

West Midlands Industrial Strategy Business Consultation Event 28.09.2018 – Summary Points

- Technology and Digital Infrastructure
 - Lack of digital infrastructure in West Midlands
 - Technology can bring huge benefits
 - Digital infrastructure needs to be looked at on a regional basis. There is currently no strategy in place to understand and realise full benefits for the region
 - There is a need to look at future digital communications, particularly 5G and satellite
 - Technology has shifted from an enabler to a driver
 - Many smaller businesses don't know what technology is available to them that could improve their business
- Transport
 - West Midlands suffers from poor transport connectivity
 - Local journey's are a key challenge – most journey's are less than 10 miles in distance
 - A lack of resilience in the system means one issue affects the entire network
 - A lot of focus placed on the future of transport, not enough emphasis on shorter term solutions, particularly with major infrastructure projects soon to be launched, such as HS2;
 - Working with the major anchor employers in the area could be a key focus
 - There needs to be a more coordinated approach to transport across the West Midlands region, including linking transport projects between local authorities
 - Poor connectivity a very visible challenge, which can damage people's perceptions of living in the area
- Skills
 - Shortage of skills, particularly technical staff a significant problem in the region
 - Lot's of technical, engineering expertise gets absorbed into larger employers such as Arup and JLR, leaving SME's with a particular shortage
 - Retraining 45-50 year olds who no longer have the required skills a big issue
 - People over the age of 50 not being fully utilised
 - Training needs to be treated as a continual process throughout a persons career
 - Lot's of employers are re-training employees rather than recruiting new employees. Opportunities exist for bespoke training
 - Job opportunities are often not promoted effectively – potential employees don't understand the job potential and skill requirements of roles
 - A lack of career support and advice for workers outside of education. Worker skills not always effectively matched with job opportunities or ambitions
 - More businesses should be going into schools, starting at early education
- Place
 - A key area where focus is required
 - Significant number of students leave the region after graduation/ study
 - More needs to be done to improve and promote the area as a place to live and work
 - A poor image of the West Midlands from people outside of the region, particularly London. People don't want to relocate to West Midlands despite job opportunity

- Business asking how to attract and retain talent
- Employees looking to live and work in a more central location rather than business parks and out-of-town locations
- Significant employer opportunities exist, needs a joined-up approach with strong PR campaign to attract the right people
- Use of the term 'industrial' projects the wrong image (of factories) and doesn't take into account cultural aspects of an area
- West Midlands strategy needs 3-5 key messages/ differentiators to focus on
- Workplace Culture
 - Cultural shift is required within business
 - Millennials look for different things to previous generations. More emphasis required on quality of lifestyle/ experiences than salary, car and home ownership etc.
 - Flexibility of working hours and working from home also important.
 - Work streams such as with social media does not suit conventional working hours
 - Business should take account of out-of-hours work, such as working during commuting