productivity performance and how to act.
  - The attraction of sufficient inward investment to fuel growth and productivity ambition.

#### Identification

- 2.4 Given that the idea is for heroes to be able to communicate with a mix of national and international influencers, investors and other businesses that may be or have been similar to themselves, it is important that the right group of individuals and businesses are identified; representing the diversity and geography of the city region.
- 2.5 To identify potential business heroes across the city region authority areas, in addition to reviewing those businesses that have engaged with the LEP, analysis of firm-level data is being undertaken to provide intelligence about different types of businesses. It is also intended that key account or private sector partnership leads in local authorities, business representative groups and other stakeholders will be engaged to ask for businesses that they know of who would meet the specification.
- 2.6 On the productivity element of the heroes programme, whilst improved productivity performance is an obvious criteria that will be used in identification of perspective heroes, it will also be important to look at other factors including skills and training, innovation, investment and the role of a business in their local community.

#### The business hero specification

- 2.7 Business heroes will be key spokespersons, advocates and ambassadors for business productivity and the City Region, its ambition and future plans. They will also contribute to ensuring messages are prominent at key industry forums and help define the strategic industry imperatives.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.the-lep.com/case-studies/>

2.8 Panel members are invited to comment on what is expected of the Leeds City Region Business Heroes:

- i. Contributing authentic business voices to the productivity revolution campaign
- ii. Defining the city region industry narrative begun in the SEP
- iii. Creating/liaising with the industry thought leader community to share best practice and create the industry impact/value needed
- iv. Representing the region at key industry events or ensuring we have the right representation
- v. Initiating & facilitating a series of events aimed at raising the profile of productivity and the sector within the city region with business/academics/other
- vi. Convening a number of “leadership” events with Government, business, academic and other circles to constantly challenge the status quo on behalf of their sector and the city region
- vii. Developing the industry programme

#### Practicalities / Logistics

2.9 It is recognised that any kind of network such as the business heroes programme will not be self-sustaining, and that it will need resource to initiate, keep people equipped and motivated, and to maintain momentum. Further consideration of who will manage the programme and where this resource will come from will be undertaken following feedback from Panel members on the approach and expectations for the programme, led by officers from the Policy, Strategy and Communications directorate of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority in the first instance.

### **3 Financial Implications**

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

### **4 Legal Implications**

4.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

### **5 Staffing Implications**

5.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

### **6 External Consultees**

6.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

### **7 Recommendations**

7.1 Panel members are asked to provide feedback on the approach and expectations for the work, and the routes to identify potential heroes.

## **7      Background Documents**

7.1    None

## **8      Appendices**

8.1    None