



**THAMES VALLEY BERKSHIRE CITY  
DEAL (ELEVATE BERKSHIRE) JOINT  
COMMITTEE  
24 JANUARY 2017  
9.50 - 10.45 AM**

**Present:**

Councillor Marc Brunel-Walker, Bracknell Forest Council  
Councillor Roger Croft, West Berkshire Council  
Councillor Jo Lovelock, Reading Borough Council  
Councillor Sohail Munawar, Slough Borough Council  
Councillor Stuart Munro, Wokingham Borough Council

**Co-opted Members:**

Tim Smith, Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership

**Also Present:**

Paul Gresty, Elevate Berkshire (City Deal Berkshire) Programme Manager  
Mark Browne, West Berkshire Council  
Laura Davis, Ways Into Work  
Hilary Hall, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead  
Rhian Hayes, Wokingham Borough Council  
Nigel Horton-Baker, Reading UK CIC  
Emelye Janes, Elevate Central Team  
Amy Lenderyou, Prince's Trust  
Rebekah Malcolm, Elevate Central Team  
Kashif Nawaz, Bracknell Forest Council  
Louise Sarginson, Elevate Central Team- Compliance Manager  
Grant Thornton, Reading Borough Council  
Philip Wright, Slough Borough Council

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillor Jack Rankin, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead  
Katharine Horler, Thames Valley Berkshire LEP

**10. Election of Chairman**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Stuart Munro be elected Chairman of the Joint Committee.

**11. Appointment of Vice-Chairman**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Marc Brunel-Walker be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Joint Committee.

12. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

13. **Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

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

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the last formal meeting held on 22 January 2016 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

In addition, the Committee received the notes of the inquorate meeting held on 22 July 2016.

15. **Elevate Project ESF Update**

The Joint Committee received an update on the pan-Berkshire Elevate programme (Year 1 November 2015 to October 2016) by way of a presentation from Paul Gresty which along with the report also provided information on recent conversations with the managing authority, the Department for Work and Pensions, around current underperformance; and put forward a number of recommendations to members to mitigate the risk of claw-back during years 2 and 3.

The Joint Committee noted that, during the first year, the programme had continued to deliver the necessary systems change around the way the skills and employment agenda was being delivered operationally. Across the local projects and collective programme, 'real' supported employment was the model of support that had added most value and delivered the best results for the hardest to reach young people. Activity funded and managed centrally, such as that by the Prince's Trust and Ways into Work, had also highlighted the value in providers working 'pan-Berkshire'. However, the programme had fallen foul of a lack of guidance at its inception in November 2015 which had meant that partners had not been collecting evidence of engagement of those helped between then and May 2016 when the guidance had finally been released. Whilst some retrospective gathering of the evidence including birth certificates and passports had been possible, this was not going to be possible in all cases. Only the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead had evidence to confirm that it had met its target due to the tighter processes it had implemented from the outset. Others were now being required to follow a consistent approach to ensure all numbers were covered. Based on known figures, the year one targets had almost certainly been met but without the subsequently required evidence. Discussions were therefore taking place with the DWP about accepting the fact that the partners had acted in good faith and engaged with the required number of young people in the period in question without any guidance, with a view to allowing some flexibility in counting these participants.

The Joint Committee's attention was drawn to the following key successes:

- System change and centralised Elevate system - Elevate had been the catalyst for conversations around the operational delivery of skills and employment activity and instrumental in culture change.
- Co-location of key partners - partners were now working together for mutual benefit and the partnership was growing as providers began to realise the

value of being associated with something that had the capacity to draw down money.

- BASE project – the pan-Berkshire project focusing on employment for young people with disabilities.
- Elevate Brand – the Elevate brand was growing locally with visits by senior Civil Service leads and the Head of the ESF.
- Referral/Caseworker Model - Elevate had implemented a new person-centred pathway; whereby services delivered by the partners were wrapped around the individual via the holistic Elevate service.
- Central project management system and ESF workshops - the central team had been working with partners to operationalise compliance considerations.
- Partnership Working - Elevate continued to build a culture of collaboration amongst partners who were seeing the added value of working together)
- Project sustainability and aspiration to deliver an ageless Elevate Berkshire model using Elevate as the vehicle.

The Joint Committee was reminded that the programme had been set a collective output of engaging with 3,380 young people and a collective result of 43% on the overarching outcome target. Each partner had been assigned output and result targets, that collectively met the collective programme targets. The collective targets had been indicatively profiled over 3 years. The project was currently 'underperforming' against the indicative profile of collective outputs and results despite a great deal of work being undertaken to ensure projects were bringing in eligible young people and delivering a 43% result. The DWP had been asked how the targets had been determined as it was not clear on what basis the numbers had been arrived at. It was evident that the target was challenging, particularly as unemployment figures were at an all time low. Employers were struggling to fill vacancies with the likelihood that the situation would worsen as major new employment opportunities such as the Lexicon Bracknell came on stream. It had become increasingly evident that the partners were seeking to engage with hard to reach young people and those who were NEET were not necessarily in a position to move into work. Paul indicated that all NEETs and 19-24 year-olds signed up with Job Centre Plus should be signed up with Elevate.

The Joint Committee noted that the DWP was concerned about the under-performance and had so far refused to agree a revised set of outputs and results. It had insisted that the programme had to deliver the outputs and results and that money could be 'clawed-back' if it did not meet the collective targets. It had, however, held off actioning the under-performance methodology until the fourth claim had been made on 4 February 2016, which it was hoped would lead to some catch-up against the targets. Normally, action would have been initiated after two consecutive claims missing the outputs.

Concerns were expressed about the position that the programme was now in due to the moving of goalposts and seemingly arbitrary targets. With uncertainty over the success of the discussions with the DWP, it was suggested that representations could be made at the forthcoming meeting of the ESIF Sub-Committee in March 2017.

The Joint Committee also noted that the collective programme would be subject to an Article 125 audit by the DWP contract managers. The central team would be continuing to provide support to ensure compliance in terms of delivery; and operationalisation of ESF requirements.

To mitigate the risk of 'claw-back' and non-compliance, the Committee was invited to consider the following:

- Local projects should look at 'what worked' in year 1 and re-focus resource in year 2 and 3 to 'direct' delivery to ensure targets were met with money linked to 'system change' re-directed to pay providers to deliver outcomes.
- Centrally, it was proposed to allocate £70k of ESF money and match held centrally to commission providers selected by the central Elevate team, on a payment by results basis to deliver activity in Slough, and to a lesser degree Reading. In addition, it was proposed to match ESF money held centrally against the original Cabinet Office money still held by Slough which would enable the collective programme to count activity in Slough. The greater number of eligible participants were known to be in Slough and Reading. Focusing money on Slough would help the collective programme deliver its targets and mitigate the risk of claw-back.

Slough was happy to participate but stressed that a separate provider would be needed as the Council was not in a position to do the work itself. This would build on the Borough Council's own Elevate work and build the sustainability of the work. It was noted that working with businesses as much as the young people in Slough was seen as an important step towards creating the opportunities for the young people.

The Joint Committee endorsed both proposals, and also agreed that £92,000 allocated to Labour Market Intelligence should remain as such rather than being re-directed to 'direct' delivery as the Labour Market Intelligence was regarded as a vital contribution to the partners' initiatives.

The DWP had also confirmed that the programme could realise its targets over a longer period of time but the Joint Committee believed that no decision should be taken on this until the results of the actions being taken became clearer.

Paul added that each partner needed to health check their project evidence with the support of the central team. They also needed to have operationalised the ESF requirements. In addition, each partner needed to provide an up-to-date financial profile and project plan for the next six months at least, clarifying the actions being taken to increase participants.

Paul stressed that failure to provide the necessary evidence could result in the central team opting not to process claims or allocate further funding if it was not satisfied with a partner's results. He indicated that the greater the amount of money drawn down without improved outputs increased the risk of programme failure as a whole. Not submitting an unsatisfactory claim would therefore help protect the interests of the others and the scheme as a whole.

Having noted the issues and welcomed the update on action being taken by Paul, the Joint Committee

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1 The immediate risk posed to ESF funding be noted and the proposal to re-focus resource to direct delivery be endorsed as re-focusing resource as outlined during the meeting would mitigate the risk of not delivering programme targets.
- 2 The impending Article 125 audit be noted with a view to ensuring local projects mitigate risks around non-compliance with ESF regulations.
- 3 £92,000 allocated to Labour Market Intelligence should remain as such rather than being re-directed to 'direct' delivery.

**CHAIRMAN**