

West of England Economic Recovery Taskforce – 16 June 2020

Summary / action notes

Taskforce members present:

Members:

Mayor Tim Bowles	West of England Mayor (Chair)
Steve West	Local Enterprise Partnership (Vice Chair)
Cllr Dine Romero	Bath & North East Somerset Council - Apologies
Cllr Craig Cheney representing Mayor Marvin Rees	Mayor of Bristol
Lucy Shomali representing Cllr Don Davies	North Somerset Council
Cllr Toby Savage	South Gloucestershire Council
Samantha Payne	Open Bionics
Kathryn Davis	Destination Bristol & Visit Bath
David Coombs	Skills for Logistics & The Skills Group
Katherine Finn	PWC - Apologies
Peter Alvis	Lye Cross Farm
Rick Sturge	Business in the Community
Natasha Swinscoe	West of England Academic Health Science Network
Paul Craig	Rolls-Royce
Margot Day	Buro Happold
Neil Douglas	Viper Innovations
Richard Bonner	Arcadis
Jon Reynolds	GDS Digital
Dave Lees	Bristol Airport
David Brown	Bristol Port
Nigel Costley	South West Trades Union Congress
Dick Penny	West of England Cultural Strategy Group
Joanne Rumley	Foot Anstey, & West of England Skills Advisory Panel
Phil Smith	Business West

Poku Osei	Babassa
Ian White	University of Bath
Andy Forbes	City of Bristol College

WECA officers: Patricia Greer, Jess Lee, Stephen Bashford, Kathryn Vowles, George Margesson

1. Welcome & Apologies

Apologies received from:

Mayor Marvin Rees (represented by Cllr Craig Cheney); Cllr Don Davies (represented by Lucy Shomali); Cllr Dine Romero; Cllr Mark Canniford; Katherine Finn; Simon Earles

TB – introductory comments:

- * Thanks to all for huge volume of work undertaken.
- * All sector groups have now met and important ideas are being captured.
- * Today's discussion to be focused on where the biggest impacts can be made in driving recovery.
- *Key intelligence has emerged – this is being followed up, including sector specific challenges and opportunities to address these or lobby for a government response.
- * It is recognised there is a need for further clarity on desired outcomes of the Taskforce's work, and the funding available. The work of the Taskforce and the development of a recovery plan is the best route to unlocking the resources needed to drive the recovery and renewal of the regional economy.
- * Working through the M9 Mayors group, there are opportunities to influence government departments and Treasury to make this case – it will be critical for the Taskforce to agree a clear position on the main priorities.
- * Today's meeting will also look to agree the key principles against which actions can be prioritised. An agile and flexible approach will be essential, with clarity on roles and appropriate linkage/interaction with the place-based recovery actions being pursued by the region's UAs.

2. Scenario planning and emerging principles for recovery

Introduction:

- * SW – The LIS key principles of clean and inclusive growth and building a future where 'none are left behind' remain hugely relevant.
- * As per slide pack, PG outlined:
 - Draft key principles for recovery.

- 4 potential future scenarios that may help the 'thinking' to identify the measures that are needed and how short-term actions can link with the longer-term direction.
- It will be critical to establish a framework to measure and assess how actions taken to boost recovery are working.

Comments raised in discussion:

- * Need to instil a bold, ambitious approach to trade – in the post-Covid, post-Brexit scenario, the UK must sell to other countries, across the full spectrum of opportunities; and attract inward investment.
- * Needs to be an urgent focus on how to create opportunities for the immediate 'burning platform' of displaced high-skilled workers (e.g. those made redundant from major companies). Potential opportunities – digital / high tech / nuclear / energy /green industries.
- * A large wave of redundancies is coming as furloughing ends and businesses face full post-Covid impacts. Quick reactions needed including public driven, job creation schemes, with speed of delivery at scale – but will need to be funded.
- * WECA needs to facilitate/deliver the skills strand – aligning skills development with employer needs, at pace.
- * Key issue - how do we best target economic stimulus to the private sector; how do we measure private sector responses to interventions.
- * Need to place much more emphasis in the key principles on promoting diversity, inclusion and social mobility – bring inclusion to the top of the agenda.
- * Need a clear commitment to building infrastructure – including transport, Broadband.
- * Need to take the opportunities that are there now – e.g. with increased on-line sales in absence of retail, the logistics industry is growing – find agile ways to quickly retrain relevant worker groups – e.g. to meet the need for more haulage drivers.
- * For some worker groups, in the 'new' labour market, geographical boundaries may need to be redrawn with increased working at home opportunities. e.g. facilitate some to work at some distance from their employer.
- * Post Covid, health and social care will be a large-growth employer but need to work with employers so they can be as agile as possible in recruiting / building their workforce.
- * There is a dilemma in tackling the 'now' mindful of mid and long-term recovery.
- * The tourism / hospitality sector will see a significant redundancy 'hit' – we need to find a way to provide as much support as possible to the region's cultural / arts / hospitality / food and drink sectors.
- * Learn from approaches elsewhere – e.g. European models of providing grants to support and build the cultural sector.
- * Encourage those displaced from work to be open to a wide range of temporary work opportunities; and assist employers with this.

Action agreed in light of discussion (PG/JL/SB):

The key principles for recovery to be reframed to place greater emphasis on:

- **Diversity and actively promoting inclusion.**
- **Instilling a bold approach to international / global trade opportunities.**
- **Ensuring the required infrastructure is developed.**

The updated key principles to then be circulated as soon as possible.

3. Feedback from Taskforce Members

Comments on key themes emerging across groups:

- * Very encouraging engagement from businesses in engaging across sector groups.
- * Common themes are being identified as per slide deck.
- * Skills matching is a key response to rising unemployment.
- * Need to be mindful of responding to needs of:
 - children in secondary school – preparing them for the workplace.
 - the transition of thousands of graduates into the labour market.
 - helping those in work who will need to adapt to changing circumstances.
- * Low carbon sector group – need to harness all opportunities for low carbon / green / sustainability initiatives – encourage maximum take-up in refitting homes to be greener for the future.
- * The importance of ‘place’ must not be overlooked – communities need to be engaged with recovery and share an understanding of what success looks like.
- * Need to kick-start apprenticeships – push government hard on utilising underused apprenticeship levy.
- * Be mindful of opportunities to adapt property space, e.g. more laboratory space required due to social distancing requirements.
- * Essential to understand what businesses need in terms of skills.
- * Although they may not generate large levels of employment, support opportunities to encourage ‘green shoots’ of activity through incubator hubs.

4. Date of next meeting

- * 21 July 2020