

## **LEP - Skills and Employment Advisory Panel**

### **Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 9th June, 2022 at 8.30 am as a Teams Virtual Meeting - Teams**

#### **Present**

Alison Robinson and Amanda Melton (Chair – in part)

Neil Conlon	Kate Quinn
Ruth England	Professor Wendy Robinson
Edwina Grant OBE	Neil Shaw
Gareth Lindsay	Stephen Sykes
Nicola Mortimer	Liz Tapner

#### **Observers**

Paul Evans, Assistant Director, Area Lead BEIS  
Stephen Jones  
Heather Murray, Senior Partnership Manager Lancashire, DWP

#### **In Attendance**

Sara Gaskell  
Dr Michelle Lawty-Jones, Skill Hub Director, Lancashire County Council  
Lisa Moizer, Lancashire Skills Hub  
Andy Walker, Head of Service - Business Growth, Lancashire County Council  
Andy Milroy, Democratic Services Manager (Companies), Lancashire County Council

#### **1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

Amanda Melton CBE, the outgoing Chair attended for the first part of the meeting to welcome the new Chair, Alison Robinson, and thank the Panel for all their work during her term as Chair. The Panel formally thanked Amanda for her service.

The new Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including guest attendee, Paul Faulkner, Local Democracy Reporter.

Apologies were received from Peter Caney, Bev Robinson OBE, Cllr Karen Buckley, Mark Allanson and Dr Fazal Dad.

#### **2. Declaration of Interests**

None

### 3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 February 2022 and Matters Arising

- **Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2022 be confirmed as an accurate record.

Under Matters Arising Dr Michele Lawty-Jones, Director of the Lancashire Skills Hub provided an update on the following:

- Skills Bootcamps: Just under 1.3mn in funding has been received from the DfE for the Skills Bootcamps for the 2022/23 financial year. A procurement process has been launched.
- Grant Renewals: A grant funding offer has been provided by the Careers and Enterprise company, valid from September 2022 to August 2023. The contract with Inspira will be extended.
- Grant offers have also been received from the DCMS for the Digital Skills Partnership.

### 4. Transition from ESIF to UKSPF

Andy Walker, Acting Director – Growth, Environment and Planning, Lancashire County Council and Dr Michele Lawty-Jones presented an update on the deployment of the UKSPF fund across Lancashire, detailing the following:

- The programme contributes to the government's Levelling Up Agenda, replacing the previous ESIF programme, providing less funding overall - the total Lancashire UKSPF allocation over three years is £54m.
- Blackburn with Darwin, Blackpool, and Lancashire County Council (CC) will receive additional DfE 'Multiply' funding.
- DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) will oversee the deployment of the fund.
- Investment Priorities for the Fund concern three areas:
  - Communities and Place (2022-2025): Community infrastructure, community projects, crime prevention etc.
  - Local Business (2022-2025): Job creation, business start-up, technology development etc.
  - People and Skills (2024-2025): Upskilling adults in work, supporting the unemployed, employment support for those furthest from the labour market

- Multiply: Focusing on raising the numeracy levels of adults.
- Several challenges with the programme were highlighted, particularly concerns around funding. There is a risk that the expertise and the locally delivered projects under the ESIF programme will be hindered due to reduced funding under UKSPF, and some programmes may have to stop completely. Funding for third sector organisations will be possible for the first two years of the programme under People and Skills.
- The impact across local authorities (LAs) will be disproportionate due to the varying allocation of funding.
- Details of Live ESF Projects (May 2022) were presented, focusing on the Lancashire Skills Escalator and support on each step, and the risks regarding gaps in provision – including support to economically inactive and the most disadvantages, young people at risk of or NEET, and upskilling in the workplace.
- The majority of ESF projects will be due to stop any new starts by mid-2023, with some stopping starts as soon as December 2022.
- Key timelines associated with the project include:
  - Investment plans are to be submitted by the 14 LAs between the 30<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> August to DLUHC. The funding period will extend from April 2022 to March 2025, with delivery commencing in October 2022, dependent on approval from the DLUHC
  - Multiply Investment Plans are to be submitted by the three top-tier authorities by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022, with provision to be delivered from September 2022 to March 2025 – dependent on approval from the DfE.

The programme will be delivered in cooperation with Lancashire's Economic Development Group (LEEDG).

- Authorities will be given the opportunity to 'opt-in' for existing county wide services (currently delivering under ESF) through a series of Dragons' Den style sessions.
- The DWP has launched a series of new programmes focused on employment and skills development, but there is a gap in support available for economically inactive and young people at risk of / or NEET. There is concern that this lack of provision will worsen under the new UKSPF programme
- The Multiply programme focuses on improving the numeracy skills of adults 19 and over. Indicative outcomes of the programmes success include:

- 1) An increased number of adults achieving maths qualifications, up to and including level 2
  - 2) An increased number of adults participating maths qualifications, up to and including level 2
  - 3) Increased number of adults participating, acquiring and evidencing skills through non-qualification provision
  - 4) Improved labour market outcomes
  - 5) Increased adult numeracy
- A Pan Lancashire consultation has been undertaken with the three LAs by the Skills Hub, with a second due to take place on 17<sup>th</sup> July.
  - EOI and pipeline forms have been issued by Blackburn with Darwin and Lancashire CC.
  - Further clarity is needed from the DfE regarding the grant offer terms and conditions before delivery can commence, targeted to begin in autumn.

Comments and questions raised were as follows:

The Board raised concerns around the significant reduction in funding and asked if there were any ways the board could act to offset this. Michele emphasised the need for a letter to be sent from the board to the LAs Chief Executives highlighting the anticipated issues (SEE decision below).

The Board also clarified that UKSPF funding also covers community projects which were not part of the ESIF programme, putting even greater pressure on LAs to prioritise funds. A suggestion was made that programmes could be funded on a priority basis, looking at 2-3 projects. It was suggested that the letter to CEOs therefore focus on the risks articulated and the skills and employment priorities identified to support local decision making.

Paul Evans, BEIS Assistant Director reassured the board that DLUHC will support with the transition and delivery as much as possible.

**Resolved:** The Board agreed that a letter be sent on behalf of the Board to the Chief Executives of the 15 Lancashire Local Authorities to highlight upcoming challenges regarding funding, and to stress the need for coordination between authorities to facilitate effective delivery.

## **5. Food and Agriculture Study**

Cassie Holden, Amion Consulting presented the findings from the Lancashire

Food and Agriculture LMI Study. The following points were highlighted:

- Lancashire is a key contributor to the Food and Agriculture (F&A) economy, comprising 6.8% of total GVA in 2021, contributing £2bn per year to the Lancashire economy.
- Over 8,000 business in Lancashire in 2021, comprised mainly of small business
- The Food and Agriculture industry is a key employer for Lancashire: 1 in 10 in Lancashire are employed in the F&A industry, higher than the regional or national share by comparison, 1 in 5 jobs are employed by the F&A industry in West Lancashire.
- The F&A industry is a comparatively lower paid sector.
- Over 30% of the F&A workforce is aged 16-24, providing a large proportion of young people with their first work opportunities.
- Almost 50% of F&A industry jobs are classed as 'Skill Level 1' jobs, leaving the sector vulnerable to automation.
- There has been a decline in the number of apprenticeship and FE starts declined between 2019/19 and 2020/2021, impacted by COVID.
- The industries workforce is comparatively less well qualified. Key barriers to investing in skills training included time limitations, funds, lack of expertise and staff turnover.
- Economic output (GVA) in Lancashire is expected to rise by 38.1% over the next 10 years, a quicker rate than Lancashire's economy as a whole. Employment rates are forecast to increase by 10,500 over the next 15 years, owing largely to food services.
- The F&A labour market is being put under greater stress due to the loss of EU workers (due to Brexit and greater restrictions on immigration), a smaller workforce, and perceptions of the food industry as a short-term career option.
- Response to this: Skills support is increasing for those in roles most at risk of automation, and the industry is working with employers that lower skilled / paid job can still provide satisfying work.
- A consumer shift toward 'healthy' food and buying in / eating out means there is a need for greater research and development, focusing on the nutritional value of food. There is also a demand for customer service skills to service the eating out trend.
- Increasing environmental awareness requires a greater focus on

environmentally friendly production that is sustainable. This requires skilled workers who can develop and implement the necessary techniques.

- The Agricultural Transition Plan 2021-2024 and the new immigration regime requires greater leadership and management skills to help workers adapt to the changing labour market and regulatory environment.

Comments and questions raised were as follows:

- Gareth Lindsay raised the issue of a lack of apprenticeship provision in the food industry and more permanent forms of employment need to be provided to increase the industry's appeal. Business managers need employment immediately and often can't afford the time it takes to re-skill, so it was suggested that the Board look at ways to shorten training periods.
- Gareth also queried whether the study's employment and wage figures in the report accounted for part-time workers – It was confirmed that the figures were based on both full-time and part-time jobs.
- Michele expanded on resources under development to help attract young people to the food and agriculture sector, with funding received from Lancashire County Council's rural fund to support a range of careers interventions. This includes investment in Start in Lancashire, a digital skills platform for careers provision, and the development of a Food and Agriculture section. A Virtual Reality project with Myerscough college will also allow food and agriculture businesses to 'bring' students to their facilities via VR technology.
- An 'employer carousel' scheme is being piloted with the Careers Hub and West Lancashire College, allowing students to engage directly with key businesses. A project is also underway to identify how food and agriculture can be embedded into the curriculum.

**Resolved:** The Skills and Employment Advisory Panel noted the presentation.

## **6. Local Skills Improvement Plan**

Babs Murphy, Chief Executive Officer, North and West Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, provided an update on Lancashire's Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), noting that her colleague Geoff Mason would be unable to co-present as planned. The following key points were highlighted:

- Businesses want a central resource for finding out who could deliver training for key skill requirements.
- There needs to be more industry placements for trainers, as businesses were finding trainers were providing outdated information to their employees.

- Businesses want greater engagement with schools, as well as a toolkit to help assist with skills-needs analysis
- Businesses want more condensed, modular-style skills training
- Overall, the feedback provided was largely positive, however, the report's findings have received no response from the Department for Education, only indicating that findings may contribute to guidance to be produced later in the year.
- There will be national roll out of LSIPs starting September 2022, with the roll-out reviewed annually.
- The future purpose of LSIPs is uncertain due to the lack of guidance from the government. Further guidance on the role of LSIPs is anticipated later this year but no specific dates have been provided.

Comments and questions raised were as follows:

Michele commented on the usefulness of the information in the report for supporting the bid for the Skills Bootcamps and other areas.

Alison raised the point that the report could inform how funding is used under devolved authorities. Babs noted that a new fund will replace the Strategic Development Fund & LSIPs next financial year, and will be called the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF).

**Strategic Development Fund – Chair, Alison Robinson**

Following on from the above presentation, the Chair provided an overview of recent changes to the SDF fund, highlighting the following:

The max grant bid available is £2.75m. Myerscough is the lead college.

The bids are centred around three key areas

- 1) The utilisation of sustainable energy
- 2) Cyber security – led by Blackpool and Fylde College
- 3) Creating a sustainability curriculum – led by Runshaw College

It was noted that bid outcomes are expected to be provided by the end of June and that funds have to be spent by March 2023

**Resolved:** The Skills and Employment Advisory Panel noted the presentation.

## **7. Up-date from the Lancashire Skills & Employment Hub and partners**

Dr Michele Lawty-Jones, Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub Director, provided an update from the Lancashire Skills & Employment Hub and partners, highlighting the following:

- The Careers Hub has recruited new Enterprise Advisers, reducing volunteer vacancies from 21 to 6 across the 156 institutions - on track to meet targets by end of July.
- Lancashire continues to be showcased by the Careers and Enterprise Company as an area of good practice, with the partnership delivering a presentation at a Department for Education (DfE) roundtable event.
- Communities of Practices for T-level route ways continue to meet. All Lancashire colleges have indicated their intention to deliver T-level qualifications by 2024 A new Digital T-level of for cyber security is also in development.
- An occupational Traineeship in textiles has been established for 16–24-year-olds to address worker shortage. Blackburn College are offering the Traineeship and are working with textiles businesses in East and Central Lancashire.
- An in-person Team Tech Live event is planned for March 2023 following the success of the virtual events.
- The programme sponsored by BAE Systems with Innovate Her and Create Education is successfully being delivered in schools following disruption from Omicron in the Autumn term.
- An invite is to be sent for the upcoming graduation for students of the Digital Advantage Programme (supporting students with special educational needs) at County Hall, Preston on the 13<sup>th</sup> July.
- The Moving on Project, supporting NEET students, is due to stop starts in December, marking the project's close.
- The Careers and Enterprise Company have provided funds to support tracking activity to support children without a secure post-16 employment destination, activity will be focus on the LCC area and in Blackpool.
- The Adult Skills Forum continues to meet, focusing on moving people into work. Vacancies remain high and engagement remains low.
- A new united for Ukraine website has been launched to highlight job opportunities for Ukrainian refugees in the Northwest.



- The Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub has received just under £1.3m in funding from the DfE for Skills Bootcamps, and a new project manager and project officer has been appointed. A procurement process is underway to allocate the funds to employer provider consortiums.
- The Growth Deal Programme has generated £54.1m in social value so far
- The Lancashire Apprenticeship Service has now been launched to support companies in Lancashire to recruit and support apprentices
- The Lancashire Levy Transfer Network is in operation, allowing companies to pledge their unspent levy funds. Just under £500k has been pledged so far, and funds are being transferred to SMEs to pay for apprenticeship training
- Funding has been secured via the Lancashire Economic Recovery Grant (LERG) to incentivise SMEs to recruit their first young apprentice (16–24-year-olds)
- The Lancashire Cyber Alliance has launched
- New careers resources are under-development, based on feedback from young people on how they would like local Labour Market Intelligence to be presented – the materials are to be launched at the Lancashire Careers Hub Conference in June.

**Resolved:** The Skills and Employment Advisory Panel noted the update.

## **8. Reporting to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership**

The committee agreed that a letter should be submitted to the 15 local authority chief executives, detailing the key findings and concerns raised in the presentation on USKPF.

The findings of both the Food and Agriculture report and LSIP presentation should also be highlighted to the board, including circulation of the final F&A report once available.

## **9. Any Other Business**

It was noted that the informal meeting of the Board had been cancelled, Michele will re-arrange a date to meet in person as soon as possible.

## **10. Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next formal Lancashire Skills and Employment Advisory

Panel meeting is scheduled to take place on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022 at 08:30am as a virtual Microsoft Teams meeting