
Update on Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership

EDTCE Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 27th August 2025

Lead director/officer: Peter Chandler/ Phoebe Dawson

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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- Report version number: 1

1. Summary

The purpose of this report is to update the Scrutiny Commission on the development and delivery of the Business and Skills Partnership for Leicester and Leicestershire.

2. Recommendation(s) to scrutiny:

EDTCE Scrutiny Commission are invited to:

- Note the ongoing development of the Business Board and the establishment of specialist sub-groups
- Note the financial position of the Business and Skills Partnership

3. Detailed report

3.1 In April 2024 the former LLEP team transitioned to the Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership (LLBSP), and the LEP board was disbanded and a new Business Board was formed

3.2 The role of the Business and Skills Partnership and its corresponding Business Board is to work with businesses and stakeholders to drive economic growth and deliver relevant business support initiatives at a regional level, working across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. This is achieved by:

- Supporting the designated Enterprise Zones, which include sites in the County at MIRA Technology Park (MIRA) near Hinckley and at Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park (LUSEP) and Charnwood Campus in Loughborough;
- Delivery of Skills and apprenticeship support, including the work of the Leicester and Leicestershire Careers Hub;
- Delivery of the government funded business support service (Growth Hub) and locally, the Create Growth programme;
- Local economic growth planning.

3.3 The Business Board brings local business perspectives into regional decision-making.

National and local delivery updates

3.4 The UK government launched its Industrial Strategy in June 2025. The strategy is a comprehensive plan designed to boost productivity and economic growth across the country. Its core focus is on creating an environment where businesses can thrive, innovation is encouraged, and high-quality jobs are plentiful.

3.5 The strategy focuses on eight key growth-driving sectors, often referred to as the "IS-8". These sectors are where the UK already has significant strengths and the potential for substantial future growth. The priority sectors are:

1. **Advanced Manufacturing:** This includes areas like next-generation vehicle production, zero-emission flight technologies, and autonomous driving solutions.
2. **Clean Energy Industries:** Aiming to capitalize on the global market opportunity for the net-zero transition, this sector covers renewable energy (especially offshore wind), carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS), low-carbon hydrogen, nuclear, and gigafactories.
3. **Creative Industries:** Encompassing film, television, music, video games, advertising, and marketing, leveraging the UK's world-leading creativity and culture.
4. **Defence:** Focusing on backing UK-based businesses through increased defence spending, procurement reform, and supporting defence exports.
5. **Digital and Technologies:** With an ambition to make the UK a global leader in creating, investing in, and scaling fast-growing technology businesses, including frontier technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Advanced Connectivity Technologies, Cyber Security, Engineering Biology, and Quantum.
6. **Financial Services:** Aiming to maintain the UK's position as a global financial hub and a leader in fintech.
7. **Life Sciences:** Strengthening the UK's position in pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, and medical technologies, and leveraging big data and AI in healthcare.
8. **Professional and Business Services:** Supporting the growth of the UK's globally renowned professional services sector, including legal services and legal tech.

3.6 Beyond these specific sectors, the strategy also emphasises five foundational pillars that underpin overall economic growth:

- **Ideas:** Boosting research and innovation.
- **People:** Developing a skilled workforce for good jobs and greater earning power.
- **Infrastructure:** Upgrading the UK's transport, digital, and energy infrastructure.
- **Business Environment:** Creating the best conditions for businesses to start, grow, and invest.
- **Places:** Ensuring prosperous communities across all parts of the UK, building on local strengths and economic clusters.

3.7 As well as the Industrial Strategy the government have also launched its **Small Business Plan** and the **Business Growth Service**.

3.8 The **Business Growth Service** is a new, integrated initiative specifically designed to provide tailored support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across the UK that are looking to scale up and grow. It acts as a central hub, bringing together various government-backed and private sector resources to offer a streamlined approach to business development. The service is delivered online and locally via the Government-funded Growth Hub and provides:

- **Access to Finance:** Guidance and connections to a range of funding options, including grants, loans, and equity investment.
- **Specialist Advice:** Expert support in areas such as leadership development, digital adoption, export potential, and innovation.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Facilitating connections with mentors, peer groups, and potential collaborators.

- **Skills Development:** Resources and programs to help businesses upskill their workforce and address talent gaps.

- 3.9 The Business Growth Service's mission is to transform how businesses access government and partner support by creating an inspiring, seamless and trusted experience that connects all businesses to the right advice and support when they need it most. It aims to reduce complexity, so businesses feel less confused, less alone and more confident to start, grow and succeed.
- 3.10 The LLBSP and Growth Hub will work with the Business Growth Service to simplify the landscape of business support, making it easier for ambitious SMEs to access the tools and expertise they need to overcome barriers to growth, create jobs, and contribute significantly to the UK economy.
- 3.11 We will work with the Business Growth Service to simplify the landscape of business support, making it easier for ambitious SMEs to access the tools and expertise they need to overcome barriers to growth, create jobs, and contribute significantly to the UK economy.
- 3.12 Following the launch of the Industrial strategy and the Small Business Plan, strategic authorities are required to work with their business boards to develop a Local Growth Plan. Whilst Leicester and Leicestershire is not a devolved area, it shares significant sector specialties with the IS-8 sectors and it has been suggested that a local growth plan which covers Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, would support the Business Board, the upper-tier local authorities and our partners and stakeholders to agree a strategic focus and support potential future bids for funding and investment.

The Business Board

- 3.13 Guidance issued from government stated that Business boards should follow certain key principles to ensure effective business involvement in local decision-making.
- 3.14 They should engage business representative organisations such as the local Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses and should include a diverse range of businesses reflecting local economic strengths and priorities, ensuring representation across different sectors, sizes and geographic areas, including urban, and rural to promote a diversity of voices.
- 3.15 The Leicester and Leicestershire Business Board is in development. Three posts are being held vacant, with the plan to recruit to after the launch of the Industrial Strategy to ensure alignment with identified key sectors. As the strategy was launched late June, recruitment to these positions is now underway. There is also a vacancy retained for a Rutland based business and the Business Board Chair is working with Rutland County Council to recruit to this position.

Business Board membership (as of July 2025)

Name	Organisation	Size of Business/representing	Sector	Local Authority
Andy Reed	Saje Impact	Micro	Business and recreation consultancy	Charnwood
Nick Owen	Mighty Creatives	Small	Creative agency	Leicester City
Sarah Windrum	Horiba Mira and Mira Technology Park	Large	Professional, scientific and technical activities	Hinckley & Bosworth
Erika Hardy	Everards	Medium	Accommodation and food service activities. Manufacturing	Blaby
Rob Walker	Caterpillar	Large	Manufacturing	Hinckley & Bosworth
Jennifer Thomas+HA7:H11	Federation of Small Businesses	Representing sole-traders to SMEs	Other service activities	Leicestershire & Northamptonshire
Scott Knowles	East Midlands Chamber of Commerce	Representing small to Large businesses	Other service activities	East Midlands
Chris Corkan	Make UK	Representing SME Manufacturers	Other service activities	East Midlands
Neil Mchee	Leicester Business Voice	Representing sole traders - SMEs across Leicester and Leicestershire	Administrative and support service activities	Leicester City
Kevin Allen-Khimani	Voluntary Action Leicester	Representing all voluntary organisations across Leicester and Leicestershire	Support for Voluntary Sector	Leicester City
Katie Normington	De Montford University	Representing the HE sector	Education	Leicester City
Corrie Harris	Loughborough College	Representing the FE sector	Education	Charnwood
Craig Bentley	Institute of Directors	Representing senior leaders/directors across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland	Other service activities	Leicestershire & South East Midlands
Cllr. Jewel Miah	Charnwood District Council	Representing the District and Borough councils	Public Sector	Charnwood
Cllr Gale Waller	Rutland County Council	Leader of UTLA	Public Sector	Rutland
Sir Peter Soulsby	Leicester City Council	Leader of UTLA	Public Sector	Leicester City
Harrison Fowler	Leicestershire County Council	Leader of UTLA	Public Sector	Leicestershire

3.16 In order to ensure that the board is fully representative of Leicester and Leicestershire business community, and to support the board to focus on priority delivery areas, the board has approved the establishment of three sub-groups, these are:

- Innovation
- Employment and Skills
- Business Support

3.17 These sub-groups will be chaired by a representative from the Business Board and include a mix of members from the Business Board and the relevant, wider business and skills community. The terms of reference and membership to these sub-groups are in development.

Financial position

3.18 The Council retains revenue reserves from the LLEP to underwrite the transition costs and on-going activity of the Business and Skills Partnership. The £3,506k balance as at 1st April 2024 is committed for this purpose, of which £344k was drawn down to cover the net operating costs during 2024/25.

4. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

4.1 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications beyond those identified within the body of the report.

Signed: Stuart McAvoy, Head of Finance

Dated: 14th August 2025

4.2 Legal Implications

Legal advice has been sought throughout the disbandment of the LLEP, this has and will support, where relevant, the approach to asset ownership, transfer, staff and where relevant novation of agreements relating to contracts for grants/ loans and management of the LLEP legacy budgets.

Signed: Mannah Begum, Head of Law – Commercial Legal, Principal Lawyer

Dated: 06 August 2025

4.3 Equalities Implications

The report provides an update to the Scrutiny Commission on the work of the Business and Skills Partnership for Leicester and Leicestershire. The Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership (LLBSP) is a collaborative initiative designed to enhance economic growth, business development, and skills improvement within the Leicester and Leicestershire region. There are no direct equality comments arising from the report. Initiatives that aim to drive forward regeneration and growth in the local economy should lead to better prospects. It is important that to ensure the careers guidance and support provided is unbiased and accessible to all young people from across all protected characteristics.

Signed: Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh Ext 37 4148

Dated: 12 August 2025

4.4 Climate Emergency Implications

There are no climate emergency implications arising directly from this report, but it is worth noting the importance of aligning economic development, business support and skills activities with the council's strategic approach to decarbonisation, climate resilience and adaptation. There are benefits to be had in terms of economic growth, employment opportunities and poverty reduction from grasping the opportunities around developing the 'green economy'. In addition, there is a need to support business with both the transition to a net zero economy and with becoming resilient to the impacts of climate change.

There is already good work represented in the Climate Ready Leicester Plan on green skills development and supporting the greening of the tourism sector, for example. The LLBSP will have an important role in linking the economic and climate agendas moving forward to maximise the opportunities for both.

Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext: 37 2246

Dated: 8 August 2025

4.5 Other Implications

None

5. Background information and other papers:

In the Spring Budget of March 2023, the Chancellor announced that the Government was "minded" to withdraw central core funding for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) starting in April 2024. This decision was officially confirmed in August 2023. The Government also indicated that funding for several key LEP functions - such as business representation, strategic economic planning, and the delivery of government programs (where directed) - would be transferred to Upper Tier Local Authorities (UTLAs), where these functions are not already managed by combined authorities or the Greater London Authority. The expectation was for UTLAs to collaborate across functional economic areas.

In April 2024 the LLEP transitioned into the UTLAs, as the Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership. The team work across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and deliver government funded delivery across the region. The work of the team is steered by the Executive Board (City Mayor and Leader of Leicestershire County Council) and the Director of Business and Skills LLBSP, Director of Tourism, Culture and Economy at Leicester City Council, and Deputy CEO Leicestershire County Council.

6. Summary of appendices:

N/A