**NOTE AGENDA FOR EMPLOYERS’ SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 19 JANUARY 2021**

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

* Review key developments since their last meeting on 15 December and respond to any issues raised during meetings of key groups held since last Board meeting
* Review progress on the update of the labour market assessment and the refresh of the Skills Report.
* Receive an update on Local Growth Fund skills investments
* 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
* Consider the invitation to bid for a skills bootcamp
* Provide views on the Jobs Portal and future funding

**KEY POINTS DISCUSSED**

**1. Welcome, declarations of interest, introductions with members sharing information on any key developments since the last meeting** **on 15 January**

Kath Mackay welcomed Julia Teale from Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and also welcomed back Kevin Hutchinson from Sisk (construction).

List of attendees and apologies at Annex A. There were no declarations of interest.

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

The note of last meeting was agreed, and some of the key outstanding issues in the updated action list were

reviewed. Kath and Pat will review the remaining actions **ACTION KATH AND PAT.**

2.1 **The Pledge**

Trevor Langston reported that the careers hub is now up and running with 21 schools committed to the first

year of operation. The careers hub strategic plan was submitted to the Careers and Enterprise Company on

12 January and Trevor will share an abridged version of the plan. **ACTION TREVOR LANGSTON**

Trevor also reported that the careers hub will be launched formally with local schools on 26 January at a

meeting with career leads. Kath Mackay and Kevin Hutchinson both agreed to speak at the event and Trevor

will follow up and provide details **ACTION TREVOR - COMPLETED**

2.2 **Accelerate**

Kurt agreed to share the Accelerate report with Pat Jackson - **ACTION KURT.** Kurt will also share a power

point version of the lessons learnt at the next meeting - **ACTION KURT**

**2.3 Hard to Fill Vacancies**

Later in the year (probably June/July) Kurt will share a paper that looks into hard to fill vacancies in more

detail **– ACTION KURT**

**2.4 Impacts**

Kath and Pat will find a date in the diary for a workshop with Members to develop a more robust set of

outputs – **ACTION KATH AND PAT**

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

Members noted the list of meetings that had taken place since the last Employers’ Skills and Education Board

Meeting and the following key points were noted.

3.1 L**EP Board**

Kath Mackay referred to the LEP CEO report that had been circulated to Members. Kath noted the LEP Board

discussion on a proposed County Deal for Cheshire and Warrington. At the last LEP Board meeting members

had identified key ‘asks’ of Government including greater local autonomy and more co-ordinated approaches

to transport, affordable housing, developing town centres and supporting the sustainability agenda.

Nicola Dunbar noted the proactive work of the Growth Hub in informing businesses about the support

available to them and the letter to the Chancellor asking for more support for businesses affected by the

pandemic.

3.2 **Pledge Board**

In Paul Colman’s absence, Trevor noted the Pledge’s work with local authorities on the progression of young

people, the new employers involved in the Pledge (NatWest and Assura) and the numbers of unfilled

apprenticeships.

Dhesi noted the unexpected recovery of the apprenticeship market in colleges (national FE data shows 16-18

apprenticeship starts jumped by 10% last year but were up only 3% this year – probably as a result of grade

inflation and more students staying in 6th forms. Because of the buoyant jobs market some young people

were also moving directly into jobs.

Kurt noted that applications to universities in the Northwest last year increased by 18% but this year

applications are down (apart from in computing) and Universities are also reporting that students are not

returning to the classroom as lockdown restrictions ease. This is partly a result of more students working part-

time.

3.3 **Institute of Technology (IoT) and Skills Accelerator**

Dhesi noted that the Cheshire and Warrington IoT is one of 21 now approved across England and one of the

twelve approved in the most recent round. The IoT is a collaboration between the local colleges and the

University of Chester and will focus on higher level technical skills. The IoT licence will be held by Cheshire

College South and West who will then subcontract to other partners. The IoT will receive £13 million of

capital funding that will provide a springboard to access other funding that will only be available to IoTs.

Dhesi noted that further work was needed to develop the IoT Board membership and Dhesi thanked Clare

Hayward, Julia Teale and Pat Jackson for their support with the interview which the Department for

Education held in London.

3.4 **Work Force Development Group and Into Work Board**

Pat reported that a key focus of the Workforce Recovery Group and the Into Work Board was the long-term

unemployed. The numbers of people who have been unemployed for less than 12 months is now back to pre-

Covid levels but the people unemployed for more than three years is still 3 or 4 times higher than pre-Covid

levels. Informed by the work of the Data and Labour Market Steering Group, Jobcentre Plus are now

developing plans to focus on the longer-term unemployed – initially in Warrington, Crewe and Ellesmere Port.

**4. Skills Bootcamps**

Kath welcomed Niki Comer from the Department for Education to the meeting. Niki presented a series of slides.

Niki made the following points:

* Skills bootcamps are focused on employer needs – to recruit or upskill the workforce
* The training can be non-regulated or bespoke to meet employers’ needs – the aim is to fill current vacancies and upskill.
* All local areas are being invited to bring forward proposals for the third wave of bootcamps to be funded via grants to local areas in 2022/23.
* The previous 2 two waves of bootcamps had a strong focus on Level 3 + technical and digital skills
* Some proposed construction bootcamps had experienced problems in recruiting trainers.
* Training providers and employers can deliver the bootcamps which could provide a lead into apprenticeships.

The next steps involve developing a proposal for submission to DfE by 14 February. This is not a competition but based on ensuring that bootcamp training is available in all areas of the country. Local areas must meet the criteria and demonstrate value for money.

In the subsequent discussion the following points were raised:

* The DfE have agreed with DWP that the benefits for unemployed people on bootcamps for up to 16 weeks will not be affected.
* The third wave reflects lessons learnt in waves 1 and 2 and is more flexible
* There is no stipulation on the balance between employed and unemployed people on bootcamps, but we do need to ensure gender balance and ethnicity that reflects local circumstances
* The DfE expect there will be opportunities for further funding later in the year
* Don’t over-egg the local proposal
* Important to learn the lessons from Accelerate
* Members were disappointed that the bootcamps were not available to support Level 2 training in the care sector

Members agreed to set up a task and finish group to help shape the proposal. Julia Teale, Kurt Allman and Dhesi volunteered to join the group. **ACTION PAT TO FOLLOW UP**

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

5.1 **Labour Market Assessment**

David Brennan provided an update on the Labour Market Assessment. (Note - since the meeting the Labour Market Assessment has been completed and posted on the LEP website -

<https://cheshireandwarrington.com/media/mtid1yvh/cheshire-and-warrington-labour-market-assessment-report-january-2022.pdf>.

David noted the following:

* The numbers of people on payroll ain Cheshire and Warrington are now 3% above pre-pandemic levels with Warrington still slightly below pre-pandemic levels
* Members are already aware of the attainment gaps between those eligible for free school meals and those who are not eligible but there are also significant variations in levels of progression in different local authority areas – this looks odd and merits further investigation
* The numbers of people unemployed for less than 12 months has dropped back to pre-pandemic levels but the levels of longer-term unemployment are still very high
* There is concern about levels of economic inactivity with levels in Cheshire and Warrington twice as high as the national average (3times in Cheshire West and Chester)
* The Labour Market Assessment includes a map showing geographical areas where there are jobs and areas where there are high numbers of unemployed people

In response Kath Mackay commented that the labour market data and intelligence was a great resource.

**5.2 Refreshed Skills Report**

Pat Jackson and David Brennan provided an overview of the ‘light touch’ refresh of the Skills Report – and invited members to comment on the report – in particular section 7 which includes key ‘asks’ of Government.

**6. Jobs Portal**

Sarah presented an overview of the Jobs Portal and invited views on the longer-term future of the Portal (the current funding by the LEP ends on 31 March).

In response Members commented that the Portal was a great resource, and it was agreed that Sarah would have follow up conversations with the local authorities about future funding sources.

Trevor Langston noted that local schools are making increasing use of the Portal and have established links from their websites to the Portal and are encouraging students to use the Portal to get a better understanding of the local labour market.

**7. Local Growth Fund Skills Investments**

There was not time for Sarah Williams to provide an update on progress to date – this will be included on the agenda for the next meeting – **ACTION PAT JACKSON**

8. **Any Other Business and Date of Next Meetings**

There was no further business, and it was noted that the next meeting will be via Microsoft Team on 16 Feb 2022. Alice Choi the Chair of the LEP’s Growth Board is also expected to join this meeting.

The next meeting will also include an update on Career Hub plans.

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 19 JANUARY 2022 Annex A**

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)
* Dhesi (Cheshire College South and West – representing the training providers)
* \*Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
* \*Clare Latham (Cheshire West and Chester)
* Sarah Hopkinson (Engie)
* Tom Russell representing Nicola Johnson (Bentley Motors)
* Kim Hardman (Astra Zeneca)
* Kevin Hutchinson (SISK)
* Julia Teale Mid Cheshire Health Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
* Pat Jackson (LEP) \*With voting rights

**Apologies**

* \*Bill Carr (Carpe Diem)
* Paul Colman (South Cheshire Chamber)
* \*Lucy Liang (AUE Ltd)
* Maggie Chen
* Nicola Johnson (Bentley Motors)
* Cllr James Nicholas (Cheshire East)
* Ben Longworth (BAE Systems)

**Also attended**

* Niki Comer (DfE) for item on bootcamps)
* Sarah Williams, David Brennan and Trevor Langston for specific agenda items
* Joe Carter (Cheshire East) as an observer

**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 McLouglin (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)