

**West of England Local Enterprise Partnership  
Board meeting – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019**

**IMPLEMENTING THE LOCAL INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY PRODUCTIVITY  
CHALLENGE**

**Purpose of the report**

1. To update on implementation planning for the Productivity Challenge described in the West of England Local Industrial Strategy.

**Recommendation**

To note progress and advise on the direction of travel set out.

**Background**

2. The Local Industrial Strategy includes the action *to set a productivity challenge for businesses to improve their performance by putting modern technology, inclusion, and leadership practices at the heart of their operations, including:*
  - *Work with Be the Business to develop a plan to support productivity growth at firm level, providing the inspiration, practical tools and guidance to encourage SMEs to become more productive.*
  - *Evolve the West of England Growth Hub offer to include tailored specialist advice, export support, technical support on environmental sustainability and development of peer learning networks based on specific places or across sectors."*
  - *Activities in development.*

**Summary of activities in development**

3. **Be the Business local programme:** WECA is in discussions with Be the Business – a government backed productivity think tank – about a range of tools which are nationally available but could be better tailored and amplified regionally. These include:
4. *Mentoring through Growth* – Mentors from leading firms are matched with SME owners to improve performance by increased leadership practices. The programme has commenced and a 'Mentoring through Growth' advisor started in September 2019 as a shared resource between West of England and Gloucestershire LEPs.
5. *Productivity through People* – A transformative programme for SME leaders already established in the North East, the Midlands and London, this activity would support a cohort of senior leaders through an intensive 12-month programme to transform working practices and productivity.

6. *Benchmarking* – a free to use SME self-diagnostic tool that will be embedded in the West of England Growth Hub portal to enable SMEs to benchmark productivity and management practices with industry level comparisons. This will lead to a result-driven local call to action.
7. *Collaboration Networks* – building on the region’s many successful sector networks, a suite of peer to peer activities to share experience, stories and advice will be developed. Working with established networks to identify useful activities such as peer learning, business open days, reference visits, business placements and advisory board roles.
8. *Tech adoption* – following consultation with businesses from across the country, including a highly productive roundtable in the West of England, a new product based on the Be the Business tool is about to be launched. This will provide specialist support to SMEs on exploration and adoption of technology including understanding risks, resilience, and the significant opportunity and productivity gains achievable.
9. **Developing the West of England Growth Hub offer:** Building on the Growth Hub platform already in place, a new focussed programme of SME engagement will be brought forward. This will include the development of shared content and case studies for use in peer to peer support and within the stakeholder network. Other activity includes:
10. *Intellectual Property to protect and succeed* – expert resource embedded within the Growth Hub and shared with the Government IP Office providing information, advice and guidance to help companies using tools such as IPEquip, IPCheck, IP B2B Toolkit and IP for Investment tools.
11. *Better Business for All* – already an established programme to enable connectivity between economic development and regulatory functions within local government, there is an opportunity for a deeper level of support to reach out to SMEs.
12. *Greater Access to Economic Opportunity* – a programme of engagement to ensure productivity and enterprise support is targeted at priority neighbourhoods which face a plethora of socio-economic barriers to accessing enterprise support.
13. *SME Public Procurement* – working with public sector bodies across the West of England to widen opportunity for SMEs to engage in public procurement; to establish standard protocols and increase communication. Also, exploring how social value procurement can maximise the employment and supply chain benefits of WECA’s own spending.
14. **West of England Scale Up Programme:** building on the West of England Scale-up Enabler work, we will explore options for a high impact enterprise scale-up programme focused on coaching, investment and workspace. We have engaged expert support to

help shape the programme based on what is current available in the market and where there are gaps.

15. **Inward Investment and Exporting:** Following a review of the West of England Inward Investment Service “Invest Bristol and Bath”, funding has been secured to continue operating for a further five years. Working closely with Unitary Authority colleagues our active programme of business development and lead generation, will increase trade and investment performance by working with the Department for International Trade to target new growth markets, building on our specific sectoral strengths.
16. *Export Support Project* – working with DIT we will develop a close working relationship with the International Trade Advisor network to explore opportunities for bi-lateral activities across investment and trade; this will focus on market analysis, SME trade advice, trade and investment missions, trade matching and access to markets.

### **Next Steps**

17. A portfolio of activities is in development which will form a business case to be taken forward to the December Joint Committee for outline funding approval. This suite of activities is being developed to provide interventions where market failure or additional value is recognised. This will be led by the Combined Authority but developed in partnership with the Local Authorities Economic Development Managers and key stakeholders.

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