

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL
Wednesday 10 January 2024

1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ATKINSON
Re: Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP's) and Devolution

LSIPs: what are the lessons learned from the first phase with respect to priorities for adapting plans to Devon's needs and what LSIF funds would we expect to get in the next round if we did not agree to devolution.

What are the devolved powers we would obtain that would these help Devon to develop its skills policy and options for collaboration between private sectors which we would not have been able to do without devolution.

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR GILBERT

Devon County Council has worked closely with Devon and Plymouth Chamber of Commerce over the past year, as the lead organisation for the Local Skills Improvement Plan, to ensure a strong integration of the needs of Devon's business and residents within the Plan. This has included sitting as part of the governance and steering group for the development of the plan itself, actively feeding into its evidence base and associated drafting, and working with the Chamber, our colleges and training providers, and the wider business community to ensure that the final LSIP submission to the Department for Education reflected the needs of our economy and people.

As a result of this engagement, the plan is heavily supportive of local need. Key priorities for the County incorporated within the document include a strong focus on providing the right skills and training offer for key sectors such as advanced engineering, digital industries, energy and low carbon, farming and tourism; ensuring training offers are suitably flexible for learners and employers in our rural and coastal areas; an ongoing emphasis on meaningful work experience and supporting young people into training and vocational offers; and support for local business to better recruit skilled staff and upskill existing members of the workforce.

With regards Devolution, as set out within the Government's Levelling Up White Paper, devolved areas can draw upon a wider menu of locally controlled skills funding. This includes a formal role within the development and delivery of the Local Skills Improvement Plan, as well as direct devolution to local partners of significant funding from the Adult Education Budget and other adult skills funds. These powers and funding controls are not currently available to areas without a devolution agreement.

As a devolved area, working with Torbay we would seek to fully draw upon this additional offer of local control and oversight of skills funding and powers, building on our strong existing relationships with businesses, private training providers, colleges, Universities and others to best meet local needs. This would include opportunities to co-design new provision; support additional pathways into work and training for younger people and adults alike; and better focus training offers into communities and groups that may currently find them harder to access.