

West of England LEP Board

Friday 29 September, 10:30am
Meeting held in person and “virtually” via Teams

Present:

Richard Bonner, Atkins Global (Chair)
Prof Sue Rigby, Bath Spa University (Vice Chair)
Christopher Grier, Airbus
David Brown, The Bristol Port Company
Neil Douglas, Viper Innovations

Margot Day, Arup
Ruth Jefferson, Wessex Water
Cllr Claire Young, South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr Mike Bell, North Somerset Council
Cllr Kevin Guy, Bath & North East Somerset Council
Stephen Peacock, Bristol City Council

Officers in Attendance:

Richard Ennis, West of England Combined Authority
Jess Lee, West of England Combined Authority
Stephen Bashford, West of England Combined Authority

Melissa Houston, West of England Combined Authority
Andy Cornelius, South Gloucestershire Council
Jo Walker, North Somerset Council
Hannah Smith, Bristol City Council

Also Present:

Sarah James, West of England Combined Authority
[item 5]

Graham Smith, West of England Combined Authority
[item 4]

Apologies:

Joanne Rumley, Foot Anstey
Mayor Dan Norris, West of England Combined Authority
Nigel Costley

Mayor Marvin Rees, Bristol City Council
Will Godfrey, Bath & North East Somerset
Dave Perry, South Gloucestershire Council

Minutes

1.	Welcome from Chair Richard Bonner welcomed members and apologies were noted.
2.	Minutes of the meeting of 29 September 2023 The minutes of the meeting held on the 29 September 2023 were agreed as a correct record.
3.	Declaration of Interest Board members were reminded that they had a responsibility to treat all proposals/projects equally and impartially and must therefore declare whether they or their organisation had either a direct or indirect interest in any of the projects to be considered by the Board. Richard Bonner reminded members of his Board position at Business West ahead of the Employment & Skills conversation and in relation to the Creative & Culture agenda item, Ruth Jefferson flagged her position as director / trustee of Bath Festivals Limited. No other declarations of interest in relation to today’s agenda.
Items for discussion	
4.	Employment & Skills On behalf of Joanne Rumley, Stephen Bashford introduced the item and gave thanks to both Joanne and Chris Grier for their support which has been fundamental in progressing the Employment & Skills Plan. We have refreshed the West of England Employment & Skills Advisory Panel [ESAP] to help oversee and guide activity which will enable us to implement the Local Skills Improvement Plan [LSIP] and the rollout and continued development of Skills Connect - a key priority for the Metro Mayor.

	<p>Graham Smith, Commissioning Manager introduced himself and gave an overview of the slide pack included in today's papers. The information provided paints a positive picture with a couple of areas of red for us to focus on - Do we have the right interventions to move these to green?</p> <p>The Employment & Skills Plan has been refreshed to bring together everything the regions needs and to help strengthen and simplify the skills system. Looking at foundational economy and high-level skills within engineering and manufacturing - areas identified during the LSIP.</p> <p>Objectives for the new Panel will be to give a strategic overview of what's happening across the region. Panel members will create 'Task and Finish groups' on a 3-month cycle to deep dive and really explore specific areas/gaps. For example, the first task and finish group looked at Green Skills - mapping green skills, pathways and careers and trying to understand where retrofit is.</p> <p>Richard Bonner invited members to give their thoughts on the information shared and the following comments were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The stat around KS 5 progressing at any HE was highlighted. At 34% our region is under the national average - where are the students going/doing? ▪ A request for clarity on the Teacher Training Academy - who is the focus - school based, community or adult education? The team confirmed there will be a deep dive to explore this and is likely to be multipurpose/something for everyone. ▪ Chris Grier would be interested in a deep dive on the West of England's use of apprentice levy vs others. ▪ Is there appetite for the Combined Authority to work with Duke of Edinburgh to create a corporate package? If interested David Brown has contact details for the team to explore. ▪ Are case studies being used to take learnings into other areas or work? There is a need to ensure there is sustained impact not just a 1-year fix. ▪ Is there an opportunity to join our thinking around progression to HE by working with regulators to support learners from all backgrounds? ▪ The potential to look into local interventions to tackle inequalities and help people access employment and skills was raised, followed by a request for a deep dive to look at these pockets of inequalities where there is a lack of engagement, employment, and NEETs and what can be done at a local level to help make a difference. ▪ From observations and interactions with other industrial sectors, Neil Douglas highlighted that everyone is declaring a skills shortage - Most originating from STEAM based subjects. <p>To note: Ruth Jefferson offered her support in the deep dive activities. ACTION: Graham Smith to follow up with John Blake, Director for Fair Access & Participation around HE progression for disadvantaged groups.</p>
5.	<p>Creative & Culture</p> <p>Following thanks from both Richard Bonner and Stephen Bashford for taking an active role, Sue Rigby introduced the item and emphasised how nice it was to report good news. Back in October the Combined Authority secured £1m through Place Partnership funding from the Arts Council - this is the only award in England to a Combined Authority.</p> <p>Sarah James, Cultural and Creative Programme Lead also took the opportunity to highlight that over 150 regional cross sector partners were involved in establishing a series of priorities for the bid and this 2-year programme will focus on four themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support freelancers through a grants programme to develop their creative practice and access skills, training and mentoring to grow their business. ▪ Support young people through 'Cultural Education Hub' - accessing cultural experiences in or outside their school ▪ Establish a central point to bring together employers and training providers to support creatives through their career ▪ Increasing the diversity of our cultural workforce and in particular retaining and nurturing talent through mentoring, business advice etc. <p>Members also learnt that the Combined Authority has been awarded £1.275m from DCMS to support local</p>

	<p>creative businesses to unlock economic growth - Create Growth Programme. This programme consists of three complementary strands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A bespoke business support programme ▪ Access to a £7m finance fund delivered by Innovate UK ▪ Investor outreach activities <p>In additional to the update the following comments were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The creative and culture sector is undervalued, and this is a great start with lots more we can go do. ▪ A requested for clarity on which elements of the programme include North Somerset. ▪ There was interest in understanding how this work will integrate with work already happening at Unitary Authority level and with the cultural work that already exists. The team were pleased to inform that both UAs and cultural organisations have been involved in the development process. ▪ A question was also asked with regards to non-creative businesses and how they could get involved. Whether it be to support or contribute, the Cultural Compact is a good starting point for strategic partnerships, and the team are happy to look into. ▪ Thoughts around the relationship between private sector and businesses in general were made. Are we missing an opportunity in connecting the cultural sector with large businesses by creating a supply chain portal? <p>In summary Richard Bonner reflected on the importance that this work is in our regional strategy and as there is an abundance of work and assets across our UAs, so we need to make sure we're connected into these and start thinking about next steps for the Cultural Compact.</p>
6.	<p>Social Value</p> <p>Social Value is a means to creating additional social economic, and environmental wellbeing above and beyond the 'core' value of the good, service or work and Board members were given a short update on the work so far in creating a social value framework which identifies the Combined Authority's social value priorities. The framework will help to make a more consistent and strategic approach to social value - ensuring that our social efforts and those of our suppliers and partners, are directed at key regional challenges.</p> <p>Three prime levers have been identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Our role as a commissioner, procurer, and investment organisation - how we can generate additional value through our investments. ▪ Our role as a regional anchor institution - the wider value we can create as a regional civic leader. ▪ Our role as an employer - how our recruitment practices and employment approach can create additional value <p>Procurement however remains a prime lever to drive consistent social value outcomes and benefits. The spending power of the region is growing quickly and the potential to our procurement to achieve wider regional objectives has never been stronger.</p> <p>Members were asked for their feedback and the following comments were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Both South Gloucestershire and Bristol City Council confirmed that they use TOMS as a method of measuring social value. ▪ Neil Douglas flagged that this is also referred to as Corporate Social Responsibility. As a business social value is key in securing funding and funders want to see this in your plans. Could the Combine Authority develop a Social Value Charter [similar to the Good Employment Charter]? ▪ Both the creative sector and apprenticeships have been mentioned during today's meeting but aren't mentioned in this paper - important to ensure everything we do is linked. ▪ Members expressed the importance of engaging with the voluntary sector and community groups. <p>In summary members agreed with the initial approach and recognise the challenge, importance in measuring the impact to show a change to the region and ensuring we move away from this being a tick box exercise.</p>
7.	AOB

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Richard Bonner gave a brief update on the Severn Estuary Steering Committee and the upcoming launch of a commission to help understand the landscape and potential economic growth for the region. This will be a 12-month commission to study the history and technologies of the Severn Estuary and create a strong evidence base. ACTION: Neil Douglas and David Brown requested an invited to the launch of the commission ▪ Cllr Bell voiced concerns towards the LEP integration and where it leaves North Somerset. ▪ Jess Lee was pleased to announce the publication of the West of England Digital Plan (westofengland-ca.gov.uk) - Please do share amongst your networks.
Items for information only	
8.	<p>Papers for January Committees Richard Bonner will be attending the Combined Authority Committee and Joint Committee on the 26th January. Business members were asked to provide any feedback to Richard by Wednesday 24 October.</p>