



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

23 JANUARY 2015

10.30 AM - 12.05 PM

Present:

Councillor Stuart Munro, Wokingham Borough Council
Councillor Alan Law, West Berkshire Council
Councillor Rob Anderson, Slough Borough Council
Councillor Marc Brunel-Walker, Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Richard Kellaway, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead

Co-opted Members:

Tim Smith, Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership
Steve Lamb, Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership

Also Present:

Shanzeeda Chowdhury, Slough Borough Council
Laura Davis, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead
Paul Gresty, Reading Borough Council
Emelye Janes, Reading Borough Council
Rohit Paul, 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

16. Apologies for Absence and Substitute Members

The Committee noted that apologies had been received from Councillor Lovelock who had asked Graham Thornton to cover any matters on behalf of Reading Borough Council. Councillor Law reported that Ann ???? had also tendered her apologies.

17. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

18. Minutes and Matters Arising from the Last Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 July 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19. **Elevate Project Update**

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the Thames Valley Berkshire Elevate programme covering the period July 14 to January 15.

Paul Gresty highlighted a number of points arising from the report. These included:

- The fact that the European Social Investment Fund monies were finally to be signed off by the end of February 2015.
- Elevate would need to construct a bid to the EUSIF Area Committee for funding.
- The Committee's attention was drawn to the distinction between the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP and the EUSIF Area Committee in terms of the decision making in respect of this funding even though there was some commonality of membership.
- Job Centre Plus had now recognised the value of Elevate.
- The Prince's Trust was now keen to get involved.
- Elevate was seeking to provide a means of more effective engagement with businesses.

In response to questions, the Committee was advised that:

- The Behavioural Insights Team were former civil servants.
- The Elevate web site was aimed at young people and therefore might not be as easy to use if an older person used it.
- There had been a disconnect between Elevate and ElevateMe but efforts had been made to bring them together.

The Committee noted the report.

20. **Spoke and Hub Project Update**

The Committee received a report updating it on spoke and hub activity in each borough across Berkshire.

A representative of each of the local spokes provided an update on the work of theirs to support the details presented in the report. Amongst the main points made were that:

- So far 40 young people had been signed up in Bracknell Forest where a new hub location was being sought to build on the good progress made; opportunities to engage more partners and some co-location was under consideration.
- Reading's Hub would be based on the third floor of Reading Library with a number of partners supporting the activities represented there.
- In Slough, the opportunity had been taken to join up and streamline all the related teams within the Council.

- In West Berkshire a brokerage service to work between young people and employers had been established.
- Two hubs had been established in Windsor & Maidenhead at which the borough's colleges and a number of other partners were working whilst the potential was also being explored to deliver services within schools.
- In Wokingham, the hub had been established at Wokingham Library where partners included Job Centre Plus which was not otherwise available in the borough; footfall was up including older people.

During the ensuing discussion, it was suggested that, as a county, there should be a better way of approaching construction apprenticeships. One option suggested which had been operating successfully elsewhere, would be to create a company to manage apprenticeships on behalf of the construction firms as this addressed the difficulties posed by most projects being developed by way of a main company and series of sub-contractors to deliver specific aspects of the work. Unless this was addressed, all six authorities were fighting for the same pot in an uncoordinated way. In response to this, the Committee was advised that the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP was aware of the problem and was aiming to direct some of its apprenticeships funding to such an approach. In addition, the Committee was told that Elevate would do more work to help the six work better together on commissioning, an area where there were already successful schemes being pursued to encourage the employment of young people for work being commissioned by the councils. Data tracking work would also enable the whole of Berkshire to pick up young people wanting construction work regardless of which borough they came from.

The Committee also received a briefing on the Business Growth Hub. It was stressed that its role was about business support rather than employer engagement. It would be seeking to ensure business got the support it wanted or needed. 150 businesses had so far been engaged. The Committee was reminded that the LEP had had to apply for the support funding from the Regional Growth Fund and was therefore undertaking a review and evaluation of the hub to meet the requirements that went with the funding. In the future, the use of the LEP's own funding would allow more freedom. The thrust would then be to simplify everything rather than adding another confusing element. The fact that national partners were currently around the table in the steering group added to confusion and therefore this needed further work once the shackles of regional growth funding were removed.

The Committee also noted that Elevate was aiming to link business intelligence back to schools to ensure they knew what was required in terms of skills and work etiquette. Elevate would be taking an overview of youth employment in Berkshire. Whilst NEETs were reducing, there were still 6000 young people looking for work or unemployed around Berkshire. The figures for claimants of Job Seekers' Allowance were also significantly down and closer to the level pre-recession.

Elevate was also aiming to support the cohorts of young people most in need. Lone parents and hard to reach groups of young people were important. Around 4000 young people were described as "not on the radar". Therefore, creative ways were being sought to support them into employment. The Cabinet Office was particularly keen to learn of experience in relation to hard to reach groups. They wanted to know what barriers were being identified to see whether they may be able to assist find a way to break down those barriers.

Some concern was expressed about the extent to which the original scope of the project was being widened. This was to be discussed with the Cabinet Office at a forthcoming meeting. They were quite comfortable to see changes made to the original proposal which took it further. A note would be sent to members of the committee on the outcome of the meeting. Some were concerned that any deviation from the original plan might lead to a failure to achieve the original aims but the Committee was told the progress to date effectively meant that most of what had been planned had already been achieved and therefore there was a willingness to move forward. It was stressed that negotiating the City Deal had been a tortuous process. There was no actual contract or mechanism to claw back money. So it was largely up to the councils to do as they wanted, within reason to maintain credibility with the Cabinet Office. The continuing work would look at local solutions to help young people into employment as it was recognised that one solution did not fit all.

Rohit Paul made a presentation to the Committee on the development of the Elevate Me Berkshire web site. The main points he made were that:

- The aim was to emphasise that the service was pan-Berkshire.
- The web site provided information and guidance.
- The site used an imaginative approach similar to that used in a popular computer game to take a young person through the topics they needed to address to find a job,
- There was further work being undertaken to make the web site more interactive,
- Feedback had generally been quite positive,
- Each web site had been localised.
- All websites except Slough's were live.

In response to suggestions that it was inaccessible to older people, it was accepted that there was work to do to get them to use it. The web site would have access to all Berkshire apprenticeships. There was still more work needed to get schools and providers to see the web site as a tool to support them. Feedback from providers had been positive.

The Committee noted the reports.

21. **Performance Monitoring**

The Committee received an update on local and collective outputs achieved to date.

Emelye James briefly highlighted a number of the key outputs so far, stressing that the majority of spokes were overachieving, and were on course to achieve all targets. She added that overall they were not doing so well in relation to work experience, as the cumulative figures were being propped up by significant over-performance in West Berkshire. Without them, less than 30% of the target would have been achieved. Wokingham was already seeking to address this by asking all managers to offer one week's work experience. This was a simple way that others might boost figures in their area.

Some questions were asked about the reliability of the figures. It was noted that there were some issues with the way in which providers were operating and what they were submitting but the common reporting framework should improve the integrity of the data in future.

In answer to a question regarding the sharing of best practice, the Committee was advised that the Elevate Steering Group received reports on best practice.

22. **Sign-off of Key Project Documentation**

The Committee considered a report inviting it to sign-off the:

- 3 Year Elevate Implementation and Performance Plan
- Implementation and Performance template
- Elevate Communications and Branding Plan

The Committee was advised that there was now a consistent marketing plan. The implementation and Performance Plan was to be refined with the changes brought back to the Committee at a subsequent meeting. The Plan covered what was in the bid plus what had changed in the landscape since.

The Committee was advised that Elevate involved cultural change after years of doing things one way. It was now recognised that there was a better way forward. Bringing services together had been a huge benefit.

There was some discussion around the use of social media. It was suggested that there was a need not to underestimate how much young people wanted to be communicated with electronically. In the circumstances, it was suggested adverts should be put on Facebook as they could generate a huge response. The Committee was, however, cautioned about the time it took to moderate such sites. Text messages had increased footfall at one of the hubs.

In concluding the discussion it was suggested that what young people actually wanted was important and they should be asked rather than assumptions made. Similarly, young people should be encouraged rather than told to use Elevate.

It was agreed that there would be a need to put money behind the marketing.

Having noted these points, the Committee endorsed the Plans.

23. **Employment Skills Plans and Procurement**

The Committee received a report from Rhian Hayes on the work undertaken by Wokingham Borough Council.

The main points made were that:

- Developers were required to commit to a certain number of apprenticeships and opportunities for young people but this needed to extend to sub-contractors.
- There was huge growth coming in Wokingham.
- Plans were negotiated at the time of the planning permission.

- The requirement to offer apprenticeships and opportunities for young people was included amongst the criteria for scoring tenders.
- The level of requirement was based on size of the project having regard to Construction Industry Trading Board figures.
- Developers were very keen to get involved but there was a lot of work to do to ensure it was embedded in policies.
- It was very resource intensive as a great deal of monitoring was required but useful for building contacts.

The Committee also noted that Wokingham was working closely with Reading and the LEP.

24. **Members Involvement in Elevate**

The Committee briefly discussed how members might act as critical friends within their own authorities.

The Committee agreed that there was a need to look at what other steps they could take to move the project forward. It was stressed that ideally there should be a consistent approach across the county.

CHAIRMAN