

LEP - Lancashire Skills and Employment Board

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 30th November, 2016 at 8.30 am at the Crompton and Duerr Room, Rural Business Centre, Myerscough College, St Michaels Road, Bilsborrow, Preston, PR3 0RY

Present

Amanda Melton

Steve Gray
Paul Holme
Lynne Livesey

Joanne Pickering
Bev Robinson
Andy Wood

Observer

Dean Langton
Dr M Lawty-Jones
Sharon Riding

In Attendance

Holly Tween
Andy Walker, Head of Business Growth & Innovation, Lancashire County Council

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that apologies for absence had been received from Graham Haworth, Mark Allanson and Lindsay Campbell.

2. Declarations of Interest

Bev Robinson and Amanda Melton declared an interest in relation to item 8 as they represented organisations involved in the Area Based Review.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2016

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2016 are confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Matters Arising

It was reported that £2,000 would be contributed to the Construction Industry Training Board study in relation to skills shortages across Lancashire in construction and the supply of relevant provision; the study will broaden the report which focused on the City Deal skills and employment implications. The proposal had been received and the study was expected to be completed in March/April 2017. Michele Lawty-Jones requested suggestions for a stakeholder group that would meet to review findings and shape the final report.

5. Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub update

Michele Lawty-Jones, Skills Hub Director, 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. Seventeen additional schools had been engaged in Blackpool and East Lancashire since the last Board meeting, which totalled 41 schools overall.
2. The Labour Market Information fact sheets were available online. The Board were invited to send feedback.
3. The Government had announced £60 million funding targeting ten opportunity areas aiming at helping local children get the best start in life. Blackpool had been identified as an opportunity area and Blackpool Council had invited Graham Cowley, Chair of the Growth Deal Management Board and LEP Board member, to Chair their Partnership Board in relation to the Opportunity Fund.
4. The SFA had written to the ESIF Committee to request support to extend the three opt-in contracts for four months to the end of July 2018. The SFA had also asked to vary the Memorandum of Understanding between the SFA and the LEP to reduce the level of co-finance. This freed up the monies currently allocated to the SFA opt-in (£13.67m). It was commented that the Board would need to plan for when the SFA ESIF funding came to an end after July 2018.
5. The three October events aimed at raising employers' awareness of the Apprenticeship Levy had been well attended and positive feedback had been received from attendees. A two-page spread on the Apprenticeship Levy was published in the Lancashire Business View.

Regarding apprenticeships, there was a general feeling that the Board would benefit from understanding the risks around future capacity within the provider base, and whether the overall provision would correlate with the skills plan for Lancashire. Michele advised that she would be contacting providers regarding this. It was also commented that there was a need to raise the profile of existing local providers with employers.

Resolved: That the report is noted

6. Digital Advantage - Progress Report

Lisa Moizer presented her report on the Digital Advantage project pilot, which was in response to key issues identified in the Creative and Digital sector report. The pilot project is being delivered by The White Room. She highlighted the following:

1. The project aimed to deliver 16 hours free classroom teaching supported by online advice. This would be delivered in different ways in different schools and colleges and would lead to learners being linked up with employers.
2. The project was expected to open up over 100 apprenticeship opportunities across Lancashire. So far, approximately 90 pupils had started on the programme.
3. It was noted that delivery had begun in nine schools, and Lisa confirmed that there was a contingency in place to either increase intake numbers at other schools or work with NEET individuals in the Preston area if the tenth school did not process engagement with the programme.
4. Colleges were already indicating that they may want to continue the programme beyond the pilot, and contribute funding. It was commented that this, along with continued part funding from the Board, would make the programme more sustainable. The Board could make a decision on this once outcome results were available to consider.
5. Digital Lancashire were beginning to develop Locality Hubs, and the steering groups were engaging employers, and it was expected that in the summer there would be a clearer picture of what opportunities businesses could offer. It was noted that there were continuous job adverts for programmers and software developers and that skills in SQL and JavaScript were often demanded by employers.

It was felt that the Board needed to be satisfied that employers had infrastructures in place for the apprentices. It was also commented that the sustainability of the programme would need to be properly considered by the Board in the future, as it was felt that this could be business critical for the Lancashire skills supply chain.

Resolved: that the Committee note the report.

7. Adult Learning in Lancashire

The Committee received a presentation from Amanda Melton on the Lancashire

Adult Learning (LAL) contract in Lancashire.

The following points were highlighted:

- Two years ago the LAL provision, overseen by Lancashire County Council had been judged as 'unsatisfactory' by Ofsted. Amanda Melton was appointed interim Principal and in March 2016 Ofsted had rated it as 'good'. LAL provision transferred to Nelson and Colne College in the summer of 2016 and the college would be moving to Brierfield Mill in East Lancashire in August 2017, placing LAL in one of the most disadvantaged areas of Lancashire.
- Key focusses of the college were to promote social renewal, geographical spread, improve health/social wellbeing, focus on disadvantaged and those least likely to participate, prepare people for training and employment, and to collect fee income from those who could afford to pay.
- Local drivers include Digital Inclusion, creating prosperity, the Future and Inclusive Workforce themes within the Skills and Employment Strategic Framework, and Starting Well, Living Well and Ageing Well.
- 2015-16 had recorded 13,256 unique learners; the target for 2016-17 was 14,000.
- 37% of learners had progressed into sustained employment, which was considered a good outcome, taking into consideration the characteristics of the target customer group. The college was working closely with the Job Centre.
- 27% households in Lancashire had no internet access, and largely comprised older people and those in the lowest socio-economic group in deprived areas.
- Targeted family learning – 241 primary schools had been identified with low Key Stage 2 attainment. Working relationships had been established with 74 of these so far.
- Going forward, provision would be aligned to traditional college offers, and to focus on areas of employment shortage. A joint post with the East Lancashire Hospital Trust had recently been established.
- Links with Blackburn and Blackpool ACL would be refined and developed to ensure joined up working

Resolved: that the information is noted, and a copy of the presentation is circulated with the minutes.

8. Area Based Review - Progress Report

Michele Lawty-Jones updated the Committee on the Area Based Review.

The second and third steering group meetings had taken place in November, both of which had been positive.

Two potential structural changes were reported:

1. Merging Burnley College with Accrington & Rossendale College.
2. Merging Preston's College with UCLan. The exact model was unclear yet, as DFE are reviewing policies around merging FE/HE organisations.

As part of the stakeholder engagement process, led by JARDU, a questionnaire had been circulated to collect views from employers. Joanne Pickering reported that she had engaged employers via the Lancashire HR Forum; this was in addition to responses from other employer representative bodies and employer contacts provided by colleges. Whilst it was commented that the sample of employers was relatively small, those received had reinforced that employers would value greater collaboration across colleges and joint approaches to marketing.

Lancashire Colleges were considering areas where colleges could collaborate with the LEP and the Combined Authority, which would be developed into recommendations before the next meeting of the steering group.

Resolved: that the update is noted.

9. Combined Authority update

Dean Langton updated the Committee on the work of the Combined Authority.

He reported that there was no appetite to change the fundamental operation of the Skills and Employment Board, recognising the committee's progress to date, but that it had been suggested that Councillor M Townsend, the Combined Authority lead for skills, should take the Chairmanship of the Committee, which would encourage collaboration between the LEP and the Combined Authority. Councillor Townsend would be invited to the January meeting of the Skills and Employment Board.

It was not proposed to change the Skills and Employment Strategic Framework, but to add to it. There was recognition that the educational attainment in parts of Lancashire was not what it should be and there would be a focus on provision to 0-16s in addition to existing work, and possibly a new committee member specifically focusing on this area.

Any formal changes to the Committee would require approval by the LEP Board before implementation.

Resolved: that the update is noted.

10. Policy Update

Paul Holme reported on policy changes and highlighted that:

1. In relation to apprenticeships, work was ongoing by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) to put in place the provider delivery base, and that so far around 220 employers had applied to be providers.
2. A Technical and Further Education Bill was going through parliament.
3. The Autumn Statement had not clarified the Government's policy position around Skills.
4. The Northern Powerhouse Strategy had set out skills priorities as
 - i. Improving education and working with schools
 - ii. Importance of digital skills
 - iii. Importance of careers education
 - iv. Importance of apprenticeships, and the need for the North to attract skilled workers

It was commented that the outcomes from these should be built into the Board's future planning. The Mayfield Review was also mentioned, and the need to link into Management Skills and the Productivity Leadership Group.

Lynne Livesey reported that the Higher Education and Research Bill was in the review stage, to be submitted 26 January 2017. This would change the way research funding would be handled, with oversight being given to a single body. The Teaching Excellence Framework would see universities ranked bronze, silver or gold. The National Union of Students had been very critical, and had made representations.

Resolved: that the information provided is noted.

11. Apprenticeship Growth Plan - Progress Report

It was agreed to defer this item to the 11 January 2017 meeting. In the meantime, any comments should be forwarded to Lisa Moizer.

12. ESF: 'Moving On' Project - Performance and Progress

Joan Costello-Smith and Darren Kellet, Preston's College, presented an update on the ESF Moving On Project. Two case studies were also tabled, alongside the report already circulated.

Ms Costello-Smith highlighted the following points:

- The project was performing well and had a range of partners delivering predominantly to NEET 16-18 year olds.
- There was an issue with the level of claims against the profile, due to the time needed to collect and collate evidence and data for the SFA causing

a 3-4 month lag between delivery and reporting. There had also been some instances where paperwork had not been submitted to the College correctly which caused delays. The College was undertaking a 100% check of all evidence prior to a claim, and the checks were onerous.

- There was concern that this would impact on the 6 month performance monitoring point in January. It was not clear exactly what the repercussions would be. It was noted that should there be funding reduction the project could reapply for funding and this would allow the programme to re-profile.
- Some providers had been requesting funding for qualifications ineligible for ESF funding which also caused hold ups. It was noted that although qualifications may be ineligible for ESF funding there would still be learning outcomes from these for that Lancashire young person.

There was concern that activity was taking place that might impact on learners, the economy and NEETs but because of the lag between delivery and reporting this would not be evident for three months, and the Committee would therefore only ever have access to three month old data.

It was requested that the Steering Group convene to ensure no opportunities were being missed, and to consider how to speed up the processes around data collection.

Ms Costello-Smith and Mr Kellett were thanked for their attendance.

Resolved:

1. That the presentation and report are noted
2. That the Steering Group be requested to convene to discuss opportunities and to consider how to improve data collection processes

13. January Meeting

It was proposed that the January meeting would be extended and split into two separate parts, a formal part and an informal part, and was expected to run until around 2.30pm.

The first part would be used to consider the formal items including the capacity building plans for the ESF SFA opt-in projects – Employee Skills Support (Learndirect) and Access to Employment (Preston's College).

The second part of the meeting would be used for review and future planning, and to consider in particular:

- Achievements to date
- Combined Authority – aspirations and how to correlate the framework and areas to build on
- Areas of focus going forward

It was suggested that Sheffield or another area could be invited to attend to talk about their devolution deal.

Following the meeting, agreement would be made in regard to the refresh of the Skills and Employment Strategic Framework and key goals.

It was noted that Councillor Townsend would be invited to the January meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the January meeting be extended to include an 'informal' discussion around future planning
2. That Councillor Townsend be invited to the extended January meeting
3. That the capacity building plans for the ESF activity with Learndirect and Preston's College are reviewed and approved

14. Reporting to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Board

This item was not discussed.

15. Any Other Business

The <https://lancashire.co.uk/ViewFunding.aspx> was under development and it was suggested that some information from the Committee should be included.

Resolved: that Lisa Moizer review the website and provide relevant information to Lisa Edge for inclusion.

16. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled at 08.30 on 11 January 2017 at Runshaw College (Euxton Campus), Euxton Lane, Chorley PR7 6AQ, and would be an extended meeting.