



Report of the Directorate Planning, Policy and Improvement

Scrutiny Board (City and Regional Partnerships)

Date: 15th January 2009

Subject: Session 3 Inquiry into Skills – Leeds City Region Multi Area Agreement

Electoral Wards Affected: All

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the first part of today's session is to consider any information requested from the previous session and examine any possible future developments to the Leeds City Region MAA.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Multi Area Agreement (MAA) is a joint commitment by both the Leeds City Region Partnership and central government to work together towards improved economic prosperity for our communities. The MAA for the Leeds City Region Partnership was signed in July 2008.
- 2.2 The MAA includes things the Partnership has asked for from the government, as well as things they have required from us. The Partnership has asked for more freedom and flexibility in how we go about improving local access to higher level skills training in the workplace and also enhancing transport connectivity. In turn, we have agreed to a number of ambitious joint targets for sustainable economic growth, all of which will help Leeds City Region close the productivity gap with the rest of the UK by 2016.

3.0 Further Information requested

- 3.1 A key focus of MAA is how to work better with Small and Medium Enterprises to better understand their training needs, encourage the development of their workforce and reduce some of the administrative burdens currently imposed by central government to enable them to gain accreditation for 'in house' training. Further information was requested on delivery arrangements and these can be found in the attached Annex A.

3.2 MAA Skills Targets had been discussed in Session 2 and consideration had been given to the impact on the local economy. Comparisons were made with skill levels nationwide and the need for continued investment, noting that that Leeds City Region was lagging in terms of higher level skills. A potentially useful means of capturing the relevant information would be within an appropriate performance management system to track delivery of the MAA. It is proposed that this system should not just capture the performance on skills levels within the Leeds City Region but also benchmark this with other comparable areas.

4.0 Future Development

- 4.1 The skills related content of the MAA has been built on the base of the 2006 Leeds City Region Development Programme, and other key policy and research including, Leitch Review of Skills. It was noted that the Houghton Review of the contribution and role of local authorities and partnerships in tackling worklessness was pending. The worklessness agenda is considered all the more important in the context of the threat of rising unemployment.
- 4.2 The Review, published in November 2008, proposes the development of Multi-area Work & Skills Plans that conform to functional economic areas where local authorities do not conform to recognised local economy boundaries. Houghton would expect to see them co-operating to meet the needs of local employers, employees and workless residents. It is recognised that this co-operation must be based on the choice of individual authorities and founded on clear agreements for how funds are to be distributed and managed and any additional flexibilities and freedoms needed from Government.
- 4.3 Government's recent Pre-Budget Report has proposed devolution to city regions to be driven by Local Authorities co-operating on the basis of strong local capacity, and governance arrangements which provide clear accountability. Therefore the partnerships delivering the existing seven "first wave" Multi Area Agreements signed off in July, including the Leeds City Region Partnership, are potentially well placed to progress this agenda, including to address worklessness issues as considered appropriate.

5.0 Recommendations

- 5.1 Members are asked to receive this report and determine what if any, further information the Board requires to complete this session of its inquiry.

Background Papers

None used