



**THAMES VALLEY BERKSHIRE CITY  
DEAL (ELEVATE BERKSHIRE) JOINT  
COMMITTEE  
17 JULY 2015  
11.30 AM - 12.30 PM**

**Present:**

Councillor Stuart Munro, Wokingham Borough Council  
Councillor Alan Law, West Berkshire Council  
Councillor Phillip Bicknell, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead  
Councillor Marc Brunel-Walker, Bracknell Forest Council  
Councillor Sohail Munawar, Slough Borough Council  
Councillor Tony Page, Reading Borough Council

**Co-opted Members:**

Tim Smith, Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership

**Also Present:**

Sue Brackley, Reading Borough Council  
Mark Browne, West Berkshire Council  
Shanzeeda Chowdhury, Slough Borough Council  
Rhian Hayes, Wokingham Borough Council  
Joanne Horton, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead  
Emelye Janes, Reading Borough Council  
Rohit Paul, Reading Borough Council  
Anneken Priesack, Bracknell Forest Council  
Grant Thornton, Reading Borough Council  
Philip Wright, Slough Borough Council

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillor Rob Anderson, Slough Borough Council  
Councillor Jo Lovelock, Reading Borough Council

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

The Committee noted that apologies had been received from Councillors Anderson and Lovelock.

In addition Councillor Bicknell had replaced Councillor Kellaway as the representative of the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead. Katharine Horler was to replace Steve Lamb as one of the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP's representatives.

26. **Election of Chairman**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Munro be re-elected Chairman of the Joint Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

27. **Appointment of Vice-Chairman**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Bicknell be elected Vice-Chairman of the Joint Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

28. **Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 January 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

29. **Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business but a revised set of recommendations relating to agenda item 8 (Minute 32) were circulated.

30. **Elevate Programme Update (Pan-Berkshire)**

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the Thames Valley Berkshire Elevate programme covering the period July 2014 to March 2015.

Emelye Janes and Rohit Paul highlighted the key outputs for the first year as detailed in the report. Amongst the points made were that the first year had seen improvements in the infrastructure which was continuing to be developed. Four employment hubs had been set up in the boroughs where there was no existing natural location to bring the partners together to deliver Elevate's aims.

The Joint Committee's attention was drawn to an example of the work undertaken in connection with lone parents. It was stressed that, whilst they were in many cases outside the 16-24 target group, helping lone parents to get back into work regardless of their age had been one of the original City Deal objectives. Very positive feedback had been received from those involved.

The Joint Committee also noted the work being undertaken to reach hard to find groups and NEETs.

With regard to data, the Joint Committee was advised that the figures for the first quarter of 2015/16 were not yet complete. However, the Joint Committee was assured that data collection had become more robust and this would be crucial for producing future EU information.

The Committee noted the report.

31. **Elevate Project Update (Local Spokes)**

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. All indicated good progress with the main points being:

### **Bracknell Forest**

- The Bracknell Hub had moved to the Open Learning Centre following the closure of Charles Square for redevelopment.
- The borough had hit all Cabinet Office targets except that relating to work experience.
- 135 young people had signed up to Elevate in Bracknell Forest.
- Web site uptake was increasing but there was a need to do more work to identify how many visitors were actually young people.
- Partners had not been keen on business brokerage so the focus had turned to sector-based work instead.

### **Reading**

- The Reading Hub had opened in April 2015 and was a very lively and attractive place to visit. A number of partners were based there and employers were booked in to run sessions.
- More outreach was to be undertaken
- It had been decided to take a sector-based approach to brokerage so that work was targeted where there was a need.
- The Council was keen to get more people into work experience.
- The need to do more work with ethnic minorities, NEETs and over 50s had been recognised.

### **Slough**

- A virtual hub had been launched in February 2015 as there was already a lot of infrastructure to support young people and Slough therefore did not need a new building and could allocate the resource in other ways where it was needed
- Job Centre Plus already provided in Slough what they were looking to provide so the Council had focussed the extra resources on filling the gaps rather than duplicating what was already there. This approach was likely to help embed the programme for the future when funding ceased..
- The virtual approach was bringing bits of the Council, Job Centre Plus and other partners together rather than working in silos, leading to much better co-ordination of the services being offered to young people.
- The web site was a key tool to being used.
- Attention had turned to work experience and traineeships.

- Work experience was, like elsewhere, proving to be hard but the Council had started a programme itself which included employability training.
- The long term unemployed were signing up to trainee ships.
- Slough was also looking at sector-based work aimed at upskilling in areas such as the construction industry and IT where needs were changing. This was working due to the type of companies in the borough.
- Lone parent work with Gingerbread was also going well including confidence building and upskilling.
- In the coming year it was intended to focus on work experience and getting more employers to offer trainee ships

### **West Berkshire**

- West Berkshire had also established a virtual hub due to the size of the borough.
- The main aim was to get providers to work together and add value.
- The Council had established a logistics training centre and a mentoring programme for 18 months, and were also supporting employers to work with young people.
- Work was also taking place with a hostel and children's centres to help people move into employment.
- Given the size of the borough, opportunities to increase outreach work was being explored such as pop up employment shops. A construction bus had also been introduced to take training around the borough and more use was being made of children's centres to engage with young people.
- Apprenticeship take up was the highest in the South East helped by two key local employers.
- Careers advice and guidance in schools also seemed to be just what was required.

### **Wokingham**

- A new hub had been required as there was nowhere else available.
- A first anniversary celebration was planned in September 2015.
- 800 had attended, 400 in the target group.
- All targets had been met.
- A work experience programme had been set up to help people into employment.

- The Council was itself providing apprenticeships and employment opportunities.
- Construction was amongst the areas targeted so far.
- Engagement with businesses was increasing and a partnership with the hair stylists, Zappers, had led to the retention of a training facility which would otherwise have closed..
- A vacancy service had been set up in the hub.

### **Windsor and Maidenhead**

- A full time hub had been established in Maidenhead town centre and a 2 day per week facility was operating at the East Berkshire College.
- The aim was to use the hub to maximise capacity, co-locating services in it thereby creating a seamless journey for young people.
- All targets had been met except work experience.
- A lot of work was under way to develop opportunities with local employers which seemed to be paying off as leading employers were starting to offer work experience.
- The Council had also looked at employability skills and offering a job club to help people into work
- It was intended to build on supported employment work including people with disabilities.
- There was a need to focus on young Asian women with disabilities which also meant addressing cultural barriers.
- Work was also taking place in schools to address concerns about working with the young people before they became NEETs.

In the course of the presentations, it was suggested that it would be interesting to see how the target market reacted to physical or virtual models, whilst recognising the valid reasons for choosing a virtual hubs in Slough and West Berkshire.

The Committee noted the reports.

### **32. European Social Investment Fund**

The Joint Committee discussed the arrangements for pursuing the original commitment to seek additional monies via the European Social Investment fund (EUSIF). The Joint Committee was advised that the partners could now proceed to a formal bid for funding. The report asked the six Berkshire authorities to note and formally endorse the content of the Thames Valley Berkshire City Deal (known as Elevate) European Social Investment Fund Programme – and operational delivery structure.

Some frustration was expressed about the seemingly endless delays in gaining access to the EUSIF monies which even now were not guaranteed as they were

subject to a bidding process. It was stressed that there were always risks associated with bidding for EU funding both before and after a successful bid as the auditing of claims was stringent, requiring detailed record keeping to evidence how the funding had been spent and matched. Tim Smith reminded the Joint Committee that a further bid for £8.1m to support the science park had also been made. Whilst the delays which had effectively put the project back by 18 months were unfortunate, he believed there was nothing more anyone could have done.

Since the original decision to bid for the funding, Slough Borough Council had indicated that it was no longer able to identify the level of match funding required, particularly with uncertainty about budgets next year and beyond. In the circumstances, it had not based its project around receiving the EUSIF money, but instead had developed a sustainable offer using only the Cabinet Office funding with the aim that its activities would be mainstreamed by partners when this funding ended. It would not be creating a physical hub with the costs that implied. As it was not reliant on the EU money, and could not identify the match funding, it believed the inherent risks around any EU funding including audit and claw back were too high and had reluctantly come to the conclusion that it could not accept that risk. Therefore, to enable the bid to go ahead and so benefit all while protecting their own position, Slough would remain a partner to the bid to securing the funding but their allocation, £378k, would go into a central pot to be used for pan-Berkshire commissioned services.

In response to a question, the Joint Committee was advised that Slough's share of the match-funding liability would be met centrally. All authorities accepted this as the basis for agreeing to proceed as they indicated that they could not accept any increase in their original match-funding liability.

**RESOLVED** that as part of the implementation of the governance arrangements in the City deal agreement, the Joint Committee on behalf of the six Berkshire Unitary Authorities under Section 101(5) and 102(1) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972 take decisions on behalf of the six Berkshire Unitary Authorities in respect of managing and delivering the outcomes of the City Deal EUSIF programme as agreed through the LEP Forum, and in this regard:

- i) Reading Borough Council be recognised as the Accountable Body for the purposes of the City Deal EUSIF initiative, and will provide financial and legal advice to both the LEP Executive Board and the Joint Committee in relation to the City Deal EUSIF programme;
- ii) Bracknell Forest Borough Council be appointed to the role of Secretariat to the Joint Committee on behalf of the six unitary authorities;
- iii) The Joint Committee endorse and formally accept the Elevate Berkshire EUSIF programme (appendix1 of the report) and by committing to the proposal also commits to all aspects of the EUSIF process, including compliance and risk around claw back of funding
- iv) The Joint Committee formally accept the agreed EUSIF programme delivery structure and agreed match for their respective authorities (appendix2 of the report) and by committing to the structure, also commit to have shared responsibility for the EUSIF programme
- v) The Joint Committee formally acknowledge the EUSIF briefing document and next steps and commitments needed from each authority around accepting shared responsibility for the EUSIF Programme; as well as 'notionally' agreed

amounts to be received, based on successful retrospective claims, per Authority (appendix 3 of the report); these notional amounts to be agreed via the City Deal Steering Group for final submission of the bid including amounts to be held centrally for commissioning pan-Berkshire services.

- vi) All of Slough Borough Council's allocation be held centrally for commissioning pan-Berkshire services.
- vii) The Joint Committee note the current Risk Assessment (appendix 4 of the report)
- viii) Reading Borough Council be the accountable body, to be delegated authority to implement any transfer of funds to the local authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnership for the EUSIF programme subject to the Council being satisfied that the projects concerned are fully developed and ready to be implemented as part of the collective EUSIF bid

**33. Elevate Programme Year 2 (Hub & Spoke)**

The Joint Committee noted that there was nothing to add to the earlier progress reports. However, Grant Thornton confirmed in response to a question from Tim Smith that there was no change in the relationship between the accountable body and the LEP.

**34. Member Involvement in Elevate**

In view of the present developments, it was agreed to hold a further meeting of the Joint Committee at 10.30am on 18 September 2015 after the scheduled meeting of the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP Forum.

***ACTION: Derek Morgan***

**CHAIRMAN**

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