

LEP - Lancashire Skills and Employment Board

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, 17th October, 2016 at 8.30 am at the Blackpool and The Fylde College, Fleetwood Nautical Campus, Broadwater, Fleetwood, FY7 8JZ.

Present:

Joanne Pickering (Chair)

Lindsay Campbell
Steve Gray

Paul Holme
Bev Robinson

Observers

Sharon Riding - District External Relationship Manager, Cumbria and Lancashire District.
Dean Langton - Strategic Director and Head of Paid Service, Pendle Borough Council.

Also in Attendance

Dr Michele Lawty-Jones - Skills Hub Director, Lancashire Skills Hub.
Lisa Moizer - Coordinator, Lancashire Skills Hub.
Mike Neville, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Lancashire County Council.
Lisa Boulton-Lear, Rebecca Bridge and Andrew Neidzwiecki – Learndirect.

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that apologies for absence had been received from Amanda Melton, Lynne Livesey, Graham Haworth, Mark Allanson, Andy Wood and Sean McGrath (LCC). In addition apologies were presented on behalf of Martin Kelly (LCC) and Holly Tween (LCC).

2. Declarations of Interest

Bev Robinson declared an interest in relation to item 7 as she represented an organisation that would be involved in the Area Based Review.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 7th September 2016

The Chair informed the meeting that she had discussed the availability of future funding from ESIF with Damian Hinds MP, the Minister of State (Department for Work and Pensions) during his recent visit to Lancashire.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 7th September, 2016, are confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Matters Arising

No issues were raised under this heading.

5. Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub - Update

Michele Lawty-Jones presented her report on activity involving the Lancashire Skills Hub since the last meeting and highlighted the following.

1. The Lancashire Enterprise Adviser Network continued to develop with two new Enterprise Coordinators appointed who would work with schools and businesses to roll out the scheme into Blackpool/Morecambe/Preston and Pendle/Hyndburn/Rosendale. It was also noted that the Celebration Event on 30th September, 2016, had been a success, attracting 84 attendees from schools and businesses in those areas currently covered by the scheme and the roll out areas.
2. The SFA NEET project had commenced with performance against profile in Q1 at 65% though this was anticipated to rise to the performance tolerance threshold of 85% by the end of the next quarter. The Committee noted that Janet Jackson (Strategic Partnerships Manager) and Joan Costello Smith from Preston College (the lead accountable body for the project) would attend the next meeting.
3. Three new facilities which had received funding from the Growth Deal programme had been opened recently, including the Science and Engineering Innovation Centre at Runshaw College (Euxton Campus) which would be the venue for the Committee in January 2017.
4. The Lancashire Skills and Employment website had been launched and was available to access at www.lancashireskillshub.co.uk
5. The first of three events in October aimed at raising awareness of employers in relation to the Apprenticeship Levy had been well attended with positive feedback from attendees.
6. The pilot Digital Advantage project aimed at enhancing the digital skills of young people to enable them to progress into apprenticeships in that area of work was progressing with ten schools/colleges signed up. It was noted that an update report on the pilot would be presented to the next meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the report is noted.
2. That further updates in relation to the SFA NEET project and the Digital Advantage pilot are presented to the next meeting.

The Chair informed the meeting that item 6 on the agenda would be considered later as the presenting Officer was not in attendance.

7. Area Based Review - Update

Michele Lawty-Jones updated the Committee on the development of the LEP and Local Authority 'skills conclusion' which had recently been approved by the LEP Board with minor amendments and subsequently shared with the Shadow Combined Authority Leaders.

It was reported that the agreed combined skills conclusion had been presented to the first ABR Steering Group in September which had responded positively. The Committee recognised the work of the ABR Working Group and the preparation undertaken prior to the Steering Group. Further meetings of the Steering Group were planned for November 2016 with a final meeting in February 2017.

In considering the report the Committee recognised that the Lancashire Colleges had a history of working well together, though there were some concerns that the effectiveness of the ABR Steering Group could be reduced if its membership was allowed to become too large. The Committee discussed the potential implications of the ABR and noted that in the event of a College closing the EFA and SFA would ensure that existing students could continue at alternate Colleges with any physical assets reverting to the DfE. It was noted that an element of shared risk in relation to ABR could be included in future Devolution Deals.

Resolved:

1. That the report is noted.
2. That a further report be presented to the next meeting to update the Committee on the outcome of the second ABR Steering Group.

10. Combined Authority/Devolution Deal - Update

Mr Langton updated the Committee on the work of the Lancashire Combined Authority, particularly with regard to the developing working relationship between the Authority and the LEP Board, and reported that Councillor M Townsend from Burnley Borough Council had been appointed as the Combined Authority lead in relation to skills.

The Board noted that whilst clarity from the Government was awaited in some areas following the European Referendum the development and implementation of the 'Northern Powerhouse' (in which the Lancashire LEP would play a role) remained.

Resolved:

1. That the update is noted.

2. That Councillor Townsend be invited to attend the January 2017 meeting to discuss the role of the Committee further and the future development of the Lancashire Skills and Employment Framework.

6. Science and Innovation Audit.

It was reported that the Lancashire LEP/Sheffield City Region bid to investigate the potential impact of science resources on a Northern Powerhouse Advanced Manufacturing Corridor, was one of five national wave one Science and Innovation Audits. Over the summer work had been undertaken to develop an evidence base and examine the hypothesis that all the major Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing sectors would face a similar challenge and assess how well equipped local science/innovation assets were to support the change.

The Committee was informed that the SIA analysis for Lancashire had focussed on aerospace, nuclear, rail and med-tech sectors and had suggested there was a strong match with some of the key technological capabilities identified as priorities which the Committee (through the LEP) had supported via the skills capital programme, including investments in virtual reality environments and additive manufacturing.

Resolved: That the report is noted.

8. European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) - Update

Michele Lawty-Jones referred to the report considered by the LEP Board on the 13th September 2016 in relation the implementation of Lancashire ESIF Strategy and indicative funding allocation and the potential implications of the European Referendum.

It was reported that projects which had been contracted in the normal course of business, by the Autumn Statement 2016 would have their funding guaranteed even after the UK leaves the EU. However, the position of calls made prior to/after the Statement was less clear.

The Committee considered those elements of funding which were deemed to be at risk and noted that whilst £13.66m had been committed to the SFA Opt in for Lancashire it had not been contracted. It was noted that work was continuing on assessing the risks and in relation to identifying potential 'pipeline projects' which could be pursued if required.

Resolved:

1. That the report presented to the LEP Board on the 13th September 2016 is noted.

2. That depending on the level of detail which is made available in the Autumn Statement, Sean McGrath, Development and Corporate Resources at the County Council be invited to attend the next meeting to discuss the matter.

9. An Introduction to Skills Funding Agency, European Social Funded Programme entitled: Employee Skills Support.

It was reported that the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework included a 'Skilled and Productive Workforce' as a key theme and had identified increasing the number of apprenticeships (including higher level and degree) across priority sectors; increasing the number of employers undertaking workforce/succession planning, and engaging with skills provision; and increasing leadership and management capacity and innovation/creativity in small to medium enterprises as priorities within that theme.

The Committee received a presentation in connection with the delivery of a European Social Fund Programme (Employee Skills Support) aimed at engaging employers/employees, up-skilling employees, and supporting a skilled and inclusive labour market which would contribute to economic wellbeing and growth across the Lancashire LEP area.

After the presentation the Committee considered the report and made the following observations.

- Concern was expressed in relation to engagement with the Job Centres across Lancashire and providing support to individuals moving into work. It was suggested that representatives of the Contractor should liaise with the District External Relationship Manager, Cumbria and Lancashire District to identify target areas in order to ensure clear and consistent referral mechanisms, so that Work Coaches could refer customers to the project effectively, with a view to upskilling in the workplace to aid sustainable job outcomes.
- It was considered that any communications with employers regarding the programme should make it clear that any training provided to develop employees was subsidised not free.
- Branding of the programme was important and it was felt that reference to the LEP would help to promote the fact that the programme was aimed at improving benefits across all of Lancashire.
- The Steering Group of relevant local stakeholders to oversee performance and monitor programme impact to deliver Key Performance Objectives was considered vital if the Employees Support in Skills programme is to realise long term benefits for all Lancashire stakeholders. It was noted that once appointed the Strategic Partnerships Manager would lead the Steering Group and report on progress to the LEP via the Committee.

Resolved:

1. That the report and presentation are noted
2. That the report presented is accepted as the first stage of the reporting procedures outlined in the SFA ESF Specification and as a contribution to the Engagement Activity Plan due at month 3 of the contract.
3. That the Prime Contractor be recommended to seek further information in relation to higher level skills and priority.
4. That the Prime Contractor liaise with Sharon Riding - District External Relationship Manager, Cumbria and Lancashire District to develop effective and consistent referral mechanisms for Universal Credit claimants moving into and in employment.
5. That strong links be developed between the programme and existing skills providers in Lancashire in order to ensure that the programme delivers sustainable benefits.
6. That the role of the Lancashire Employee Skills Support Steering Group in overseeing performance and monitoring programme impact is vital in order to ensure the delivery of long term benefits to all Lancashire stakeholders.

11. Reporting to Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Board

It was noted that the following items would be reported to the next meeting of the LEP Board.

- The discussion earlier in the meeting in connection with the Employee Skills Support programme.
- An update on the Area Based Review.
- An update in relation to the developing Enterprise Advisor Network.

12. Any Other Business

Michele Lawty-Jones referred to research work being undertaken by the Construction Industry Training Board in partnership with LEPs across the country in relation to the wider benefits of City Deal programmes.

It was suggested that, provided the cost of being involved was considered to be reasonable, Lancashire should be engage in the research as it would provide useful data in relation to jobs/skills within the construction industry.

13. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting would be held at 8.30am on the 30th November, 2016, in the Crompton and Duerr Room at the Rural Business Centre, Myerscough College, St Michaels Road, Bilsborrow, Preston PR3 0RY.