



**THAMES VALLEY BERKSHIRE CITY  
DEAL (ELEVATE BERKSHIRE) JOINT  
COMMITTEE**

**22 JANUARY 2016**

**11.05 - 11.40 AM**

**Present:**

Councillor Stuart Munro, Wokingham Borough Council  
Councillor Rob Anderson, Slough Borough Council  
Councillor Phillip Bicknell, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead  
Councillor Marc Brunel-Walker, Bracknell Forest Council

**Co-opted Members:**

Tim Smith, Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership

**Also Present:**

Mark Browne, West Berkshire Council  
Shanzeeda Chowdhury, Slough Borough Council  
Paul Gresty  
Zoe Hanim, Reading Borough Council  
Rhian Hayes, Wokingham Borough Council  
Nigel Horton-Baker, Reading UK CIC  
Emelye Janes, Reading Borough Council  
Anneken Priesack, Bracknell Forest Council  
Grant Thornton, Reading Borough Council

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillor Jo Lovelock, Reading Borough Council  
Katharine Horler, Thames Valley Berkshire LEP

**39. Apologies for Absence and Substitute Members**

The Committee noted that apologies had been received from Councillor Lovelock who had asked Grant Thornton to cover any matters on behalf of Reading Borough Council. Katharine Horler had also tendered her apologies.

**40. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**41. Minutes and Matters Arising from the Last Meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 November 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

42. **Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

43. **European Structural Investment Fund (EUSIF)**

The Committee was reminded that the 'Full' EUSIF application had been submitted to the Department for Work and Pensions on 14 August 2015. Since submission, the DWP had sought and been provided with additional information. At the same time, they had been asked for additional clarity around process/match and a draft funding agreement so as to make the necessary arrangements with regard to compliance and partnership agreements. In late December, the DWP indicated that the proposed outputs and results for the EUSIF element of the wider programme had been revised.:

"Please can you send me your updated outputs and results indicators. As discussed the last version sent to me did not have the 50/50 split for Male and Female and although there was an increase from 1650, it is still lower than would be required overall – given the amount of proposed funding. (Although I am unable at this stage to share with you the final agreed Indicators for Thames Valley Berkshire – we do know that for this Investment priority we anticipate that the total number of participants should be over 3000)"

In response, the DWP had been asked to clarify how they had worked this number out, and the unit cost, bearing in mind the call had indicated the aim was to work with those furthest away from the labour market with multiple barriers to employment

Furthermore, the DWP had again asked for clarification and for some additional information to be provided. The information and granularity required by the DWP and guidance information had not been set out at the beginning of the application process and it was clear that the full application that had been sent in August (supplementary evidence in October) was only now being reviewed.

Paul Gresty reported that verbal agreement had been reached with the DWP that the match was fine including the Adviza framework. Applying this retrospectively from November 2015 had also been agreed. He added that he had been assured that the Thames Valley Berkshire application would be considered by the Board either late this week or early next week. Paul was to meet the person reviewing the application and reminded the Committee that he required the additional information sought by Monday 25 January 2016. This involved a complete breakdown of cost details including the basis of the calculations.

In response to questions, he advised that:

- There remained some doubt about whether the funding would be confirmed although Paul remained optimistic..
- He had sought a timeline for agreement but had yet to receive a response from the DWP.

The importance of seeking written answers to ensure that there was an audit trail was stressed.

There was concern about the protracted process and delays which some viewed as maladministration. The Committee's greatest concern was for the young people who could be missing out if the matter was not settled quickly.

It was suggested that that there was a degree of risk aversion nationally given past problems with EU funding. Whilst there was a suggestion that if the delays continued, consideration should be given to pulling out, the Committee was advised that to do so would be damaging as there would not be the capacity to provide the support needed by young people without the funding.

All agreed that if progress was not made in the coming week, they should seek to put pressure on their own contacts and the new relationship manager to bring the matter to a conclusion.

Paul agreed to notify members of progress during the following week, and brief them on what he needed, if anything, so they could approach their contacts.

***ACTION: Paul Gresty***

#### 44. **General Programme Update**

The Committee considered a report providing an update on progress made by each council individually and as a whole.

The Chairman invited representatives to provide a brief update and the following was noted:

##### **Bracknell Forest:**

- Good progress was being made, having moved to Breakthrough where the new set up was working really well.
- Three more partners had joined and the team had reconnected with the Prince's Trust, improved collaboration with Job Centre plus and was seeking to align the Elevate brand with more services.
- Events would be taking place in March to promote Elevate during careers and apprenticeship week.
- Recruitment fairs were being arranged later in the year for the Lexicon.
- The new vacancy tool had been really successful.
- Bracknell Forest was overachieving on most targets, but work experience remained a problem.

##### **Reading**

- Work experience was a problem in Reading too although there was a suspicion it was happening but not being captured.
- It was hoped to pump prime activity from the EU money.
- A lot of agencies were now working in the Hub.

- A pop-up business event was taking place at the Oracle.
- Recruitment fairs were being arranged.
- Construction opportunities were being sought and offered.
- An insurance broker tool was available from which it was possible to see everything that was available.

### **Slough**

- A Skills Strategy had been produced which was effectively a delivery plan for Elevate and had been endorsed by local partners.
- The budget had been re-profiled.
- Two events had been held in January leading to engagement with 20 people who had been difficult to reach
- An LMI tool on growth sectors was now live on the web site and was being used by schools.
- Work experience was also a problem in Slough but otherwise all work was on target.

### **West Berkshire**

- It was now very much business as usual.
- There was now a very low number of NEETs with 11% more leaving than joining the cohort making it harder to find them.
- Some employers were struggling to find young people to employ.
- Everything was positive but there were significant financial pressures facing the Council as a result of the Local Government Finance Settlement.

### **Wokingham**

- Consolidating the programme had been the priority over the past two months.
- All targets except work experience were being met.
- An Employment Skills Plan was being produced..
- *Something about the car park at the carnival pool?*
- An apprentice had been interviewed on BBC Radio Berkshire thereby providing a publicity boost for Elevate.

Paul Gresty provided a brief summary of corporate activity, advising that:

- The team was trying to knit all activity together under the Elevate brand.
- A bid for DfE funding had been successful.

- Work was continuing with the LEP and the Business Growth Hub.
- The aim was to make Elevate the one organization with which businesses engaged.
- In terms of long term sustainability, the shape of local delivery models and working together was under review..
- Existing structures were being re-engineered using elevate as the catalyst.

Nigel Horton-Baker added that the NEETs were largely taking care of themselves. However, those 18-25 year-olds not statutorily tracked were a problem and therefore there was a need to do some outreach work. It was estimated that there were three to four times the number of those not being tracked compared to those who were registered. Therefore, NEET data did not really paint the true picture of need. It was added that another issue that needed consideration was under-employment. There was a need to do work to tempt them to upskill. More work would be done in schools in due course.

Tim Smith added that The LEP had agreed that the contract for the existing Business Growth Hub operator, VitalSix Ltd, should be extended from 1 April 2016 for a maximum of 12 months with break clauses at 3, 6 & 9 months. An intermediate delivery plan must include reference to engagement with ConnectTVT, the Elevate Me Programme and the to-be-appointed Careers & Enterprise Co-ordinator. The LEP was highly likely to be awarded £600,000 to fund a Business Growth Hub in 2016/17 and 2017/18; when combined with the RDA Legacy Funds this took the available funding to in excess of £800,000, which if used as match for ESIF presented a real opportunity for the longevity and functionality of the Hub service. A meeting was scheduled with other GTV LEPs to explore collaboration across geographies on any residual assets of the defunct national Business Growth Service. It had also agreed that, during this quarter, an in-depth review of the Business Growth Hub function would be necessary to inform the procurement of an operator for the medium term.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their updates and encouraged them to maintain the progress despite the ongoing delay in approval of the EUSIF funding application.

**CHAIRMAN**