**NOTE OF EMPLOYERS’ SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2022**

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

* Review key developments since their last meeting on 13 July including further work on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Local Skills Improvement Plan
* Review further work on the impact measurement work with particular focus on the long-term unemployed and economically inactive people
* Receive report from the sub-group investigating the issues around the information failures and the attainment and progression of young people in disadvantaged communities, and agree next steps
* Receive an update on Skills Bootcamps and provide a steer on next steps
* Provide a steer on the development of the Jobs Portal

**KEY POINTS DISCUSSED AND AGREED ACTIONS**

**1. Welcome, declarations of interest, introductions with members sharing information on any key developments since the last meeting** **on 13 July**

* List of attendees and apologies (Annex A)
* No additional declarations of interest were made.

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

* The note of the last meeting was approved, and the action list reviewed.

**3. Updates on Key Developments Since Last Meeting**

**3.1 LEP Board**

* Kath Mackay referenced the LEP Chief Executive’s September report which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Kath explained that the LEP Board meeting scheduled for 14 September following the death of the Queen. Later this month the LEP Board will be holding a weekend meeting focused on the LEP review.
* Kath noted the recent Government announcements regarding energy prices and the impact of cost-of-living increases on the visitor economy.

3.2 **Pledge and Careers Hub**

* Paul Colman summarised a number of developments:
* Progress has been achieved across all 8 Gatsby benchmarks across Cheshire and Warrington including more employer engagements and work experience. In the last half-term, we were identified as having the highest progress of any area in the country.
* Progress on Gatsby benchmarks has been particularly strong in the 21 hub schools, which were those identified as having most need through the Data and LMI group, i.e., with high numbers of Free School meals and or in areas of disadvantage.
* All schools and colleges in Cheshire and Warrington have been invited to move across to join the Hub – to date 80 of the 83 schools have signed up to this which means we have hit the LEP Delivery Plan target.
* The Pledge Celebrations and Next Steps event on 30 June attracted 220 attendees from a variety of employer, education and community partners. During the event the Pledge’s Core Offers for both employers and schools/colleges were launched and further work on sharing good practice and impact measurements were outlined. The first main areas are:
* 6 town wide careers fairs taking place in October and November.  This is the first time we have had coverage across the sub region and schools, colleges and employers working together on joint and more effective events.
* Launch of the Employer Readiness programme across the whole sub region with employers working directly with Year 13 students looking to progress onto Higher or Degree apprenticeships
* Over the next few weeks sees the first round of local Pledge hub meetings which bring together employers, schools/ colleges and other partners to work on local priorities.
* During the summer a programme of paid summer internships for SMEs to employ undergraduates was undertaken – designed to encourage more young people to return to Cheshire and Warrington after graduating.
* The Pledge team have worked hard to encourage local schools to complete the Future Skills Questionnaire (a national youth voice survey). This is the first year the survey has been run nationally and just under 4,000 young people in Cheshire and Warrington completed the survey. Initial analysis of the results of the survey indicates an increase in the numbers of young people who know about local employment and apprenticeship opportunities. The results can be shared in more detail at the next meeting of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board. **ACTION TREVOR LANGSTON**

**3.3 Digital Skills Partnership and Digital Connectivity Board**

* In Nicola Dunbar’s absence Sarah highlighted the following from the meeting of the D**igital Skills Partnership Board Meeting on 13 September. T**he main purpose of the meeting was to:
* Receive an update on the voluntary sector from Cheshire West Voluntary Action Group
* Provide a steer on the changing nature of the digital agenda in Cheshire and Warrington
* Receive an update on governance of digital in Cheshire and Warrington and review progress on the Digital Skills Partnership’s Key Performance Indicators for 2022/23
* Update Members on progress in the delivery of Skills Bootcamps in Cheshire and Warrington and provide an opportunity for Members to provide steer on employer involvement and influence content of future Skills Bootcamps
* Receive updates on the work of the Cheshire and Warrington Pledge to inspire young people about the importance of digital and on how Good Things Foundation are supporting digital inclusion
* Provide a steer on the content for the digital skills and careers video we have commissioned

3.4 **Accelerate**

* Kurt Allman noted that an evaluation report had been completed and he will seek clearance for this to be shared with the Employers’ Skills and Education Board **ACTION KURT ALLMAN (to share report) AND PAT JACKSON (to put on agenda for next meeting).**
* Kurt also noted that the funding for future support for business would be approximately 1/12 of current funding via European Structural Funds – and in future the funding would be more focused on a demand-led approach. Kurt expressed the need for a more collaborative approach – he is meeting with 7 of the North West higher education institutes to explore the scope for collaboration and suggested a follow up in 2 weeks - perhaps establishing a sub-group to develop a plan to support innovation and skillsas a means of increasing productivity (the Cheshire and Warrington Science Corridor and the HS2 corridor should be a key aspect of the plan).
* It was suggested that these issues should be emerging from the current work by Metrodynamics to update the evidence supporting the economic strategy. Members asked if Metrodynamics could be invited to the next Employers’ Skills and Education Board to present their emerging findings. **ACTION PAT JACKSON**

3.5 **Institute of Technology (IoT)**

* Dhesi highlighted the focus of the IoT in helping to improve productivity.
* Dhesi noted that it was 2 years ago that the initial proposal for a Cheshire and Warrington IoT had been proposed. The building costs had escalated over this time but the Department for Education (DfE) had pressed all IoT to remain within budget. Following discussions with DfE the budget had been increased from £13 million to £14.1 million but this was still short of what was needed by some of the Cheshire and Warrington colleges. Discussions are continuing and Dhesi is hopeful that legal documents will be signed before Xmas.
* Dhesi also noted that he was in discussion with a perspective new chair of the IoT.

3.6 **Data and Labour Market Steering Group**

Pat Jackson reported that the refresh of the Digital Skills report was near completion and would be discussed

at the next Data and Labour Market Steering Group on 3 October.

Pat noted that work was also planned to update the Labour Market Assessment and the Adult and Young

People reports.

**4. Skills Bootcamps**

* Pat Jackson and Sarah Williams reported that there are now six Skills Bootcamps that are live in Cheshire and Warrington, details are available at: website:  <https://cheshireandwarrington.com/what-we-do/skills-and-education/skills-bootcamps/skills-bootcamps-learners/>. The **LEP have now allocated £400k of the £1 million awarded from the Department for Education to deliver Skills Bootcamps to 264 learners in Cheshire and Warrington.**
* Sarah noted that a new open framework for bidding to delivery Skills Bootcamps in Cheshire and Warrington was launched on 20 September. The framework is broken down into two stages:
  + Stage 1 will review organisations, their approach and the basics of the bootcamp area or areas they are interested in delivering.
  + If organisations pass stage 1 we will give a decision in principle, and then dependent on available funds and potential learner start dates, we would then look to invite organisations to a stage 2, where the outcome would be an allocation decision.
* The new framework document and guidance pack is available here: <https://cheshireandwarrington.com/what-we-do/skills-and-education/skills-bootcamps/skills-bootcamps-training-providers/>
* The first deadline for submitting bids was 26 September. Sarah noted that as any award is subject to available funds, proposed Skills Bootcamps that would start in either January or March may not be able to receive an allocation if sufficient proposals are received and grant allocated for Skills Bootcamps that would start in November.
* In the subsequent discussion the following points were made:
* Paul Colman suggested that some of the language being used to promote the bootcamps was a barrier to engaging employers – the focus needed to be on an opportunity for employers to recruit and/or train existing staff to improve business performance and productivity. The message that employees might progress into new jobs (with other employers) would not be welcome.
* Paul also noted that smaller businesses needed help to identify how best to access support – there is so much available it is difficult to know where to start
* Lucy Liang suggested the need to link with existing business networks and use social media to promote the bootcamps
* Kath Mackay noted that there are over 200 businesses at Alderley Park and many of the smaller businesses do not have an HR function or spare capacity to explore opportunities
* Kevin Hutchinson suggested linking with business park managers and local radio to promote the bootcamps.

5.**Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and Designation of Employer Representative Body**

* Paul Colman explained that Local Skills Improvement Plans would be led by a designated employer representative body.
* South Cheshire Chamber is leading on developing an expression of interest in becoming the designated body in Cheshire and Warrington. The Chamber is working with other Chambers and other employer representative bodies including the Federation of Small Business, IoD, and CBI.
* The initial plan will not be set in stone and employers will have an opportunity to provide input. Paul envisaged a series of local LSIPs.
* If the expression of interest is successful, the next step will be to produce a delivery plan.
* Kath Mackay stressed that the Employers’ Skills and Education Board were keen to support Paul in the development of the LSIP and asked Paul to follow up with her on this. **ACTION - PAUL COLMAN AND KATH MACKAY**
* The LSIP will link to the skills Strategic Development Fund – Dhesi noted that Cheshire and Warrington colleges have already secured £2 million, and it was agreed that Dhesi would provide more details about the fund at the next meeting **ACTION DHESI and PAT JACKSON to include on agenda for next meeting.**

**6. Unemployed and economically inactive people**

* In Colin Billingsley’s (DWP) absence Pat Jackson noted that there had been a joint meeting of the Workforce Recovery Group and the Into Work Board on 13 September and key actions included:
* **Working together** - all Members have indicated they are happy to work together and that we need to make sure we are referring people between projects and organisations as appropriate
* **Localised approaches to work** - we need a localised approach that works with the structure of UKSPF. Local Authority representative should scope out what a programme of work would look like for specific areas in their regions (eg Crewe, Ellesmere Port and North Warrington), this could draw on work from Torus and DWP - this may assist Local Authorities to specify projects when bidding for UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF). There is time to work on this before April 2023 ready for a September 2023 start date.
* **Job Centre Plus (JCP) – the priorities set out in local JCP area plans** will be shared and form a focus for the next Into Work Board meeting on 3 October where partners will explore how they can work together on the identified priorities including use of the Jobs Portal?
* Work with businesses on changing their recruitment practises could potentially be funded via the UK SPF business support strand
* **The next joint meeting** to review progress will be in approximately 6 weeks.

**7. Impact Measures – Work with Young People to address information failures and in particular support young people in the most disadvantaged areas of Cheshire and Warrington**

* Paul Colman reported back on the sub-group meeting held on 14 September where partners explored how to address information failures and in particular support young people in the most disadvantaged areas of Cheshire and Warrington. The sub-group also discussed possible key measures of success and what more the Employers’ Skills and Education Board members can do to support the work.
* Key actions include:
* Sharing the results of the Future Skills Questionnaire results and the initial analysis of results
* Consider developing further qualitative analysis – to test a series of hypotheses about the reasons for information failures
* Higher Horizons to share their data on progression to higher education and for these results to feed into the updated Young Person report
* Hold a meeting with the local authorities to share destination, attainment and progression data and develop a shared interpretation of the data
* Identify examples of good practice and possible champions e.g., the family learning hubs
* Follow up and review progress at a second meeting of the sub-group within 2 months and involve DWP in the meeting
* Provide all who attended the sub-group with an opportunity to influence the forthcoming schools survey
* Share Pledge work with Mark Bailey on key performance indicators
* Local Authorities to explore the possibility of sharing anonymised school census data

**8. Jobs Portal**

Sarah Williams presented a series of slides to update Members.

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

* **Date of next meeting** 19 October 2022 – in person at Alderley Park
* **Items for agenda of next/future meetings:**
* Follow up action from meeting on 21 September:
* Metrodynamics presentation? (Pat Jackson to organise)
* Skills Strategic Development Fund (Dhesi)
* Accelerate evaluation / lessons learnt (Kurt)
* Pledge Future Skills Survey results
* Local Skills Improvement Plan (Paul)
* Review of progress in addressing the issues identified in the Skills Report and the skills and education elements of the LEP Delivery Plan?
* Skills Challenges of Netzero – what are the training priorities of employers?
* Cheshire and Warrington Life Science businesses – what are their skills and employment needs – can the public sector help?
* Digital skills report – the big challenges?

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2022 Annex A**

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

* \*Kath Mackay - Chair
* Paul Colman (South Cheshire Chamber)
* Kurt Allman (University of Chester)
* Dhesi (Cheshire College South and West – representing the training providers)
* \*Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
* \*Matthew Smith (Cheshire West and Chester)
* Tamara Barker (Engie)
* \*Lucy Liang (AUE Ltd)
* Kim Hardman (Astra Zeneca)
* Kevin Hutchinson (SISK)
* Sophie Baldock - representing Nicola Johnson/Gemma Betteridge (Bentley Motors)
* Ben Longworth (BAE Systems)
* Pat Jackson (LEP) \*With voting rights

**Apologies**

* \*Nicola Dunbar (Deputy Chair)
* \*Bill Carr (Carpe Diem)
* Julia Teale Mid Cheshire Health Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
* Maggie Chen
* Cllr Sarah Pochin (Cheshire East)
* Tim Smith representing \*Eleanor Blackburn (Warrington Borough Council)

**Also attended**

* Sarah Williams, 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 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)