

GM LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Item No. 5

SUBJECT: LEP Task & Finish Group

DATE: 17 July 2017

FROM: Simon Nokes, Executive Director, Policy and Strategy

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The LEP has informally discussed the creation of a small number of Task and Finish Groups to drive forward a number of key issues for the GM Economy. Based on this initial discussion, it was suggested that these cover digital skills, scale up, schools and the 4th Industrial Revolution. A note summarising 4 potential Task & Finish Groups was sent to LEP members

A range of feedback was received on these ideas for Task and Finish Groups and, following discussion with Mike Blackburn and Lou Cordwell, these proposals have been amended and further developed. The following paragraphs set out a revised proposal for agreement by the LEP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The LEP is asked to agree to set up four Task and Finish Groups, with the Chairs and remit set out above, to report back over the coming 3-9 months.

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Proposed Task & Finish Groups

Digital Skills

-) Long Term Ambition: To ensure the GM population is developing the digital skills for the needs of all sectors
-) Why: Digital will be an integral part of all jobs and sectors in the future
-) Current State of Play: There is considerable activity by both employers and schools on digital skills, much of it uncoordinated and, at the same time, considerable evidence of employers finding it harder to meet their digital skills needs
-) Short Term Questions for T&F group to resolve:
 - o Should GM employ a person to develop a consensus around the core digital skills needed into the future and co-ordinate activity around digital skills to help drive and enhance the GM ambition? Focus areas in the short term could include: school and business engagement, and a 'digital passport' so employers know that people with this have transferrable digital skills.
 - o How can the LEP best support GMCA in using the £2m digital skills fund it has agreed to maximise leverage from the private sector and the overall impact of the fund?
 - o What is the role of the Apprenticeship Levy in supporting the development of digital skills in GM?
-) Chair: Lou Cordwell is the proposed Chair of this group, with volunteers sought to join the group
-) Timescale: The group should be asked to report back by the end of October.

Start Up/Scale Up

-) Long Term Ambition: The GM economy has an eco-system for entrepreneurship to support thriving business start-ups and potential scale-ups reach their potential in our towns and cities
-) Why: Thriving economies have high levels of start-up and scale up activity
-) Current State of Play: The level of start up in the GM economy and the number of 'scale ups' (fast growing companies) is lower than you would expect, based on the size of the economy, although things are changing rapidly
-) Short Term Questions for T&F Group to resolve:
 - o What is the best way for GM to support Start Up activity – e.g. online support, direct advice, premises support, support via the Growth Hub working with others?
 - o What do the statistics tell us about the potential of 'scale-ups' and medium sized companies in driving the GM economy? Is there an issue about GM being seen/known as a place to scale up?
 - o Learning from the textiles project how can GM: map supply chains across GM companies to understand inter-relationships across sectors; and better support more companies to scale up (including engagement with national initiatives in this area)?

- J Chair: Lorna Fitzimmons is the proposed Chair of this group, with volunteers sought to join the group
- J Timescale: The group should be asked to report back by the end of November

Schools

- J Long Term Ambition: All young people understand, and have exposure to, the world of work whilst at school and are clear on the pathways that will lead them to particular jobs. Employers are playing a more active role in the curriculum to raise young people's aspirations
- J Why: Evidence shows that young people who have exposure to the world of work during school are far more likely to feel inspired by work and far less likely to be unemployed in later life
- J Current State of Play: Many employers want to get involved in supporting schools and the curriculum but struggle to know how best to do this. Many schools want to involve employers to raise aspirations but struggle to know how to engage with employers. GM has discussed a range of devolution asks with DfE and is keen to develop a 'curriculum for life'
- J Short Term Questions for T&F Group to resolve:
 - o How can the LEP support GM employers to engage with school governing bodies to help drive a focus on excellence in school leadership?
 - o How can the LEP support a simple quality assured mechanism to bridge the gap between schools wanting to bring in employers, and employers wanting to offer support around the curriculum and work experience (referring to the GM Education and Employability Board as appropriate)?
 - o Should GM set a target that all young people should have [100] hours of work experience by age 16 and create a 'Work Ready Stamp/Portfolio' so that employers know that people with this have a clear experience of the world of work?
 - o How can the LEP support the Mayor's commitment to a UCAS style apprenticeship system to help all young people make informed choices and gain parity between the technical and academic routes?
- J Chair: Mo Isap is the proposed Chair of this group, with volunteers sought to join the group
- J Timescale: The group should be asked to report back by the end of December

Future Technical Skills Challenges

- J Long Term Ambition: To ensure GM is developing the technical skills and higher levels of productivity it will need to be internationally competitive in a post BREXIT economy
- J Why: If the GM economy is to be competitive post BREXIT, particularly if there are lower levels of migration, employers will need to compete on the basis of higher skills and higher productivity than at present. This could represent a significant challenge to many employers

- J Current State of Play: There is evidence that more GM employers seek to compete on the basis of low added value, low wage business models than in other parts of the country
- J Short Term Questions for T&F Group to resolve:
 - o What are the key skills challenges that GM employers (in both our large employment and high growth sectors) will face as the UK leaves the EU?
 - o In the light of these challenges what is GM's best strategy for developing talent and driving productivity in all sectors?
 - o How can GM support companies to develop the technical and digital skills needed in the future particularly in a period when all sectors will be faced with adopting radical new digital technologies that will boost productivity and create new high tech jobs?
- J Chair: David Birch is the proposed Chair of this group, with volunteers sought to join the group
- J Timescale: The group should support an initial submission by GM to the Autumn Budget but report back its wider conclusions by the end of March