



SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 22ND APRIL 2026

THE LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE BUSINESS AND SKILLS PARTNERSHIP

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, LAW AND GOVERNANCE

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Commission regarding the governance and function of the Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership (BSP).

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The County Council's Strategic Plan is based on five strategic outcomes which describe the Council's vision for Leicestershire, including:

"Strong economy, transport and infrastructure: Leicestershire has a productive, inclusive and sustainable economy and infrastructure which meets the demands of a growing population and economy."

3. The Scrutiny Commission at its meeting on 10th March 2025 received a report providing an update on the work of the Business and Skills Partnership.

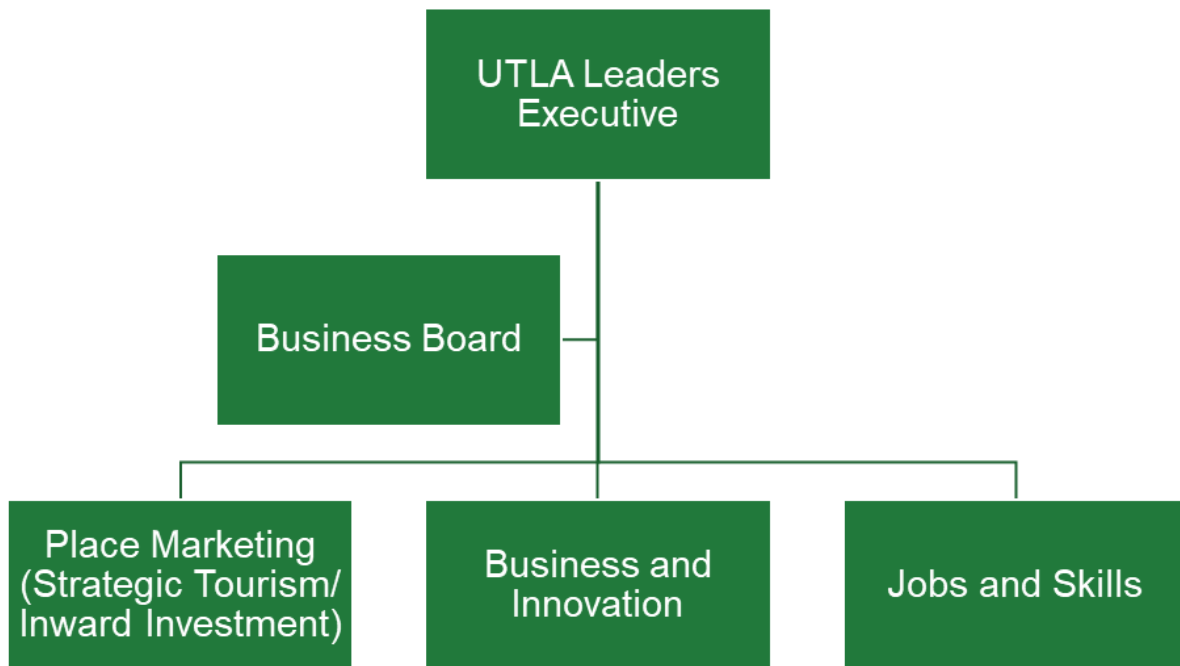
Background

4. In the Spring Budget of March 2023, the then 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. The expectation was for UTLAs to collaborate across functional economic areas.
5. A Transition Board was subsequently established to manage the transition of the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) to the County and City Councils, with the City Council remaining the accountable body. Responsibility for decision-making is now exercised jointly by the two UTLA, working collaboratively as appropriate.

6. In April 2024 the former LLEP team transitioned to the Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership (LLBSP), the purpose of which is to lead and drive economic prosperity across the Leicester and Leicestershire area.
7. During 2024/25 the government provided transition funding to support the establishment of the Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership Board (the Business Board, membership of which is shown in the Appendix to this report) and to continue with government funded priority programmes. These are as follows:
 - i) Supporting business representation through the establishment of a Business Board.
 - ii) 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.
 - iii) Skills and apprenticeships, including the work of the Leicester and Leicestershire Careers Hub.
 - iv) The Business Gateway Growth Hub which was formed to create a single point of contact for businesses to access information, advice, and support to help them start, grow, and scale.
 - v) Local economic growth planning.
8. Membership of the Business Board is drawn from the local business community (both local businesses and representative organisations), voluntary sector and local authorities (City Council, County Council, Rutland Council, and district councils).

Governance and Leadership

9. Overall governance of sub-regional economic development functions is via the LLR upper tier local authority (UTLA) Leaders Executive. This comprises the Leader of the County Council, the City Mayor, and the Leader of Rutland Council (as observer).
10. These are supported by advisory sub-groups for visitor economy, business support/ innovation, employment support, and skills. It has been agreed there will be a Joint Working Agreement put in place between Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council to align economic growth activity following these three broad areas.
11. The Business Board aims to work with businesses and stakeholders to drive economic growth and support the development of economic strategies. This includes developing a sub-regional Local Growth Plan.
12. More recently, Government has also encouraged joint working between the City and County Councils and Rutland Council on several new sub regional programmes including business support (Growth Hub) and employment support (Connect to Work and Get Britain Working). Future funding programmes may also be allocated across this broader LLR functional economic geography.



Place Marketing

13. There has been a Joint Working Agreement in place to deliver Place Marketing across Leicester and Leicestershire since 2017 (the subject of a separate report on the agenda for this meeting). Governance and stakeholder engagement arrangements are in place and working well across Strategic Tourism and Inward Investment. Development of a refreshed sub-regional tourism plan was launched on 16 March 2026 and sets a clear strategy for the next 5 years.

Business and Innovation

14. The Business and Innovation theme will lead strategy delivery, stakeholder engagement and coordinate service delivery.
15. This includes **Business support** (including managing the government funded Growth Hub service) and subregional sector support programmes such as Create Growth. Government funding for the **Growth Hub** has now been confirmed until March 2029 covering the whole LLR geography. Business **innovation**, working with local universities and businesses. Supporting the designated **Enterprise Zones**, which include MIRA and LUSEP and Charnwood Campus in Loughborough, and in the city at Leicester Waterside/ Space City and supporting business workspaces.

Jobs and Skills

16. The Jobs and Skills lead to deliver strategy, stakeholder engagement and coordinate service delivery to support this theme.
17. This includes **Employment Hub** - previously delivered a sub-regional offer across Leicester and Leicestershire with European funding. This team is currently focused

on the City, funded from the City's UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme which ends in March 2026, but it is being explored how this can work across LLR.

Connect to Work which is designed to help people with health conditions, disabilities, or complex barriers enter and retain employment. New teams have been established within the three UTLA to deliver the Connect to Work programme across LLR, which is fully funded by the DWP £17.2m from 2025/26 to 2029/30. Further funding is anticipated but not confirmed for this agenda. Skills and apprenticeship support is provided via the Leicester and Leicestershire **Careers Hub**.

Careers Hub

18. The Careers Hub engages with local schools and colleges, employers, and careers-education providers to improve careers education related outcomes for young people, especially the disadvantaged across LLR. It aligns this work against the Gatsby Benchmarks for Good Careers Guidance which define world class careers education. The Hub is above national average in seven of the eight benchmarks and has been acknowledged as progressive and leading the way on creating the national blueprint for careers education. The Hub provides training, support, and best practices in careers education and demonstrates the impact of this on career readiness, employment outcomes and "Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) reduction.
19. The Hub is funded through LLBSP with match funding in full or part for all staff. It operates through a grant funding agreement with the Careers and Enterprise Company which is the national body for careers education.
20. The strategic priorities of the Careers Hub are:
 - i) Raising the quality of careers provision in schools and colleges, against the Gatsby Benchmarks, through training for the education workforce, targeted support, and quality assurance.
 - ii) Driving positive experiences with employers by stimulating and providing more high-quality experiences with employers for students and teachers in the classroom and the workplace.
 - iii) Boosting Skills Pathways - amplifying apprenticeships, technical (T Level) and vocational routes and aligned to the knowledge, skills and behaviours, and engaging businesses to understand their current and future workforce needs.
 - iv) Tackling disadvantages through target interventions for economically disadvantaged young people (those in receipt of free school meals) and those who face barriers to education, employment, or training.
 - v) Connecting careers provision in schools and colleges to the needs of local economies as articulated through local growth plans the Local Skills Improvement Plan.
21. The Get Britain Working plan was launched in 2025. Governance and stakeholder engagement arrangements have been established to guide the development of sub-

regional Get LLR Working plan, which was published in December 2025. This work has been led by the City's Economic Regeneration team with input from the County's Economic Growth team and Adult Learning Service, and Rutland Council.

22. There has also been subregional commissioning with the 'skills bootcamp' programme led by the City Council's Economic Regeneration team, working with the LLBSP and the County Council Growth team. This includes confirmed Skills Bootcamps funding of £1.5m in 2026/27. Longer term funding is uncertain.

Resource Implications

23. The County Council has not provided funding to support the LLEP/LLBSP. In 2025/26 Government transition funding of £231,785 was received.
24. In the Autumn Statement 2024 the Government announced that it was minded to cease funding the functions delivered by the previous LEPs and Business Board Network from April 2025. The Government subsequently launched a consultation on this proposal, and a decision is anticipated imminently.
25. The LLBSP activity is funded through the City Council revenue and LLEP reserves. The County Council and Rutland Council do not provide any funding but do continue to align agendas across the sub-region. A Joint Working Agreement is being drafted to confirm this input.
26. Government funding for the Growth Hub has been confirmed until March 2029 covering the whole LLR geography. The confirmed amount from April 2026 to March 2029 £352,000 per annum of external funding.
27. During 2024/25 the government provided transition funding to support the establishment of a Business Board and to continue with government funded priority programmes. These are as follows:

Conclusions

28. The Commission is asked to note this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

29. None.

Equality Implications

30. There are no equality implications arising from this report.

Human Rights Implications

31. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Background Papers

Report to the Cabinet on 26 March 2024 - Transition of Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LEEP) responsibilities to upper tier local authority control
[https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s182065/240326%20Cabinet%20LEEP%20Transition%20TP %20v4.pdf](https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s182065/240326%20Cabinet%20LEEP%20Transition%20TP%20v4.pdf)

Report to the Scrutiny Commission on 10 March 2025 - Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=7833&Ver=4>

Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership website
<https://lbsp.org.uk/>

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Appendix

Membership of the Business Board