

# **COMMENTS TO THE COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE FROM THE LEP CHAIR ON BEHALF OF THE WEST OF ENGLAND LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP**

**FRIDAY 15 MARCH**

## **COMMITTEE:**

We would also like to thank Mayor Marvin Rees for his service to Bristol and the West of England Region, working with him and his team over 8 years to help to build a thriving economy, and tackle the deep inequalities that exist across our region.

### **Transformation Programme**

- Share the disappointment of others that the Authority has received a Best Value Notice. The West of England is an amazing place with much to shout about – we can't lose sight of that. I'm pleased that point is drawn out in the paper – which highlights a wide range of positive decisions that Committee has made over the past year that will have long-term benefits for the region.
- The LEP Board are committed to playing our part to support and deliver the improvements we all want to see.
- I'm pleased to see the ongoing progress across the Transformation Programme that is set out in the paper. None the less – we have some tough issues left to address, and working out how we deal with our differences, and the responsibilities that we have towards improving the outcomes for the West of England. A wider place first approach.
- LEP Board members were pleased to see the positive tone Committee Members took in their public responses to the Best Value Notice – the commitment to work together is vital to our success. LEP Board members are ready to support the work of the Independent Improvement Panel and political leaders across the region to move forward.

### **Employment and Skills – Strategic working approach and funding request**

- I welcome the proposal to create an Employment and Skills fund of £15.6m. to ensure core services are continued and to establish new support for residents not covered by mainstream education and skills funding.
- The LEP Board, through our colleagues Joanne Rumley and Chris Grier has been involved in development of skills programmes across the region through their work in Co-Chairing the Employment and Skills Advisory Panel and we are committed to continuing to support the Combined Authority where we can to ensure that employers are involved in supporting our young people to access the opportunities available to them.

### **Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan**

- As we can see from the climate and ecological strategy paper, we continue to make really important and in places significant steps towards our Net Zero and Nature Recovery ambitions.
- Great work is happening across the region that is helping businesses decarbonise and to support nature's recovery. One strong example is the work just starting with Innovate UK funding to help decarbonise Bristol port area. From a Nature Recovery perspective, we are going to be the first to go to public consultation on our new Local Nature Recovery Toolkit. This is a really exciting piece of work as it will help everyone in the region, including businesses, know what they can do to help nature's recovery, and in particular channel investment in nature.

- However, we have a long way to go and the pace we are moving at isn't fast enough. The paper highlights work underway to scale up investment across 3 areas – decarbonisation, supporting nature's recovery and helping to build our resilience to the impacts of climate change. This will be presented to Committee in June and critically will set out options for us to act at a different scale and pace.

### **Investment Fund Programme**

- I am pleased to see the Digital Office Proposal in Investment Fund Programme. This scheme will boost delivery of our West of England Digital Plan, making good on the commitments set out in the plan to tackle digital exclusion, boost our economy and make sure that digital transformation has a positive impact for residents and businesses in our region.