

LEP - Lancashire Skills and Employment Board

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 23rd March, 2016 at 8.00 am in Cabinet Room C - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston.

Present:

Amanda Melton – Chair (part)

Lindsay Campbell

Steve Gray

Lynne Livesey

Joanne Pickering - Chair (part)

Andy Wood

Observers

Dean Langton - Strategic Director and Head of Paid Service, Pendle Borough Council.

Sharon Riding – District External Relationship Manager, Cumbria and Lancashire District.

In Attendance

Dr Michele Lawty-Jones - Skills Hub Director.

Martin Kelly, Director of Economic Development, LCC

Andy Walker, Head of Business Growth & Innovation, LCC

Kathryn Molloy, Head of Service LEP Coordination, LCC

Mike Neville, Company Services Team, LCC

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was reported that apologies for absence had been received from Bev Robinson, Paul Holme, Graham Howarth, Mark Allanson and Cat Settle (SFA).

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made at this point.

Note – having previously disclosed interests Amanda Melton and Steve Gray would be excluded from the meeting during discussion on item 15 as they represented organisations which were involved in making bids for Growth Deal Skills Capital funding in both Round 1 and 2. Lynne Livesey would also be excluded as she represented UCLan and the University was unable to comment on applications from other providers.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on the 27th January 2016

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 27th January, 2016, are confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Matters Arising

Mr Walker reported that Lancashire had been successful in its bid to run a BIS endorsed Science and Innovation Audit.

5. Up-date from the Lancashire Skills Hub

Michele Lawty-Jones informed the meeting that an event to support employers impacted by the Apprenticeship Levy had been well attended from representatives of the public/private sectors with many indicating they would find further events useful. It was noted that another event, focussing on strategic workforce planning and opportunities to engage with higher level and degree apprenticeships was being planned for June/July.

With regard to Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) it was reported that the LEP had successfully bid to the Careers and Enterprise Company for an 'Enterprise Adviser Network'. A pilot project had been launched in January, 2016, covering Blackburn with Darwen and Burnley, which aimed to stimulate engagement between businesses, industry and schools to inspire young people and provide CEIAG. It was noted that both the HIVE business network and Burnley Bondholders were working proactively with the Skills Hub to match local businesses with local schools and Colleges and excellent feedback had been received from the Careers and Enterprise Company on the activity to-date.

The Committee was also informed that work was underway with Fulwood Barracks and the Northwest Transition Group to highlight the work of the LEP and develop a system to support servicemen and women in securing work once they leave the armed forces.

Resolved:

1. That the updates set out in the report presented are noted
2. That Joanne Pickering be provided with further information and contact details in relation to the support system for ex-servicemen/women so that she can raise awareness about the scheme through the Lancashire Employers Forum.

6. Presentation - Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework and the ESIF Programme

Michele Lawty-Jones gave a presentation in relation to the Skills and Employment Strategic Framework and alignment with the ESIF programme.

In considering the presentation the Committee noted that funding was being used

to provide different forms of support targeted at particular groups, such as NEETs, the over 50s and the unemployed, with a view to creating an inclusive, skilled and productive workforce. It was also reported that discussions were underway with the Department of Work and Pensions to support capacity building to engage SMEs in apprenticeship provision and standards and in relation to leadership/management capacity.

With regard to the Thematic Objectives (TOs) within the ESIF Investment Priorities the Committee noted that TO8 in relation to Sustainable Employment and Labour Mobility would be explored through a pilot project in Blackpool through an integrated employment and mental health service. The proposed future activity regarding TO9: Social Inclusion, aimed at supporting digital inclusion as identified in the Skills and Employment Strategic Framework and active inclusion activity would complement existing activity under the Big Lottery Building Better opportunities opt-in, together with TO10: Training for Skills and Lifelong Learning which would support widening participation and outreach.

Resolved:

1. That the presentation is noted.
2. That the Committee be kept informed of developments in relation to the pilot project in Blackpool testing integrated employment and mental health services in connection with TO8: Sustainable Employment and Labour Mobility.
3. That further work be done with the Department of Work and Pensions in order to develop projects in connection with TO9: Social Inclusion, focusing on digital inclusion and active inclusion and TO10: Training for Skills and Lifelong Learning, focusing on widening participation and outreach, as set out in the presentation, with a view to requesting calls for funding in April, 2016.
4. That further work be done with the Department of Work and Pensions in order to develop projects in connection with TO10: Training for Skills and Lifelong Learning focusing on capacity building in relation to apprenticeship standards and provision and leadership and management activity, with a view to requesting calls for funding later in the year.

7. DWP Presentation of Welfare Reforms and Universal Credit

Sharon Riding, District External Relationship Manager, Cumbria and Lancashire District DWP informed the meeting that Welfare Reforms and the introduction of Universal Credit were intended to produce a simpler, fairer benefits system to help ensure that people were better off in employment rather than on benefits. Universal Credit would replace six existing 'legacy benefits' and was aimed at rewarding work, encouraging a new relationship with claimants and providing flexible, tailored support to individual jobseekers through the Claimant Commitment.

It was reported that alongside the live service the DWP had been testing the new digital service for Universal Credit which would work with the full range of claimants and could be accessed via a computer or mobile phone with a single

online account for payments, reporting changes to circumstances and receiving job alerts and work coach feedback. The full service was expected to be available nationally from May 2016. It was noted that the introduction of the digital service re-iterated the priority in regard to digital inclusion in the skills and employment strategic framework.

In considering the presentation the Committee recognised the importance of encouraging people off benefits and into the workforce together with the role of CEIAG in ensuring that people gained employment in the first instance.

Resolved: That the presentation is noted.

8. Economic Impact of Lancashire Training Providers

As some members of the Committee were absent the Chair proposed that consideration of the item be deferred until the next meeting. To assist with the discussion at the next meeting it was suggested that members of the Committee consider the report and submit any comments/questions to the Skills Hub so that they could be referred to the report author for consideration.

Resolved:

1. That consideration of the final report in relation to the economic impact study of the Lancashire skills providers be deferred until the next meeting.
2. That members of the Committee consider the contents of the report and submit any comments/questions to the Skills Hub for referral to the report author, Regeneris Consulting.
3. That a representative from Regeneris Consulting be invited to attend the next meeting to discuss the report.

9. Adult Further Education - Outcome Based Success Measures

In considering the report on the above the Committee acknowledged that the outcome based success measures would give prospective learners better quality information in relation to vocational qualifications and the performance of colleges and other providers which would enable them to make better informed decisions about what and where to study. Furthermore the information would help improve high quality post 19 education and training by ensuring that skills provision was more aligned with the needs of both employers and individuals and also represented value for money.

It was noted that the consultation document referred to in the report was lengthy and it was suggested that in future Directors would benefit from informal discussions between meetings in relation to certain items which would then be presented at Board meetings.

Resolved: That the report is noted.

10. Reporting to the LEP Board

Resolved: That any recommendations regarding the applications for Growth Deal Skills Capital (Round 2) funding set out at item 15 on the agenda be referred to the LEP Board for determination.

11. Any Other Business

No items of business were raised under this heading.

12. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting would be held at 8.00am on the 4th May 2016 in Cabinet Room 'B' – The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston.

13. Area Based Review (ABR)

(Not for publication – exempt information as defined in paragraph 41 (Information provided in confidence relating to contracts) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. It is considered that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information).

Michele Lawty-Jones proposed to the Committee that the Skills Hub work with others to develop a Lancashire view on the Area Based Review for the 13 institutions in Lancashire ahead of the arrival of the Commissioner. The Committee noted that the intention was to ensure that the outcome of the review would leave a skills infrastructure capable of supporting all the LEP aims and objectives around skills and employment.

A Working Group was also proposed, to develop the LEP visioning document, and also progress a joined up approach to reviewing data and analysing potential options, prior to the review commencing. It was recommended that the Working Group, in the first instance, comprise Michele Lawty-Jones, Lisa Moizer, Andy Walker, Dean Langton and a representative from The Lancashire Colleges - Robin Newton-Syms, Executive Director. It was also recommended that Paul Holmes join the group as an 'expert adviser' in a consultancy capacity.

Resolved:

1. That the report is noted.
2. That the proposed Working Group be established and report progress to future meetings of the Committee.

14. Devolution - Skills and Employment 'ask'

(Not for publication – exempt information as defined in paragraph 41 (Information provided in confidence relating to contracts) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. It is considered that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information).

Mr Langton informed the Committee that since the last meeting the public consultation on the proposed Combined Authority had come to an end with over 2000 responses being received. The results of the consultation and the proposed proposition to be made to Government would now be reported to each local authority in Lancashire for consideration. It was noted that whilst the majority of local authorities in Lancashire had initially supported in principle the introduction of a Combined Authority it was possible that the position of some authorities could change following the local elections in May.

It was further reported that any announcement in relation to the Devolution Deal would be made either in the Chancellors Autumn Statement or as part of the March 2017 budget. The Committee noted that whilst some of the previously announced Devolution Deals had progressed others had failed and Lancashire would continue to monitor the situation to learn from the experiences in other areas.

Resolved: That the Committee continue to receive updates in relation to the Combined Authority and Devolution Deal.

Amanda Melton, Steve Gray and Lynn Livesey all left the meeting at this point having previously declared interests in relation to growth Deal Skills Capital Funding in Round 2. Dean Langton and Sharon Riding also left the meeting.

Joanne Pickering took the Chair for the next item of business. It was noted that as the meeting was inquorate it would be necessary for any recommendations to be approved by the non conflicted members of the Committee outside of the meeting by written resolution before submission to the LEP Board.

15. Growth Deal Skills Capital - Round 2

(Not for publication – exempt information as defined in paragraph 41 (Information provided in confidence relating to contracts) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. It is considered that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information).

Michele Lawty-Jones reported that the three fast track applications considered at the previous meeting had been approved by the LEP Board and would now be taken forward by the Growth Deal Programme Office.

A further six projects (requesting total grant funding of £4,428,308) had submitted full business cases which had been the subject of a robust appraisal process

involving both the Skills Funding Agency and an independent appraiser. An additional project had been withdrawn by the applicant. Updated information in relation to the six applications, including the recommendations of the SFA and independent appraiser, was circulated to the members of the Committee at the meeting.

In considering the information presented the Committee was aware of the potential implications of the Area Based Review (for College applicants) in relation to funding being allocated to a specific institution for a particular project when in the future that institution may be affected by the outcomes of the ABR. As a result it was suggested that consideration be given to including within Grant Funding Agreements measures to minimise the impact of the ABR by targeting the investment or for funding to be clawed back in the event that the planned project did not proceed.

Resolved:

1. That the following applications for Growth Deal Skills Capital, as set out in the report presented, are recommended for approval.
 - Application 1 for £125,000, subject to the receipt of letters of support from employers.
 - Application 2 for £166,500, subject to the receipt of letters of support from employers.
 - Application 3 for £524,808.
 - Application 5 for £750,000, subject to legal concerns identified by the SFA being resolved and clarity on funding issues being identified in connection with other phases of development on the site.
 - Application 6 for £367,000.
2. That consideration of Application 4 for £2,500,000 be deferred until further information is received from the SFA and the independent appraiser. Information to be provided to non-conflicted members on Tuesday 29th March 2016 with view to a written resolution which will enable a recommendation to the LEP Board.
3. That, where appropriate, consideration be given to including within the Grant Funding Agreements associated with the projects specified at 1 above measures to minimise the impact of the Area Based Review by targeting the investment or provision for funding to be clawed back in the event that the planned project does not proceed.
4. That with regard to Application 1, as specified at 1 above, the institution concerned be requested to write to employers who have been asked to provide letters of support regarding the project to inform them of the potential implications of the Area Based Review, the potential for changes in ownership and the proposed actions to be taken in relation to the Grant Funding Agreement to minimise the impact.

5. That the recommendations set out above are referred to the LEP Board on the 5th April, 2016, for consideration and determination.