

## **Private and Confidential**

### **Lancashire Skills Board**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 11th June, 2015 at 8.00am in the Room A07 - A Floor, County Hall, Preston.**

**Present:**

Amanda Melton (Chair)

Steve Gray  
Paul Holme  
Lynne Livesey

Joanne Pickering  
Bev Robinson

**Observers**

Debbie Corcoran, Head of Employer and Delivery Services (North West) Skills Funding Agency.

Cat Settle, Skills Funding Agency Partnership Manager designate.

**In Attendance**

Andy Walker, Head of Business Growth, Lancashire County Council.

Mike Neville, Company Services Team, Lancashire County Council.

Michele Lawty-Jones, Shills Hub Director designate.

Dave Brennan, Interim Skills Hub Director.

Ian Ruff, Consultant to the Skills Board.

John McCreadie, Director, ekosgen.

**1. Welcome and Apologies.**

All those present introduced themselves and the Chair noted that apologies had been received from A Atherton and G Haworth.

**2. Declarations of Interests.**

The Chair and Bev Robinson declared an interest in relation to item 8 on the agenda as they represented organisations which were involved in makings bids for funding from the Skills Capital programme. Mr Walker informed the meeting that as the report did not involve the Committee making any decisions about specific applications it would not be necessary for members of the Committee to exclude themselves from any discussion.

**3. Minutes of the last meeting.**

**Resolved:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2015 are confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

#### **4. Matters Arising**

Mr Ruff informed the meeting that whilst individual sectors would respond to the consultation on a Dual Mandate for Adult Education it had been difficult to produce a collective response from the Committee as suggested at the last meeting.

With regard to the decision to adopt a neutral approach in relation to a proposed 'virement case' request from a College Debbie Corcoran reported that the SFA had considered the request and determined that it was not eligible for support. Debbie added that this would be the last meeting she would be attending as she was due to move to the newly formed Intervention Team at the SFA and Cat Settle would attend future meetings of the Committee.

##### **Resolved:**

1. That the updates set out above are noted.
2. That the Committee place on record their thanks to Debbie Corcoran for all her support and contribution to the work of the Skills Board and wish her well for the future.

#### **5. Skills Evidence Base presentation**

John McCreadie, Director from the specialist economic development and regeneration consultancy, Ekosgen, presented a detailed report on the evidence base on skills and employment. In considering the report the members of the Committee identified a number of issues, including:

- Lancashire currently has a higher proportion of apprenticeships in the workforce than the national figure and there was concern that a ceiling would be reached in the future. However, it was recognised that the national average for higher apprenticeships had not been reached in Lancashire and so there was an opportunity to explore and develop that area.
- Factors such as salary, housing and schools were also considered important in retaining a skilled workforce for Lancashire. Currently individuals from the 20-24 and 30-34 age groups were more likely to move elsewhere due to perceived better opportunities or higher salaries.
- In the future there would be difficulties around recruiting skilled and experienced personnel with shortages in skilled trades as the construction sector grows. The visitor economy continued to show good growth while manufacturing was in decline. The Committee acknowledged that whilst it was a controversial issue Shale Gas extraction would have an impact on employment in Lancashire if it were to proceed due to the significant number of associated job opportunities.
- It was noted that Lancashire would need to get more out of its workforce in the future and that industry must become more proactive in relation to training its employees rather than relying on the public sector which would be subject to

increasing economic constraints.

On behalf of the Board the Chair thanked Mr McCreadie for his informative report and suggested that the issues raised be discussed further at the Away Day on the 28<sup>th</sup> July in the light of the consultation on the draft Skills and Employment Strategy.

**Resolved:** That the information set out in the report presented and the comments of the Committee as set out above are taken into account when developing the Skills and Employment Strategy for Lancashire.

## **6. Development of the Skills Strategy/Strategic framework.**

Dave Brennan, Interim Skills Hub Director, presented a report on the first draft of the Lancashire Employment and Skills Strategic Framework and invited members of the Committee to comment on the contents.

- It was noted that there were a number of key action points attached to each of the 7 strategic priorities set out in the Framework and whilst construction was not identified as a priority it would be addressed as a sub theme. In addition the provision of information/advice would be viewed as a cross cutting theme under Priority 7.
- Whilst recognising that it had limited influence regarding the attainment of young people aged 16 and 19 the Committee agreed that efforts should be made to encourage schools to improve attainment in the future in order to provide better qualified entrants into the workforce.
- With regard to Priority 5 it was noted that projects regarding NEETS and skills for the unemployed were in development though it was acknowledged that further consideration may need to be given to investment in those projects in the light of any announcement as part of the Governments budget in July.
- Members of the Committee agreed that in the future employers needed to be more engaged with skills and provide investment as referred to in Priority 6.
- It was suggested that a paragraph be included in the Framework to acknowledge the potential future devolution of local government and the dual accountability of the LEP and any Combined Authority in relation to employment.
- With regard to the initial consultation on the Framework it was noted that discussions would take place with officers at local authorities before being referred to individual authorities for decision. Chambers of Trade and Job Centre Plus would also be consulted.
- It was noted that new materials/resources were being developed which could be provided to coaches/mentors and other intermediaries in order to keep them informed of developments.

**Resolved:**

1. That the comments of the Committee, as set out above, in relation to the contents of the draft Lancashire Employment and Skills Strategic Framework are noted and taken into consideration during development of the Framework as set out at Annex 1 to the report presented.
2. That local authorities be consulted in accordance with the process set out in the report presented as part of the next phase of developing the Framework prior to the wider consultation launch.
3. That the following milestones for launching and consulting on the draft Strategic Framework are agreed.

Local Authority Consultation	By early July
Final Evidence Base	By early July
Sector Skills Action Plans	By w/c July 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Board agree Strategic Framework for consultation (Away Day)	End July
2x consultation events	Early August/Mid September
Final Report for approval to the LEP Board	6 <sup>th</sup> October
Agree Final Strategic Framework launch	mid / end Oct.

4. That the suggested mechanism for providers to respond to the Strategic Framework once it has been finalised, as set out at Annex 2 to the report presented, is agreed.

**7. Ofsted meeting feedback.**

Steve Gray reported that representatives from Ofsted had indicated at a meeting with providers that they were interested in many elements of the proposed Skills and Employment Strategy including supply/demand levels and the number/quality of apprenticeships.

It was suggested that in the future Ofsted anticipated that the LEP would hold providers to account against agreed priorities and this role would be exercised through the Skills Board.

**Resolved:** That the update is noted.

**8. Skills Capital - progress update**

Andy Walker presented a report on the management of the Skills Capital process and outlined progress/issues in relation to the initial round of projects and the timeline/approach for developing projects for the second year of the programme.

It was reported that the seven projects previously considered by the Committee had been referred to and approved by the LEP Board. The SFA Capital Team had subsequently raised some information issues regarding some of the projects which would be clarified in parallel with the development of the Grant Funding

Agreement for each project.

With regard to the revised timetable for future commissioning members of the Committee discussed the Expression of Interest stage and noted that providers/colleges would need to be given advance warning of the limited timescale between the launch of the EOI process and submission date.

**Resolved:** That the updates are noted.

**9. Communications Strategy and Programme of Work**

Mr Walker informed the meeting that he had to leave due to another commitment and asked that consideration of items 9 – 12 be deferred until the next meeting.

**Resolved:** That consideration of items 9 – 12 on the agenda is deferred until the next meeting.

**10. Employer Engagement - plans for Boost/Skills offer for business.**

Consideration of item 10 on the agenda was deferred until the next meeting.

**11. Membership Review**

Consideration of item 11 on the agenda was deferred until the next meeting.

**12. Away day - content and arrangements**

Consideration of item 12 on the agenda was deferred until the next meeting.

**13. Any Other Business.**

Members of the Committee discussed the circulation of papers and it was suggested that in future the agenda should be circulated five days before the meeting.

**Resolved:** That the agenda for future meetings of the Skills Board be circulated five days before the date of the meeting.

**14. Date of next meeting.**

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting would be held at 8.00am on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2015 in Scholars at the University of Central Lancashire, Fylde Road, Preston.