

West of England Economic Recovery Taskforce – 15 May 2020

Summary / action notes

Taskforce members present:

Mayor Tim Bowles (Chair), Steve West (Vice-Chair), Cllr Dine Romero, Cllr Craig Cheney, Cllr Toby Savage, Nigel Costley, Richard Bonner, Phil Smith, Neil Douglas, Joanne Rumley, Ian White, Natasha Swinscoe, Samantha Payne, Dave Lees, Poku Osie, Rick Sturge, Margot Day, Claire Smith, Peter Alvis, David Brown, David Coombes, Jon Reynolds

Apologies: Paul Craig, Andy Forbes

WECA officers present: Patricia Greer, Stephen Bashford, Jess Lee, Kathryn Vowles, Lynda Bird

1. Introduction

Mayor Bowles, Chair of Taskforce:

- * Has been asked by Prime Minister to take the lead on the regional economic recovery in response to Covid-19.
- * This Taskforce is being established to ensure that plans for recovery and renewal are formed collaboratively, to ultimately bring about a stronger, sustainable regional recovery.
- * Sector leads bring demonstrable track records, credibility and professional expertise and can lead collaborative approaches to bring positive impacts and find solutions, recognising the 'bigger picture' around the challenges faced – short, medium and long term.
- * The Taskforce will ensure a consistent and powerful voice into government; clearly articulating the West of England's specific requirements.
- * The Taskforce will meet monthly.

Steve West, Vice-Chair of Taskforce:

- * The region must find ways to adapt to and live with Covid-19 and mobilise the economy.
- * Collaboration will be critical, including accepting and responding to constructive 'challenge'.
- * There is no 'magic bullet' – need to drive forward a range of solutions, at pace.
- * The Local Industrial Strategy is still the 'guiding star' for driving the region's clean and inclusive growth – but in light of Covid-19, the LIS may require some adjustment - some areas may need greater emphasis.

Pre-circulated documents noted as follows:

- * Taskforce purpose and terms of reference
- * Taskforce membership
- * Sector Leads and role of Sector Leads and Sector Lead groups

3. Sector Groups – discussion / comments:

Actions:

* All to send in any specific comments / questions on the sector group detail as set out in the slide deck.

* Mayor Bowles, Steve West and Patricia Greer to meet all sector leads individually as soon as possible to further discuss roles and challenges for each sector group.

Initial comments:

Cllr Don Davies: noting that UA Mayors /Leaders are attending this Taskforce, it will be helpful to have clarity on role of UAs and input from professional officers. There also needs to be full recognition of the very significant issues around tourism and the visitor economy; also need to ensure the Tourism sector group's work is representative of the whole region.

Mayor Bowles: points noted; Kathryn Davis is the Tourism sector lead with very strong connections across the sector throughout the region – it will be critical to draw on all available expertise from the UAs. Also recognises more widely that UAs are taking a key role in leading their own local economic responses.

Cllr Dine Romero: welcomes the wide involvement of the university and tourism sectors, which are critical to the B&NES economy. The recovery planning should maximise the opportunity to pursue a greener, cleaner, low carbon economic future. Climate emergency and clean and inclusive growth will continue to be cross-cutting priorities.

Mayor Bowles (response to Phil Smith question): No extra powers or funding from government yet announced but M9 group of Mayors are meeting the Chancellor soon and are in ongoing contact with MHCLG and Treasury.

Nigel Costley: need to be mindful of reaching beyond the region's geographical boundaries e.g. in building wider relationships in developing a 'critical mass' case for additional government resources.

Kathryn Davis: the Tourism sector group will draw on a wide evidence base for the region and will link in with national tourism bodies.

Margot Day: need to consider how we involve young people; also need to take into account residents' wider wellbeing considerations.

* Generally recognised that diversity will need to be captured through the sector group activity.

* *Peter Alvis:* there are immediate very practical challenges for the rural enterprise sector e.g. managing the demands of the fruit picking season; financial challenges faced by dairy / beef farmers. Will be important to learn from innovative approaches and modelling from elsewhere.

* *Katherine Finn:* it will be important to share approaches / best practice across the sector in navigating the post-lockdown situation and related re-modelling.

* *Ian White:* university sector faces short term uncertainty about physical student attendance; the sector needs to retain its civic engagement; opportunity to tap into new graduates

contributing to the recovering economy; welcomes the suggestion that we need to engage younger people.

* Generally recognised that as some businesses collapse, ensuring capacity to re-skill and re-train people will be critical. Need to build also on the region's strengths in encouraging innovation.