

LEP - Lancashire Skills and Employment Board

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 22nd February, 2017 at 8.00am in Cabinet Room D - The Henry Bolingbroke Room, County Hall, Preston

Present

Amanda Melton

Lindsay Campbell
Steve Gray
Paul Holme
Lynne Livesey

Joanne Pickering
Bev Robinson
Andy Wood

Observers

Dean Langton
Sharon Riding

In Attendance

Michele Lawty-Jones, Lancashire Skills Hub
Lisa Moizer, Lancashire Skills Hub
Holly Tween, Company Services, Lancashire County Council

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

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

2. Declarations of Interest

Amanda Melton and Bev Robinson declared an interest in Item 12 as they represented organisations involved in the Area Based Review.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2017

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2017 are confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Matters Arising

Any matters arising were dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

5. Skills Hub Update

Michele Lawty-Jones presented the update report on Lancashire Skills Hub activity and highlighted the following:

The expansion of the Lancashire Enterprise Adviser Network with Inspira had exceeded the end of January target, as the network had now grown to include 62 schools. The Chair expressed thanks to Inspira and the Enterprise Coordinators Kay Vaughan, Penny Heyes and Andrew Heydeman for exceeding the engagement target.

The Careers and Enterprise Company has communicated that the Department for Education has confirmed funding for the Enterprise Adviser Network for a further two academic years (2018/19 and 2019/20). A total of £150k per year would be made available to support 6 Enterprise Coordinators for Lancashire. It was expected that a confirmation letter would be sent to the LEP in April. Match funding from Lancashire County Council was in place until the end of 2017/18; further match funding (of £150k per year – 50:50) would need to be confirmed to continue this activity.

The Skills Hub was involved in the development of the approach in the Blackpool Opportunity Area and was working with Graham Cowley, who would Chair the Executive Partnership which was being established to oversee the Opportunity Area Delivery Plan. It was agreed to invite Graham to attend the Committee's informal session in April to update the Committee on activity.

Three Strategic Partnerships Managers had been appointed to work on European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF) activity. They would produce an update report for each meeting of the Skills & Employment Board. The Committee discussed concerns around the accountability and monitoring of this work and the need for real scrutiny. It was agreed that the Strategic Partnership Managers should be invited to the April session to help the Committee understand performance, risks and contingencies for this area of work, to discuss the reporting role of the Strategic Partnership Managers, and to bring a paper setting out assurance of accountability. The Committee also felt a diagram setting out the reporting structure would be beneficial.

Resolved:

1. That Graham Cowley be invited to attend the Committee's informal session on 05 April to update on activity around the Blackpool Opportunity Area
2. That the three Strategic Partnership Managers be invited to attend the Committee's informal session on 05 April for a discussion around the ESIF activity, monitoring and accountability

3. A paper outlining the accountability of ESIF work, with a diagram of the ESIF activity reporting structure would be brought to the informal session on 05 April

6. National Collaboration Outreach Programme (NCOP)

Lynne Livesey gave a presentation outlining the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP), a two-year HEFCE funded programme targeting specific groups of students from disadvantaged backgrounds to encourage them to consider higher education.

The Lancashire Consortium's £2.2m funded programme was "Future U", linking young people in key stages 4 and 5 with mentoring and outreach activities in five delivery zones across Lancashire, selected by HEFCE. The aim was to double the proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Higher Education (HE) by 2020, increase the number of students in HE from ethnic minority groups by 20% and increase the number of white young men from disadvantaged backgrounds, who were underrepresented in HE.

Future U will also develop an evidence base using a social impact mapping tool, and will evaluate links between education, enterprise and employability.

The Committee thanked Lynne for her presentation.

Joanne Pickering mentioned a group of people in Lancashire already qualified in mentoring who could work on this project, and would link with Lynne. It was also suggested that helpful links could be made with the employer ambassadors.

In response to discussion, it was confirmed that Future U would be coordinated with other projects in schools at a strategic level to minimise confusion for the young people, for example the Lancashire Enterprise Adviser Network, and some streams of work were taking place in the community to raise understanding of HE opportunities with parents, including an information pack on finance options.

Resolved: that the information presented be noted.

7. ESIF Programme - update and recommendations

Michele Lawty-Jones presented a report updating on progress in relation to the European Social Fund (ESF) element of the European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) programme in Lancashire.

At the last Committee meeting it had been noted that no ESF calls had been issued in Lancashire since the EU referendum result. Following a discussion at the ESIF Committee, where the concern of the Skills and Employment Board was raised, the DWP had prioritised Lancashire and a call was issued on 30 January against investment priority 2.2, focusing on improving the labour market

relevance of provision and the engagement of small to medium enterprises.

Regarding the unallocated £13.7m SFA opt-in funding previously discussed, for use across priorities 1.1, 1.2 and 2.1, it was noted that policy remained unclear whether there would be the potential to extend timescales for current procured activities, but that a decision was expected in the next few months. It was therefore recommended that calls were not to be developed in relation to this funding until clarity is received in relation to national policy and that, if the policy remains unclear by June, recommendations be brought to the Committee with a view to developing calls for projects over the summer for release in September 2017.

Resolved:

1. That the progress in relation to procurement activity and release of the 2.2 call is noted
2. That calls would not be developed in relation to the £13.7m unallocated ESF funding until clarity is received in relation to national policy and that, if the policy remains unclear by June, recommendations be brought to the Committee with a view to developing calls for projects over the summer for release in September 2017.

8. Green Paper: Building our Industrial Strategy

Michele presented a summary report on The Green Paper 'Building our Industrial Strategy' which was published in January for consultation. The Committee were pointed to the pillar focussed on Developing Skills.

There was a brief discussion, during which the Committee noted their dissatisfaction with the language used and assumptions made in the Green Paper and it was agreed that, due to the depth of the consultation questions, Committee Members would send their comments to Michele, to be fed into the wider LEP response.

Resolved:

1. That the Industrial Strategy paper be noted
2. That Committee Members should send comments to Michele by 10 March 2017, to be fed into the LEP response to the consultation

9. Apprenticeship Growth Plan

Lisa presented the report setting out the draft Apprenticeship Growth Plan.

It was highlighted that the consultation responses had raised the need for an informed and nuanced approach to determining local apprenticeship growth

priorities, focusing on the socio-economic benefits for Lancashire.

The Skills Funding Agency have granted £5k funding to commission research analysing Lancashire employers to determine the expected number of apprenticeships for Lancashire that will be generated through the levy paying businesses. The research is planned to complete in April 2017.

In considering the report, the Committee noted that many employers were still struggling to understand how the apprenticeship levy would impact on them and the long term strategic benefits. It was suggested that there may be an opportunity to advise employers about the levy at the Lancashire HR Employers Forum in March. It was also commented that there was a need to ensure the quality of the programme, and that employers had the skills necessary to manage the programme properly.

It was suggested that the Plan should be a living document to capture any developments, and that close monitoring was needed of issues with colleges and providers so potential problems could be flagged up early.

Resolved: that the Committee sign off the Apprenticeship Growth Plan, on the understanding that it would be a living document.

10. DWP Fuller Working Lives Strategy and Lancashire 'The Value of Experience' Conference

Michele Lawty-Jones presented the report from Tracy Heyes, Strategic Partnership Manager, updating on DWP's Fuller Working Lives Strategy and highlighted that a conference titled 'The Value of Experience: retaining, retraining and recruiting older workers' was planned to be held in Lancashire on 25 April 2017. The aim of the conference was to challenge the perceptions of employers around recruiting and retaining older workers.

The conference would be funded through the ESIF capacity building fund, and UCLan had agreed to host without charge. Thanks were given to Lynne Livesey.

The Committee discussed the need for careful use of language to avoid being potentially offensive or patronising, and the need to make employers aware of unlawful discrimination against an employee because of their age.

The Committee were requested to send any further feedback, suggestions or good examples of businesses actively retaining older workers to Michele.

Resolved:

1. That the Fuller Working Lives report be noted
2. That the Value of Experience conference be noted, and that any further feedback, suggestions or good examples of businesses actively retaining or recruiting older workers be sent to Michele

11. Strategic Planning Session - expanding the evidence base

At this point the Committee approved that the meeting move into Part II, Private and Confidential to consider the items which contained exempt information provided in confidence as defined in the Freedom of Information Act 2000. It was considered that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

The Committee was advised that any Committee Member wishing to tender for this project work should declare an interest and leave the room at this point. No declarations were made and all members present remained in the room.

Michele presented the draft specification for the Future Workforce evidence base study which, after the Committee had considered it, would be passed to the Local Education Authorities, and then to the LEP. In considering it, the Committee commented that the work should have a very tight remit, and noted the 10 week timescale.

Resolved: that the study specification be approved subject to discussion with the Local Education Authorities, and funding be sought from the LEP and Combined Authority to enable the piece of work to be commissioned

12. Area Based Review progress report

Michele Lawty-Jones presented the Area Based Review (ABR) progress report.

It was noted that the Lancashire ABR report would not be published until May.

The Committee discussed the task and finish implementation group and Pennine Strategic Planning Group, both of which would report to the Skills and Employment Board, and commented that the Terms of Reference should be kept very tight, include membership and governance arrangements, and that the focus of both groups should be on collaboration.

The working group was meeting on 22 February in the afternoon, and it was agreed that the focus should be on developing the Terms of Reference and membership for each.

Resolved:

1. That progress made in relation to ABR be noted
2. That the working group on 22 February should focus on the developing Terms of Reference and membership for the task and finish implementation group and Pennine Strategic Planning Group

3. That the proposed Terms of Reference should be brought to the Skills and Employment Board for approval by written resolution

The meeting then returned to Part I of the agenda (items publicly available).

13. Reporting to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership

Resolved: that the outcomes from the Area Based Review be reported to the LEP Board and the shadow Combined Authority

14. Any Other Business

Dean Langton reported that the request for establishing the Lancashire Combined Authority had been submitted with a proposed commencement date for April; however, the Government had not yet responded so the proposed start date was expected to be delayed. It was expected that skills activity would be reported to the LEP Board and to the Combined Authority.

It was agreed that discussion at the informal session would focus on the Blackpool Opportunity Area, and ESIF Activity with the three Strategic Partnership Managers who would be invited to attend. Lisa would confirm the venue.

15. Date of Next Meeting

The next formal meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place at 08.00 on 07 June 2017 in Cabinet Room D – Henry Bolingbroke Room, County Hall, Preston.

An informal session was scheduled for 05 April 2017, proposed venue Lancashire College – to be confirmed.