

SCRUTINY BOARD (INFRASTRUCTURE, INVESTMENT & INCLUSIVE GROWTH)

WEDNESDAY, 6TH NOVEMBER, 2024

PRESENT: Councillor H Bithell in the Chair

Councillors A Ali, N Buckley, K Dye, S Lay,
S Leighton, M Millar, A Scopes,
M Shahzad, R. Stephenson and I Wilson

34 APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

There were no appeals.

35 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exemptions.

36 Late Items

There were no late items.

37 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

38 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies were received from Cllr Matthew Robinson.

Cllr Ryan Stephenson attended as a substitute.

39 Minutes - 25 September 2024

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting of 25 September 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

40 Inclusive Growth Update

Those in attendance for this item were:

- Cllr Jonathan Pryor (Executive Member, Economy, Transport & Sustainable Development)
- Fiona Bolam (Chief Officer, Economy and Skills)

The Chair introduced the paper, noting that it provides an update on progress in delivering Inclusive Growth in Leeds since the publication of the city's second Inclusive Growth Strategy in September 2023.

She particularly welcomed the partnership approach to Inclusive Growth in Leeds, as was evident at the Inclusive Growth Partnership event she attended in July.

Cllr Bithell noted that the main measurement tool for inclusive growth is the Social Progress Index. She put on record the thanks of the Scrutiny Board to Fiona Bolam and Graham Ponton who delivered a training session on the SPI to scrutiny members last month.

Cllr Pryor described the update as an exciting piece of work that reflects a joint vision for economic growth amongst partners in Leeds. He highlighted that the Council became the first local authority to achieve an outstanding Ofsted judgement for its Adult Learning and Employer Provider Apprenticeship programmes. Other highlights from the last year include the expansion of Leeds PIPES network and the impact of an expanded UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiIF).

Fiona delivered a presentation on inclusive growth in Leeds, which covered the following areas:

- National Policy Context
- West Yorkshire local Growth Plan
- Inclusive Growth Strategy
- Leeds Anchors
- Next steps

In response to member queries, it was noted that the paper was written prior to the Government's very recent budget announcement and as such an assessment of the potential impact of local growth is not available.

Fiona advised members that knowledge-based sectors in Leeds are a key feature of the regional economy. She highlighted digital, health, and tech sectors as significant drivers of local economic growth, along with finance and professional services.

Fiona was invited to provide further clarity about comparisons with equivalent European cities and a reduction in the overall Social Progress Index score between 2018 - 2022. She advised the Scrutiny Board that she would provide more information about the comparative with European cities outside of the meeting. However, she noted that European cities do tend to score better than their UK counterparts. Skills, productivity, and transport connectivity are all drivers of that disparity.

Members welcomed the positive activity set out in the report including work with the Anchor network, the delivery of careers fairs, the roll out of HomesFirst and progress in relation to the delivery of new homes. Members

also recognised the increased focus on education and employment opportunities for children within the SEND cohort.

Further information was requested with regards to the options for post-16 education outside of the city centre. Fiona agreed to reflect member concerns in joint discussions with colleagues from Children and Families.

Fiona confirmed that the Council has worked with West Yorkshire Combined Authority to invest in digital infrastructure in the city with a view to encouraging further private sector investment in the network.

Members received assurances that very early discussions are taking place with Microsoft about the potential for a heat network linked to a new hyperscale datacentre on the former Skelton Grange Power Station Site.

In response to member queries further information was provided about community listening exercises taking place in association with the Good Jobs, Better Health, Fairer Futures project (2021-2024).

Members sought further information about how to maximise the benefits of national institutions such as the National Wealth Fund locating in Leeds.

Clarity was sought in relation to the Gross Value Added (GVA) within the regional economy being lower than the national average per person.

Other matters addressed by the Scrutiny Board included:

- Access to work experience
- Ways in which to remove barriers to work through targeted skills tuition.
- Feedback from exhibitors attending the SEND careers fair
- The impact on the health sector if the proposed Leeds General Infirmary re-build does not take place.
- An update on plans to develop the British Library North and National Poetry Centre in Leeds.

RESOLVED:

Members noted that a One Year On report to Executive Board setting out progress on the delivery of Inclusive Growth was also published in November.

Members note progress made in delivering our collective ambitions set out in the Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy.

The Scrutiny Board Chair committed to write to the Chief Officer and Executive Board member on behalf of the Scrutiny Board to formally endorse the approach to the inclusive growth programme, with specific reference to the following issues:

- The need to deliver improved infrastructure – including transport connectivity – to drive future economic growth locally.

- Support for increased skills tuition and education for young people in Leeds post-16.
- Support for the expansion of work with the Anchor network and a request for a further update on this activity to be provided in future reports.

41 Visitor Economy

In her introductory remarks the Chair expressed her delight that members would have the opportunity to examine this topic following their previous requests. She thanked officers for the detailed report.

Those in attendance for this item were:

- Cllr Jonathan Pryor (Executive Member, Economy, Transport & Sustainable Development)
- Fiona Bolam (Chief Officer, Economy and Skills)
- Belinda Eldridge (Head of Service, Destination Marketing and International Relations)

Following the Chair's introductory remarks, Belinda Eldridge delivered a presentation that covered the following topics:

- The economic impact of tourism in Leeds
- The varied ways in which income from leisure tourism supports local economic growth.
- The geographical centrality of Leeds.
- An update on business tourism in 2023.
- The role of Conference Leeds.
- The impact and growth of UKREiiF.
- National framework for Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) and Destination Development Partnerships (DDPs).
- Governance structure for the West Yorkshire LVEP.
- The West Yorkshire LVEP and the Destination Management Plan.
- Opportunities and threats for the development of tourism in West Yorkshire.

The Scrutiny Board received an overview of the economic impact of international tourists as opposed to domestic tourists.

Members sought further information about the structure of the formal Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) for Leeds. Members received further details about the structure of the DMO and the interim LVEP board. Belinda set out the next steps to seek the final membership of a permanent LVEP board, with EDI values at the heart of the process.

Concern was raised about the growth of short term lets in the city and the negative impact this may start to have on some communities. Several members were keen to explore opportunities for greater proactive management of short-term lets in Leeds. Belinda Eldridge advised members

that this has been raised in the House of Lords and via a private members bill in the House of Commons.

Belinda noted that there is an ambition to establish a public-private model of long-term funding for the visitor economy in Leeds. She confirmed that a wider commercial strategy may involve a membership model.

The Scrutiny Board sought information about comparative conferencing facilities in neighbouring authorities and core cities. It was noted that Leeds is the only core city without a dedicated convention centre, which results in a loss of business tourism for the city. Members were also advised that Leeds has the smallest visitor economy team of any core city both in terms of budget and resource.

Members discussed the ambition for the Royal Armouries to develop a conference centre with the capacity to seat approximately 1,800 delegates. In response to member queries about current capacity, Belinda advised the Scrutiny Board that the current facilities at the Royal Armouries are already completely booked for the next year. She confirmed that the team is confident of the capacity to grow business tourism further.

Members noted their in-principle support for the development of purpose built convention facilities in the city.

UKREiiF was cited as an example of how the city has hosted a large-scale conference – with over 13,000 delegates – using a different delivery model to the traditional convention centre, and showing the potential for growth in future.

At the request of members, Belinda set out the way in which an Accommodation BID (ABID) may operate. She reiterated that this would be a voluntary levy on the invoices of those staying in a hotel for each night of their stay. The income generated by a hotel levy could be used to create more momentum behind larger events, including by potentially providing a subvention to secure major business.

Hoteliers are keen to see more overnight stays and longer stays, and major events will be a significant part of achieving that growth.

Councillors sought more information about how the LVEP could secure data regarding visitor perceptions of Leeds and considered how anonymous data may be shared in future.

Members examined the benefits of providing a welcome for major employers relocating to Leeds – supporting the Bank of England in establishing their expanding workforce in Leeds was cited as an example of this work.

Belinda reassured the Scrutiny Board that the team will be exploring opportunities to grow sustainable and regenerative tourism.

Members explored ways in which leisure tourism is promoted to business visitors to encourage return visits to the city.

RESOLVED:

The Scrutiny Board noted and provided comments on the information provided in the report and the progress made.

Members asked that their in-principle support for the development of purpose-built convention facilities be noted.

Cllr Sandy Lay left the meeting at 11.55am.

42 Work Schedule

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor asked members to note the draft work schedule in the agenda pack.

She highlighted that a remote working groups will be taking place **1pm – 2.30pm** on **9 December 2024** to consider the budget proposals that fall within the remit of the Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth).

The Chair reminded colleagues that she has asked for the work programme to be considered at the start of public meetings in future.

RESOLVED: The 2024/25 draft work programme was noted, along with the request to schedule the work programme as the first substantive item on future agendas.

43 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED: The next meeting of the Scrutiny Board will take place on **27 November 2024 at 10.15am**. There will be a pre-meeting for all Scrutiny Board members at **10am**.