

LEP - Lancashire Skills and Employment Board

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 7th March, 2024 at 8.00 am at the Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present

Wes Johnson (Chair)

Councillor Karen Buckley
Nina Dixon
Andrew Ireland
Paul Jones

Sarah Kemp
Nicola Mortimer
Lisa O'Loughlin
Liz Tapner

Observers

Sam Blenkinsopp – Department for Work and Pensions

Stephen Jones – Department for Education

County Councillor Jayne Rear - Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Lancashire County Council

In Attendance

Dr Michele Lawty-Jones, Director, Lancashire Skills Hub

Sara Gaskell, Manager, Lancashire Skills Hub

Simon Lawrence, Director of Growth and Regeneration, Lancashire County Council

Hannah Lysons, Democratic Services Officer, Lancashire County Council

James Farr, Think UK

David Brennan, Think UK

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from Fazal Dad, Helen Crossley, Peter Caney, Steven Sykes, Jacqui Old CBE, and Mark Davies.

2. Declaration of Interests

Multiple Board members declared a potential interest in Agenda Item 6 but as the item in question was for information, it was deemed there was no conflict of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 07 December 2023

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held on 07 December 2023 were

approved as an accurate record.

4. Matters Arising

None

5. Lancashire County Combined Authority and Devolution

Simon Lawrence, Director of Growth and Regeneration, Lancashire County Council provided a verbal update to the Board on the arrangement for Devolution and the establishment of the County Combined Authority.

It was reported to the Board that as the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership will cease from the end of March, any decisions to be taken by the Board will go through shadow Combined Authority arrangements in the interim whilst the governance structure for the County Combined Authority and regarding LEP integration to Local Authorities are finalised.

The Board were assured that there was a desire to see the work being done by members continue and the importance of the work being done by the Board was highlighted.

Resolved: That the Board note the update provided.

6. Adult Education Budget (AEB) and Devolution

James Farr and David Brennan of Think UK gave a presentation to the Board regarding findings to-date from the review of AEB strategies and models in other Combined Authority areas and local consultation.

Several priorities for Lancashire were suggested, as well as potential approaches to commissioning. Work will continue with the Lancashire Skills Hub and the steering group to develop a draft strategy and commissioning plan for Adult Education Budget readiness in Lancashire ahead of proposed Devolution arrangements.

There was a time of questions and answers.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted.

7. Update from the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub and partners

Dr Michele Lawty-Jones presented a report (circulated) providing the Board with an update from the Lancashire Skills Hub and partners. The following key points

were highlighted:

- Schools and colleges are currently achieving an average of 6.4 Gatsby Benchmarks against a target of 5, with continued performance above the national average on all eight benchmarks. 39% of schools and colleges are achieving all 8 Benchmarks.
- The Early Connect pilot started formally in October 2023, with 92% of sixth forms and colleges within Lancashire participating in the pilot.
- Funding has now been confirmed by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) for three projects and the sponsorship of TeenTech, which also includes the roll out of Cyber Fairy Tales to a further 60 primary schools.
- Skills Bootcamp providers have enrolled 812 learners, which exceeds the DfE target of 700 learners. To date, 199 learners have been offered their guaranteed interview and 130 learners have achieved successful outcomes into employment or progressing in their current role.
- The full amount of the £6.4m of grant funding requested for Wave 5 of Skills Bootcamps was granted and the grant offer received. The target number of learners for Wave 5 is 1,714. Funds are being awarded through a mix of contract extensions and an Invitation to Tender (ITT) process.
- The annual Skills Pledge celebration event took place at County Hall on 8th December 2023 with over 100 Lancashire businesses in attendance. County Councillor Phillippa Williamson, Pater Caney from BAE Systems and Georgia Thomas from Victrex spoke at the event and County Councillors Jayne Rear and Aidy Riggott presented the Lancashire businesses with their certificates.
- A bid has been submitted by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) for WorkWell targeting 5000 economically inactive people across a 7 place based project approach in Lancashire, in conjunction with the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub, local authorities and place partners across the areas. An announcement on whether the bid was successful is expected in April.
- DWP have announced the Universal Support programme which is a supported employment programme aimed at supporting economically inactive people back into work and supporting them through employment. Due to start in Autumn 2024, it is likely that Lancashire will be included in the first phase of the programme with the local supported employment programme currently being delivered by Lancashire County Council expected to be pivoted in and scaled accordingly, as well as new activity in the two unitary areas.

Resolved: That the report and updates provided be noted.

8. Any Other Business

None

9. **Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted to the Board that there is an intention to publish a further programme of meetings for the Lancashire Skills and Employment Board, recognising that the Board will be meeting during an interim period whilst ongoing work to transition LEP functions into Local Authorities continues.

At the time of the meeting the date of the next meeting was still to be confirmed.

Resolved: That the date of the next meeting is to be confirmed once further information regarding LEP integration into Local Authorities is received.