



A Mayoral Manifesto for West Yorkshire

Small businesses and inclusive growth

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Federation of
Small Businesses

March 2024

FSB

The UK's leading small business campaigner

As experts in business, we offer our members a wide range of vital business services including advice, financial expertise, support and a powerful voice heard in government. Our mission is to help smaller businesses achieve their ambitions.

Established 50 years ago to help our members succeed in business, we are a non-profit making and non-party political organisation that's led by our members, for our members.

In West Yorkshire we are a trusted voice for small business with 3,500 members. We aim to represent anyone and everyone running a business or with aspirations to start a business. During the Covid lockdowns we saw how important strong business networks were for building resilience. We see hundreds of business owners at our regular online and face to face events. We are committed to helping business owners connect with each other and help partners connect with small business owners.





A Mayoral Manifesto

Small businesses and inclusive growth

The West Yorkshire economy will not be able to boost productivity, tackle the climate emergency and there will be no inclusive growth without small businesses.

Too often overlooked and underappreciated, SMEs make up over 99% of the businesses in West Yorkshire. They employ more than half of the people working in the private sector.

Small businesses are at the heart of the West Yorkshire economy. They are also at the heart of West Yorkshire communities. Small businesses create local jobs, grow and keep wealth within a local economy and provide vital local services. They support communities in the good times and, as we have seen, stick around when the going is not so good.

Having a Mayor has transformed local decision making. This manifesto sets out ways that small businesses can help a Mayor create a thriving West Yorkshire, a successful economy and vibrant communities.

Small business and a thriving West Yorkshire

This is a set of proposals that would help the Mayor ensure small businesses fulfil their potential in creating a thriving West Yorkshire.

As well as specific actions, a more general problem is that small business interests are overlooked. This could be addressed by developing a small business impact assessment to understand the impact of relevant policy decisions on SMEs prior to implementation. It needs to measure the disproportionate costs to small businesses that policy decisions can have and look at whether policies allow small businesses to maximise their positive impact on West Yorkshire communities and the economy.



Inclusive growth in West Yorkshire

- West Yorkshire towns have successfully won funding from levelling up schemes. However, local businesses and communities are not seeing much benefit. The Mayor needs to provide a focus and coordinating role to maximise the impact of this funding.
- Levelling up is needed across West Yorkshire; including our cities, towns and rural areas. Small businesses play a crucial role in increasing local employment and retaining wealth in an area. Business support from the combined authority should reflect this by having targets to support small businesses.
- Most business owners would like to be more environmentally aware, recycle more, use less energy, and produce as little pollution as possible. Support is needed to help businesses – particularly the smallest – understand how they can make a difference. This must include relevant and practical support for businesses who don't own premises, allowing them to make a contribution towards net zero targets.
- Local planning can be slow and a barrier to inclusive growth. The Mayor should initiate a conversation with local authorities to get them to shift planning from a bureaucratic service to a business service. Applications that create inclusive growth need to be prioritised as part of the West Yorkshire plan.

Having the right infrastructure in West Yorkshire

- We need the fastest possible rollout of full fibre and 5G to all areas of West Yorkshire. All areas should be treated fairly, not just the main town and city centres.
- Integrated ticketing across West Yorkshire is long overdue. The Mayor should also support improved connectivity across our region and the North.



Ensuring the workforce has the necessary skills

- Start Up West Yorkshire is a welcome initiative that supports entrepreneurs and raises aspiration. Continuing this scheme is a great way of providing support to those who want to start up a business and/or become self-employed and raise the aspirations of people from all backgrounds to help them realise they can start a business.
- Developing the skills of business owners is never included in skills strategies but must be. Developing their skills is crucial to growing small and micro businesses, employment and the West Yorkshire economy. It will embed a skills culture in small businesses.
- Young people should be helped to learn key employment skills (such as manufacturing, digital and health care) by developing careers in small businesses. FSB is keen to work with the Mayor on measures to address lost work experience through the decline of 'Saturday jobs'.
- West Yorkshire is blessed with seven great universities and many colleges. The Mayor should play their role as a convenor to support work, such as FSB is doing, to bring universities, colleges and business closer together.

Making West Yorkshire the place to do business

- The Single Prosperity Fund is half of the amount we would have expected in West Yorkshire if it were to match EU funding. However, it has given the Mayor the ability to shape business support and this has been done well. There needs to be a continued emphasis on information to help businesses better access all support available. Most business support is delivered by private businesses to private business. Therefore, we need holistic business support strategies and planning that includes all who deliver business support, not just that part which is state funded.
- Access to finance is crucial for small businesses. Support is needed for small business to be investment ready and to address the inequality in the success rates of getting alternative funding. Structural issues make it harder for women and black and Asian entrepreneurs. There is also an imbalance between the south and the north. The Mayor can help through a campaign to promote West Yorkshire businesses to alternative funders.
- We are pleased that business crime is included now in the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan. The next step is for West Yorkshire Police to have a targeted communications campaign to 'report it', to help counter the premise that business crime doesn't matter.
- We are proud adopters of the Fair Work Charter. We need a continued effort to encourage small businesses in West Yorkshire to sign up to the charter and get relevant support.

Procurement that works for small business

- Small business keep wealth in communities. Introduce a target to increase the amount in value of contracts won by SMEs.
- Ensure tender processes for public sector contracts in West Yorkshire do not exclude SMEs. For example, removing any requirement for more than £1M public liability insurance, which is unrealistic for most small businesses.
- We are aware of cases of extreme late payment by local authorities in West Yorkshire. The Mayor should work with business organisations to eliminate late payments in West Yorkshire. Undisputed and valid invoices should be paid by public bodies in West Yorkshire within 30 days.

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