



**THAMES VALLEY BERKSHIRE CITY
DEAL (ELEVATE BERKSHIRE) JOINT
COMMITTEE
10 NOVEMBER 2015
10.30 - 11.25 AM**

Present:

Councillor Stuart Munro, Wokingham Borough Council
Councillor Marc Brunel-Walker, Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Sohail Munawar, Slough Borough Council
Councillor Tony Page, Reading Borough Council

Co-opted Members:

Katharine Horler, Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
Tim Smith, Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership

Also Present:

Paul Gresty, Reading Borough Council
Shanzeeda Chowdhury, Slough Borough Council
Mark Browne, West Berkshire Council
Laura Davis, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead
Rhian Hayes, Wokingham Borough Council
Harjit Hunjan, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead
Emelye Janes, Reading Borough Council
Robert Jolley, Bracknell Forest Council
Peter Kennedy, Department of Work & Pensions
Anneken Priesack, Bracknell Forest Council

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Alan Law, West Berkshire Council
Councillor Rob Anderson, Slough Borough Council
Councillor Phillip Bicknell, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead
Councillor Jo Lovelock, Reading Borough Council

35. Apologies for Absence and Substitute Members

The Committee noted that apologies had been received from Councillors Bicknell, Law and Lovelock.

Councillor Page was substituting for Councillor Lovelock.

36. **Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

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

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 July 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

The Committee considered a report on progress with the EUSIF application as well as practical considerations around the operational delivery of the EUSIF element of the wider Elevate Berkshire programme. It also summarised compliance considerations and work undertaken to date to mitigate risks around non-compliance with EU regulations

The Committee noted that since submission of the EUSIF application, the Department of Work and Pensions had asked for further information. The Committee was advised that feedback had now been received from the DWP which had sought further information. Responses to their questions were being prepared.

As the project was already up and running, the intention was to carry on with a start date of 1 November from which it was intended to be claiming the match retrospectively. It would therefore be necessary to ensure compliance with EU requirements from that date. In effect, an EU programme was running but without any formal agreement in place. The lack of a funding agreement was causing an issue as it was not possible to firm up agreements with partners. Whilst it had been a coup to get the Prince's Trust to commit to partnering, they like the other partners were in limbo. As an added concern, the response from the DWP seeking confirmation that the match could be claimed back to 1 November 2015 once the agreement had been completed had been ambiguous. It had also become apparent that the operational programme had been revised but without any notification. The new results and indicators were different to what had originally been expected requiring some further work.

Tim Smith added that the LEP Executive Board had had representatives from the ESIF Managing Authority and Cities & Local Growth Unit at its meeting to discuss its refreshed strategy. Elevate was one of its key projects. The deadline for a refreshed strategy had moved twice. Currency exchange rates had had an impact reducing potential funding from £25m to £20m. As such, the LEP wanted to see a point at which the uncertainty stopped and everyone knew exactly where they were. The Science Park project was similarly in limbo.

Peter Kennedy of the DWP advised that the uncertainties were simply the nature of European funding. There would always be a need to ensure that actual claimed costs were real. He added that decisions on national funding allocations should be made by 17 November 2015 but the Berkshire allocation would follow sometime after that, probably within a month or so. All of the LEPs in England were in the same position. Whether there would be enough for everyone was in doubt. It had however been confirmed that spend on the youth contract was eligible as part of the match funding.

There was concern about the present position and it was suggested that if everyone had known that the issues would still be outstanding at this point, some might not have signed up. There remained disappointment that no-one could say if or when the funding would be confirmed, but the six authorities were still trying to deliver a vital service for young people.

Whilst it had been hoped that this meeting would confirm the successful implementation of the EUSIF funded programme, this was not the case and the Committee agreed to meet again on Tuesday 10 December 2015 at 10.30am to review the latest position or, depending upon the situation, discuss the way forward via a conference call.

In order to expedite the process, it was agreed that all should aim to provide Paul Gresty with the information he required to respond to the DWP by 20 November 2015.

Having noted that positive progress was being made in the course of the discussion, the Chairman invited each authority's representative to provide an update for Members. The following points were made:

Bracknell

- The Hub was to move from the Open Learning Centre to Breakthrough.
- Analytics were developing well, enabling the officers to see if young people were accessing the site.
- Social media had been launched with 56 likes and a Twitter feed.
- Part of the aim of the project was to get council services to work better together.
- Mace, who were developing Bracknell town centre, was to employ a minimum of 10 apprentices and offer work experience opportunities.
- A social care employer was keen to visit to schools to brief them on opportunities.
- The team was working with schools and would attend assemblies to advise them of what it offered.
- Partnership working had been key with more than ten working out of the hub,

Reading

- Good progress was being made.
- A partners event had been held at the Reading hub; this had been the first shared learning event.
- The aim was to work with co-located partners to create a person-centred approach to help.

- Employment and skills plans had been developed.
- Efforts were being made to knit together services to create a more holistic approach.
- Elevate's business pages had been launched.

Slough

- An employer-led approach working with large employers had been adopted.
- Outcomes-focused events for young people in softer skills were being arranged.
- The team was working closely with the LEP to use the local labour market information.
- Headteachers and Adviza were working together.
- A sector profile tool was to be provided on the web site showing vacancy levels to help young people make real career choices.
- More efforts were being made to provide work experience opportunities.
- Two weeks' work experience was being offered to Job Centre Plus clients, with some then moving into work afterwards.
- More pathways were being created for young people including some hard to reach NEETs – 50% had ended up in jobs.
- A project to prioritise lone parents had met the Cabinet Office's target within six months.
- Although Slough was not part of the EUSIF funding bid, it had developed an ambitious plan to work with lone parents and NEETs.

West Berkshire

- The number of NEETs was low.
- The team had adopted different approaches to suit the individual.
- There had been some successful projects with young parents.
- Partners were working closely with the DWP to offer job clubs and the like.
- Links were being developed to adult skills and community learning budgets to see how they could be better targeted at employability courses.
- Health issues were being taken into account particularly to address deeper anxiety issues which were hindering some young people.

Wokingham

- There were very few NEETs,
- The team had recently celebrated the first year of the hub.
- Elevate had run the careers fair for the borough's secondary schools.
- 500 people had attended the evening session at the careers fair.
- The Facebook page had had 524 hits after the careers fair.
- Employment skills plans were being developed.
- Work was underway on shared apprenticeships and working with SMEs.
- The Council was providing 7 apprenticeships and 58 work experience opportunities.
- Lots of work experience opportunities were being developed in Wokingham town centre.
- Elevate had been a very key story during the recent OFSTED inspection.

Windsor

- Targeted work was continuing on a particular cohort, including youth offenders, care leavers and those with disabilities
- Footfall had increased at the hub, but had dipped again so more work was being done in the community.
- Work was being undertaken with SMEs.
- Work was underway to increase the size of the highway maintenance workforce.
- The co-location of partners was working well.
- It was still a struggle to provide work experience, particularly for young people with disabilities who could not always do five consecutive days, therefore a more person-centred approach had been adopted to enable them to do their five days over a longer period more suited to their disability.
- More work was being done to get young people into work-related courses.

Elevate as a whole:

- The Princes Trust and other partners were working pan-authority.
- All hubs were using labour market intelligence.

- A joint bid had been made for DfE funding to support skills and employment.
- The Elevate brand was beginning to take off.
- Partners were now part of the elevate family rather than providers.
- The project had become much more partner orientated.
- All were working really well in hubs co-located with partners.
- Work was being undertaken with gingerbread to help lone parents.
- All were working creatively pan-Berkshire to help the clients.

CHAIRMAN