

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

### **Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 23rd February, 2022 at 8.00 am at the Zoom Virtual Meeting - Zoom**

#### **Present**

Amanda Melton CBE

Mark Allanson	Nicola Mortimer
Cllr Karen Buckley	Kate Quinn
Peter Caney	Alison Robinson
Neil Conlon	Bev Robinson OBE
Ruth England	Wendy Robinson
Edwina Grant OBE	Stephen Sykes
Gareth Lindsay	

#### **Observers**

Stephen Jones, Head of FE Territorial Team, ESFA  
Heather Murray, Senior Partnership Manager Lancashire, DWP

#### **In Attendance**

Kerry Harrison, Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership Coordinator  
Dr Michele Lawty-Jones, Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub Director  
Geoff Mason, Policy Manager, N&W Lancashire Chamber of Commerce  
Lisa Moizer, Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub Coordinator  
Denise Park, CEO, Blackburn with Darwen Unitary Authority  
Garth Harbison, Democratic Services Officer, Lancashire County Council

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

The Chair welcomed as a new member of the Panel Councillor Karen Buckley, Leader of Fylde Council, representing the Lancashire Leaders Group. Councillor Buckley was replacing Councillor Mark Townsend.

The Panel was informed that Lindsay Campbell, who represented the hospitality sector, had resigned from the Panel. A replacement would need to be found as the hospitality sector was an important sector in Lancashire.

The Chair, Amanda Melton CBE, informed that she would be retiring later in the year.

Apologies were received from Liz Tapner.

## **2. Declaration of Interests**

None were disclosed.

## **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2021 and Matters Arising**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2021 are confirmed as an accurate record.

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

Michele Lawty-Jones, Director of the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub, presented an update from the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub and partners. The update was structured against the strategic themes and priorities outlined in the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework 2021 and provided an update since the last meeting of the Panel.

Highlights from the report were as follows:

- Regarding Careers Hubs, action plans had been agreed with 12 business networks across Lancashire. Positive relationships had emerged with these networks. Business networks were encouraging their members to sign up to the Lancashire Skills Pledge. This was resulting in an increase of Skills Pledges with a particular focus on 'Become an Enterprise Advisor' and 'Give an Hour' to support encounters in schools.
- The Cornerstone Employer Group, which was a group of businesses Lancashire wide, was agreeing its commitment plan around the Careers Hub.
- In terms of Technical Education, the Careers Hub had successfully secured funding through the Careers and Enterprise Company for a project to be delivered in this academic year. The aim of the project was to raise the profile of apprenticeships.
- The Institute of Technology (IoT) submission to the DfE from Lancashire's consortium of colleges and universities had been successful and was now in the pre-award stage.
- There was a whole host of digital activity going on to enable young people to develop their skills and gain careers insight. The TeenTech Live Festival was due to start. The Cyber Girls First event had been postponed until 23 March. There was a BAE Systems' sponsored programme with InnovateHer and Create Education which was delivering events for staff and young people. There was a Hub Incubation Project which was aimed at testing and evaluating the impact of careers activities. The digital Advantage 2021/22 programme would focus on delivering digital skills with industry experts to 70 young people with SEND, care-experienced students and young carers, in schools, colleges and alternative provision settings across Lancashire.

- The Adult Skills Forum continued to meet regularly with providers across Lancashire. The forum shared good practice and highlighted opportunities for participants, such as Skills Bootcamps and apprenticeship training.
- The pre-launch guidance had been issued for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This indicated that the Skills and Employment programmes would commence in 2024.
- The Northwest Skills Academy was also delivering a Retrofit Skills Bootcamp across Lancashire as an extension of a contract held with GMCA. This was in addition to the HGV Bootcamps launched early in January.
- Regarding Social Value and the Preston Western Distributor, the project team had continued the successful delivery of their social value programme despite operating in very difficult operating conditions due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- To support the objectives in the Apprenticeship Action Plan, the Skills Hub was sponsoring the inaugural Lancashire Apprenticeship Awards alongside Blackpool and Fylde College, Porsche and VEKA. The awards were being held on 31 March.
- The national apprenticeship week would take place week commencing 7 February. The Lancashire Skills Hub would be promoting the Lancashire Apprenticeship Service and Skills Pledge over the course of the week and would be highlighting partners and stakeholders' activities.
- The launch event for the Lancashire Cyber Alliance took place on 22 February at UCLAN's Engineering and Innovation Centre.
- In terms of Healthy Workplaces, the ESF funded Building Blocks project had already engaged with 19 SMEs and delivered to 97 employees with 59 people undertaking a Workplace Health Champion course. The project aimed to support the mental health and wellbeing of the employees in Lancashire businesses.
- The Skills Hub was in the process of refreshing the Evidence Base and had received just under 50 responses from stakeholders to a survey which asked how the Evidence Base should be developed and be presented going forward.
- The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership and the Lancashire Skills Hub had taken delivery of Cambridge Econometrics' Local Economy Forecasting Model for Lancashire and its districts.
- A Food and Agriculture Sector Study had been commissioned utilising remaining Skills Advisory Panel funds.
- The Lancashire Skills Pledge had continued to grow across all metrics, with the number of businesses registering up 23.2% to 181 businesses.

**Resolved:** The Skills and Employment Advisory Panel noted the update report from the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub and partners.

## **5. National Skills Fund: Skills Bootcamps for 2022/23**

The report presented informed the panel that Digital Bootcamps were piloted in Lancashire and Greater Manchester through the Fast Track Digital Workforce Fund, in partnership with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport

(DCMS). The model was driven by employers, with employer-provider collaborations developing 12+ week bootcamp programmes, which provided intensive training to fast track unemployed residents into hard to fill digital jobs.

The model was adopted and adapted by the Department for Education (DfE) under the National Skills Fund, with pilots taking place locally and in several other areas across the country. The DfE model had an increased focus on guaranteed interviews and progression into employment or within the workplace. Following devolved pilots, Skills Bootcamps were rolled out nationally through a national procurement process focusing on digital and construction, and subsequently HGV training.

The DfE had recognised the benefits of balancing locally driven procurement processes with national procurement and had invited LEPs and MCAs to submit proposals for devolved grant funding for financial year 2022/23. Local consultation had been undertaken to build a pipeline of ideas for Skills Bootcamps, building on the success in Lancashire to-date, with a view to submitting a proposal to the DfE by the deadline of 15 February to secure funds for Lancashire.

Whilst Lancashire had worked in collaboration with Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) to-date, expertise had been built up through proactive engagement in the procurement of provision and project management, and more recently Skills Bootcamps had been procured and contracted locally, providing a springboard to scale up a programme that was driven locally.

It was unclear when the DfE would get back to Lancashire regarding the submitted proposal but hopefully it be around mid-March. To formulate the proposal Lancashire had ran an event with partners to get what people's ideas were and share what the difference was between the local and national procurement process, and what the DfE was looking for. The bid submitted by Lancashire was around £2.6m. If the bid was successful there would need to be a Lancashire procurement process.

The panel was informed that the DfE had changed the funding model slightly. It was still in 3 parts where you received 50% upfront based on projected numbers. There would then be a middle payment which would be adjusted for the actual numbers. There would then be 20% held back at the end until the person was in a job. This increased the incentive to get that person into a job.

Comments and questions raised were as follows:

- It was pointed out that Lancashire had a lot of success with the DfE in the past in terms of delivery and that Lancashire would likely be successful with its proposal. It was only a question of how much Lancashire would receive from the DfE.
- In terms of interest, there was a lot of partners engaged in the consultation who returned ideas. The biggest job was selling the understanding of what a Skills Bootcamp was and how it could benefit an individual. By delivering locally there was a better chance of selling a cohesive offer and for

partners to support each other.

- It was stated that the timescales set by government for development of proposals and delivery was currently challenging, with a number of examples including the LSIP and Strategic Development Fund. There was concern over the short time for delivery of the fund. It was also noted that it was currently difficult to engage adults in skills development.
- The panel enquired what the target audience was for Skills Bootcamps in terms of recruits. The target audience was mixed and depended on the Skills Bootcamp. It had to be an open offer and entry requirements were very different. It was up to the Skills Bootcamps to set their entry requirements.
- The level of jobs coming through the Skills Bootcamps was very mixed, but all are positioned at Level 3 and above.
- It was felt that programmes like Skills Bootcamps should be aimed at people who have not had the benefit of a university education. Individuals who were unemployed could come to Skills Bootcamps and their benefits would not be affected.
- The problem with the new funding model was that it disadvantaged new industry led groups as there was no upfront funding to develop the course content.
- One of the main issues that Skills Bootcamps are aimed at is aligning the skills of unemployed people with the skills that employers needed. Many of the Skills Bootcamps were engaged with the unemployed and disadvantaged people.

**Resolved:** The Skills and Employment Advisory Panel considered the opportunity to secure grant funds for Skills Bootcamp delivery in Lancashire and proposed to the LEP Board that grant funds were accepted should the application to the DfE be successful, subject to review of the grant funding offer and the terms and conditions by the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer and any related procurement considerations.

## 6. Levelling Up For Lancashire

Denise Park, Chief Executive of Blackburn with Darwen Council, gave a presentation to the panel on Levelling Up For Lancashire.

Leaders in Lancashire recognised the potential to do more to strengthen Lancashire's place leadership and to speak with one voice.

Lancashire had a distinct and diverse urban, rural and coastal geography. It was home to 1.5 million people, 55,000 businesses and a £34.1 billion economy.

Lancashire had a granular robust evidence base, including bespoke compound impacts of Covid-19 and legacy structural inequalities developed.

Lancashire had a major and unique contribution to make to the UK economy. It had to work with policy makers to realise the full potential and ensure specific issues and opportunities were clearly set out.

Council Leaders had made a historic pledge to work together to deliver a bold vision to benefit the people of Lancashire. There was an emerging, overarching vision and strategic plan setting the collective, long-term ambition for Lancashire in 2050. There was close collaborative work to develop a set of ambitious and forward thinking proposals. It was important to create a single narrative and unified, influential voice for Lancashire. There were detailed devolution asks in development for funding, powers and flexibilities from Government. These focused on the priority themes in the Lancashire 2050 Strategic Plan.

There were 11 sub-regions benefitting from devolution deals and more emerging, the majority, but not all, within a mayoral combined authority governance. New unitary councils were being created with the potential for devolution opportunities.

At a strategic level, Lancashire needed to find a way to present its case and advocate for its residents and businesses with the same level of authority and influence. The Government had reiterated commitment to devolution and 9 initial 'County Deals' which sought to widen devolution beyond the large city regions.

Council Leaders had been engaged in successful local negotiations to shape Lancashire's priorities and establish the principles of governance to shape and oversee delivery of a subsequent county deal / devolution in Lancashire.

The next step would include the development of those principles in response to the Levelling Up White Paper.

The Levelling Up White Paper had announced further details on empowering local decision making including a new, flexible framework and four key principles underpinning devolution.

Lancashire had considered various models to date including (Mayoral) Combined Authority, Economic Prosperity Board, Joint Statutory Committee, upper tier/district voting and consultative committee. Leaders had established a set of core principles, currently subject to formal decisions of all 15 councils. Those principles were well aligned to the White Paper covering effective leadership, sensible geography, flexibility and appropriate accountability.

The Lancashire principles included Leader representation and would be initially chaired by LCC as accountable body seeking to maintain council sovereignty without imposing governance or reducing local decision making.

The new deal for a greater Lancashire had 4 key themes:

- Economic growth and investment
- Transport, connectivity and infrastructure
- Early years, education, adult skills and employment
- Environment, climate change and housing quality

In terms of the Levelling Up White Paper, initial reactions were that the 12 policy objectives were well aligned to Lancashire priorities. The devolution menu helped shape Lancashire's ask and offer. Specific announcements included the £5bn National Cyber Force, North West Space Agency Hub, 2 new hospitals, the Institute of Technology and devolved spending. Government was committed to having regional directors for levelling up. Lancashire had to have a significant development and delivery pipeline.

Regarding the next steps, Lancashire Leaders were considering the White Paper implications and options. The development of the overarching strategic plan, Lancashire 2050, had to be driven forward. Engagement had to be commenced with Government on devolution and a county deal focused on the 4 priority themes. It was important to develop and implement a governance model for Lancashire's place leadership including a role and voice for business and education.

In terms of timelines the Lancashire 2050 vision would continue to be developed into the spring/summer of 2022 in terms of ambition, thematic priority areas and engagement plans. There would be governance and devolution appraisal and development and there would be engagement with HM Government. There would be ministerial visits, a Levelling Up Director appointment and Local Levelling Up Panels would be established.

In autumn 2022 there would be stakeholder engagement and consultation on the Lancashire 2050 vision. Devolution and county deal proposals as well as governance arrangements would be developed to final drafts.

In winter 2022 and into 2023 the Lancashire 2050 Strategic Plan would be finalised, adopted and launched. There would be potential shadow arrangements in place to support the formal delivery in spring 2023.

Comments and questions raised were as follows:

- The panel was happy to see the alignment of the Lancashire 2050 Strategy with National Government. This would make the strategy easier to deliver.
- The panel enquired about what the likely timeline for putting the strategy in place would be. The timeline would hopefully be 12 to 18 months depending on Government capacity and receiving agreement. There were a lot of policy decisions that were needed and information around future funding.
- The question of how far Lancashire still had to go in terms of the strategy and what in what areas had good headway been made was raised. It was felt it would be useful to reshare some of the IER evidence. A lot of the work on the Independent Economic Review needed to be refreshed and the impact of the pandemic on Lancashire's young people had to be looked at and what was needed going forward.
- It was noted that there were different needs in various parts of Lancashire and how different people's expectations were met. It was still early days for the strategy and the needs of different areas was being looked at. Lancashire was a very diverse county and there were concerns with housing quality across the board.
- Praise was given for getting 15 local authority leaders to agree on the strategy but there was concern about where the voice of the people of Lancashire would feature. Individual local authorities did resident consultations. This was important to find out what the people of Lancashire wanted. It was vital to support learners and residents in deprived areas but it was also important to invest in the affluent areas.
- The Lancashire 2050 Strategy Plan was about building relationships.
- It was important to bear in mind that there were 3 Local Government

reorganisations underway.

- It was noted that the next informal meeting would have a focus on the development of Lancashire 2050, with the anticipation that the committee would have a role in developing the theme relating to early years, education, adult skills and employment.

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

## **7. Local Skills Improvement Plan: Early Findings**

The Chair welcomed Geoff Mason, North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, to the meeting.

The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) came out of the Skills White Paper from January 2021 with the intention of putting employers right at the heart of decisions made with regards to skills provision in their local areas. Lancashire was one of only 8 trailblazers in England to do this.

The programme ran alongside the Strategic Development Fund programmes that were going through colleges at the moment. The work on the LSIP was due to finish on 31 March 2022. Then a report would be sent the DfE.

The Employers Skills Survey went out in the autumn of 2021. There had been over 1,000 responses to the survey. There had been disparity across the county in terms of responses.

The programme had been running focus groups and all of these groups had been finished by the end of January 2022. These groups had provided information on how skills gaps were affecting businesses and what solutions could resolve them.

A lot of roundtables had been ran recently with a number of stakeholders and local colleges as well as partnering with some of the local employer representative bodies.

There had been a group of roadshows ran at a number of different colleges including Myerscough, Burnley, Blackburn, Lancaster and Morecambe, and West Lancashire in partnership with the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub.

Surveys had also been ran to employees and the unemployed. There had been over 500 responses to these surveys. This would give an initial look into some of the issues employees and the unemployed find.

There was also a training provision survey which looked at who employers skilled their staff and where they sourced it.

The Skills Survey results had just been completed. The survey results were sat with the data analysis team. The team would also help with the production of the report.



Some of the general issues that had come out of the various focus groups were as follows:

- There were concerns about the levels of literacy of people coming out of the education system.
- There were issues over some of the courses being too long and generic. There was a suggestion for shorter, modular skills training.
- There were difficulties in attracting young people into the so called 'dirty' industries like manufacturing and construction.
- There had been discussions around making the Apprenticeship Levy more flexible and include more non-apprenticeship skills training.
- One issue that had come from employers and providers was that trainers had been too long out of industry. It was vital to keep up with current working practices.

Work was continuing with providers around findings and to discuss what could be done in the short term.

Work was ongoing with organisations such as the DWP and the Prison Service to maximise opportunities for those outside of the current workforce.

Further opportunities were being looked at to utilise the LSIP methodologies.

Lancashire's LSIP was one of only eight trailblazers and was waiting on a national roll out of LSIPs. LSIPs did feature in the recently published Levelling Up White Paper. A national roll out of LSIPs was expected around autumn 2022.

It was vital to keep up the strong stakeholder work that was happening especially with providers and the rolling out of some of the recommendations. It was important to keep the brand of the Lancashire LSIP going with the marketing and promotion of the brand. A lot of this depended on what funding was available from the DfE.

There was currently a Skills and Post-16 Education bill in progressing through government, which included a legislative framework for having a LSIP available in all areas of England. This would hopefully provide a skills system that would help Lancashire be genuinely productive.

Comments and questions raised were as follows:

- It was noted that the Health and Social Care Sector were the second highest respondents from the services sector and had given good feedback. There had been a regular focus group on Health and Social Care as well.
- The panel enquired if there were any insights that had been given about people not wanting to come into particular skills areas because of the employment offer. It was important to make some industries more attractive for young people, as well as their parents and teachers. There had to be a culture change and work had to be done with employers.
- The Lancashire LSIP provided employer insights to support the bid for

funds from DfE for the Skills Bootcamps.

**Resolved:** That the Skills and Employment Advisory Panel noted the report.

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

Regarding Skills Bootcamp delivery in Lancashire, the Skills and Employment Advisory Panel would propose to the LEP Board that grant funds were accepted should the application to DfE be successful, subject to review of the grant funding offer and the terms and conditions by the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer and any related procurement considerations.

The panel would recommend to the LEP Board acceptance of the grant funding offer from CEC once received, subject to review of the final grant offer and associated terms and conditions by the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer and support the extension of the contract with Inspira.

The panel would recommend to the LEP Board that they approve the acceptance of the grant from DCMS, should it be approved, subject to the review of the final grant offer and associated terms and conditions by the LEP Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer.

The LEP Board would be informed about the discussion of Levelling Up and devolution in Lancashire at the April meeting of the Skills and Employment Advisory Panel.

## **9. Any Other Business**

The Skills and Employment Advisory Panel was informed that the IoT was at the pre-award stage and fortnightly meetings were being held by the DfE. This would likely be a six month process.

It was felt that it would be a useful, substantive item for a future meeting of the Panel.

## **10. Programme of Meetings 2022/2023**

**Resolved:** The Skills and Employment Advisory Panel agreed the following dates that completed the 2022/23 programme of meetings:

### **Formal Meetings held via Zoom**

Thursday 9 June 2022, 8:30am – 10:30am

Thursday 1 September 2022, 8:30am – 10:30am

Thursday 8 December 2022, 8:30am – 10:30am

Thursday 2 March 2023, 8:30am – 10:30am

### **Informal Meetings**

Thursday 21 April 2022, 9:30am – 12:30pm

Thursday 10 November 2022, 9:30am – 12:30am

## **11. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Resolved:** That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that there would be a likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the appropriate paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as indicated against the heading to the item.

## **12. Grant Renewals**

The report presented confirmed that funding had been allocated by the DfE to the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) for the national network of Careers Hubs and Enterprise Adviser Networks. Details regarding KPIs and targets were currently being negotiated. The Skills Hub was currently awaiting the Grant Funding Agreement for the Lancashire Careers Hub and Enterprise Adviser Network. It was anticipated that the funds would enable the continuation of the current model which supported all 156 schools and colleges across Lancashire to deliver excellent careers provision. This was raised to enable a recommendation to the LEP Board to be made to accept the grant offer once received and to commit to the same level of match funding as previous years.

The report also confirmed that a business case had been submitted to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) for funds for the Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership (LDSP). The report outlined the approach to sustaining the LDSP and the regional coordinator locally, with a phasing out of funds from the DCMS in the 2022/2023 financial year.

**Resolved:** That the Skills and Employment Advisory Pane;;

1. Recommended to the LEP Board acceptance of the grant funding offer from the CEC once received, subject to review of the final grant offer and associated terms and conditions by the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer and support the extension of the contract with Inspira.
2. Recommended to the LEP Board that they approve the acceptance of the grant from DCMS, should it be approved, subject to review of the final

grant offer and associated terms and conditions by the LEP Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer.