

## **NOTE OF EMPLOYERS' SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 15 DECEMBER 2021**

### **The main purpose of the meeting was for Members to:**

- Review key developments since their last meeting on 17 November and respond to any issues raised during meetings of key groups held since last Board meeting
- Receive insights from Bentley and Astra Zeneca on how digitalisation is transforming their businesses
- Review the latest update of the Skills Action Plan
- Review progress on the update of the labour market assessment and the contributions received to date on the refresh of the Skills Report and provide a steer on next steps.
- Receive an update and comment on the recent rebranding of the Jobs Portal
- Receive an update on the planned pilot work with Jobcentre Plus to support more long-term unemployed people in Ellesmere Port, Crewe and North Warrington into work

### **KEY POINTS DISCUSSED**

#### **1. Welcome, declarations of interest, introductions with members sharing information on any key developments since the last meeting on 17 November**

- Kath welcomed Ben Longworth from BAE Systems and also Tom Russell from Bentley and Jo Baker from Astra Zeneca
- List of attendees and apologies (Annex A)
- There were no additional declarations of interest.

#### **2. Note of last meeting and outstanding actions**

- The note of the last meeting was agreed, and the action list was reviewed.

#### **3. Feedback from key meetings/activities since last Employers' Skills and Education Board**

- Members noted the list of meetings that have taken place since the last Employers' Skills and Education Board meeting.

##### **3.1 LEP Board**

- Kath Mackay and Nicola Dunbar noted the LEP Chief Executive's report to the November LEP Board meeting and agreed to circulate the Chief Executive's report to the December LEP Board meeting. Kath referenced the LEP Board's discussion on HS2, the Chancellor's spending review announcements and the Levelling Up Review.

##### **3.2 Digital Skills Partnership (DSP) Board**

- Nicola Dunbar summarised the key issues discussed at the last DSP Board meeting on 23 November including updates on data and labour market work, feedback on DCMS's evaluation of the Local Digital Skills Partnerships, the digital perspectives on the refresh of the Skills Report and impact measures for the DSP Board. It was noted that the DSP Board are particularly interested in building the digital knowledge of local teachers by developing links with local digital businesses.

##### **3.3 Digital Connectivity Board**

- Nicola Dunbar reported on the outcomes from the Digital Connectivity Board meeting on 25 November where there had been a discussion on the investment in the roll-out of fibre broad band and whether the Silicon Stoke (fibre spine) model might be implemented in Cheshire and Warrington.
- The Digital Connectivity Board had also developed a response to the refresh of the Skills Report. Concerns had been expressed about the timings of the roll-out of the fibre network across Cheshire and Warrington – in particular, the procurement processes.

### 3.4 Pledge Board

- Paul Colman noted that a key focus of the Pledge Board is the development of a Strategic Careers Hub Plan – to be submitted to the Department for Education/Careers and Enterprise Company by 15 January. The Strategic Plan will build on and be informed by the refresh of the Skills report. The first and second drafts of the Plan will be shared with the Employers Skills and Education Board and the Pledge Board as well as local Pledge Boards in January. **ACTION TREVOR LANGSTON AND GRACE SHELDON**
- Paul also noted the focus of the Pledge on supporting the development of T-levels across Cheshire and Warrington and the focus on the employment readiness programme including mock assessment centres.

### 3.5 Accelerate

- Kurt Allman reported that the DWP after over 100 days of consideration had accepted the University's programme change request and had then asked for a response from the University and the LEP within 6 days. The DWP had not imposed any financial penalties in response to the programme change request.
- Kurt will now share a draft report on Accelerate with Kath Mackay and Pat Jackson (not for wider circulation). **ACTION KURT**. Kurt will also share a paper on the lessons learnt from Accelerate **ACTION KURT**

### 3.6 Institute of Technology (IoT) and Skills Accelerator

- In Dhesi's absence Pat Jackson provided a brief update on the progress of the IoT bid. Pat agreed to share a short briefing note on the IoT. **ACTION PAT JACKSON**

## 4. An Insight Into How Digitalisation is Transforming Business Processes in Bentley and Astra Zeneca

- Tom Russell and Jo Baker presented a series of slides to illustrate how digitalisation is transforming business processes in Bentley and Astra Zeneca.
- During the subsequent discussion the following points were made:
  - There is a gap in the provision of short courses that provide modules of training to meet the specific upskilling needs in the workforce. Even where courses are available processes within businesses get in the way of employers accessing the courses for employees.
  - The next big issue for Bentley is decarbonisation and green issues.
  - When looking at skills needs, we need to consider how new technologies and ideas are developed and reach consumer markets and whether the associated skills will meet 'niche' or 'mainstream' business needs. (Jo referenced concepts presented in a book 'Diffusion of Innovations' by Everett M. Rogers).
  - Too many schools have digital equipment e.g., 3D printers that they do not know how to use effectively in the curriculum – there is a bid issue around how to upskill teachers in new technologies.
  - How information about new technologies can get to smaller businesses in a way that does not over-whelm them and how might we link smaller businesses to the innovation being adopted in larger businesses.

5. **Refresh of Skills Report and Underpinning Labour Market Assessment**

- Pat Jackson reminded Members that the Department for Education had asked them to undertake a 'light touch' refresh of the Skills report by the end of January 2022. The refresh included an update of the Labour Market Assessment. The latest update of the Labour Market Assessment had been discussed by the Data and Labour Market Steering Group earlier in the week.
- To date a number of partners including the LEP Board and the Employers' Skills and Education Board had highlighted issues that should be addressed during the refresh of the Skills Report – comments received were summarised in a slide presentation.
- David Brennan provided an update on progress to date in the refresh of the Labour Market Assessment.
- In the subsequent discussion Members queried the level of economic inactivity in Cheshire East and noted that numbers of people across Cheshire and Warrington choosing early retirement. It was also noted that there had been a significant reduction in the number of self-employed people in the area.
- Next steps – the Labour Market Assessment will be finalised, and a draft refresh of the Skills Report will be discussed with Members at their next Board meeting on 19 January 2022.
- Members noted the latest update of the Skills Action Plan.

6. **Any Other Business**

6.1 **Jobs Portal**

- Sarah Williams presented a series of slides summarising the latest development of the Jobs Portal including the re-brand and the latest analysis of the certifications being specified in current job vacancies.

6.2 **Planned pilot work with Jobcentre Plus to support more long-term unemployed people in Ellesmere Port, Crewe and North Warrington into work**

- Pat Jackson briefly outlined the pilot proposed by Jobcentre Plus to work with the Workforce Recovery Group on long-term unemployed people in Ellesmere Port, Crewe and Warrington.

7. **Date of next meetings**

- The next meeting will be held on 19 January 2022 via teams.
- Members agreed that, in the light of the current Covid situation, their February and March meetings would also be held via Microsoft Teams.

The following members of the Employers' Skills and Education Board are expected to attend the meeting:

- \*Kath Mackay - Chair
- \*Nicola Dunbar (Deputy Chair)
- Kurt Allman (University of Chester)
- \*Eleanor Blackburn (Warrington Borough Council)
- Tom Russell representing Nicola Johnson (Bentley Motors)
- Paul Colman (South Cheshire Chamber)
- \*Clare Latham (Cheshire West and Chester)
- \*Lucy Liang (AUE Ltd)
- Maggie Chen
- Jo Baker representing Kim Harman (Astra Zeneca)
- Kevin Hutchinson (SISK)
- Ben Longworth (BAE Systems)
- Pat Jackson (LEP)

\*With voting rights

#### **Apologies**

- \*Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
- Dhesi (Cheshire College South and West – representing the training providers)
- Sarah Hopkinson (Engie)
- Nicola Johnson (Bentley Motors)
- Cllr James Nicholas (Cheshire East)
- \*Bill Carr (Carpe Diem)
- Kim Hardman (Astra Zeneca)

#### **Also attending**

- Sarah Williams, David Brennan, Andy Devaney and Trevor Langston for specific agenda items

#### **Papers copied to:**

- Trevor Brocklebank (Deputy Chair of LEP)
- Martin Wood (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy)
- Jamie Zucker (DfE)
- Clare Cassidy (DfE)
- Mike McLoughlin (DfE)
- Peter Skates (Cheshire East Council)
- Kirstie Simpson (University of Chester)
- Nicola Said (LEP)
- Joe Manning (LEP)
- Andy Devaney (LEP)
- Sarah Williams (LEP) and Trevor Langston (LEP)
- Andrew Bridge and Dave Rowlands (CITB)