**Note of Employers Skills and Education Board Meeting on 5 December 2018**

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Clare Hayward welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked all members for their contributions to date.

Clare noted that the Employers’ Skills and Education Board had made considerable progress over the last year in implementing its two key strategic priorities. Clare said that she would work with Pat Jackson to produce a summary of achievements in 2018 and the plans for 2019. **ACTION CLARE HAYWARD AND PAT JACKSON**

Clare noted that she wanted the meeting to focus on 3 key issues:

* The skills and education aspects of the Industrial Strategy – in particular, the evidence base that was currently being prepared for the LEP by Metrodynamics.
* The progress report on the Pledge network.
* The proposed consultation on the Local Growth Fund.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Clare invited Members to declare any interests. The following standing items were noted:

* Paul Colman – involvement in the development of the Pledge partnership network across Cheshire and Warrington.
* Clare Hayward – working for Cirrus recently named the best leadership and management/HR Consultancy at the CIPD Management Awards. Cirrus now offer apprenticeships as part of their overall service to businesses.

**3. LOCAL INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY (LIS)**

Andy Hulme presented a series of slides. Andy explained that the LEP was using Metrodynamics to produce an updated assessment of the local economy – this would inform the development of the Local Industrial Strategy. Metrodynamics were focusing on:

* the total productivity of Cheshire and Warrington and the productivity of key sectors and geographies,
* the nature of the business base and
* the characteristics of local residents and labour markets.

Andy was keen to hear from the Employers’ Skills and Education Board about the key skills and education issues that needed to be reflected in the LIS. An extensive consultation on the LIS is planned for the New Year.

Some headlines from the Metrodynamics work included the extent to which productivity growth in Cheshire and Warrington has stagnated with Warrington now below the national average and the low rate of population growth.

It was proposed that the LIS would focus on a number of key questions:

* How to improve productivity
* How to improve resilience of the economy
* How to improve earning power.

The following points were made in the subsequent discussion:

* Jenny Clucas referred to the Life Science Deal, the Science Industry Partnership Apprenticeship Survey report, the Chemicals Strategy and the Bioeconomics Strategy. She agreed to send Andy links to the reports. **ACTION JENNY CLUCAS – COMPLETED**
* The numbers of apprenticeships being undertaken is declining but the amount spent on apprenticeships has not dropped – this is an indication that more expensive, higher level apprenticeships are being taken up.
* Phil Atkinson stressed the need to look at absolute numbers not just percentages – across all the statistics being used. Phil was particularly interested in the demand for STEM and digital skills and asked for more detail about the demand in terms of jobs and apprenticeships. It was suggested that the slide showing take up of apprenticeships should detail the split between STEM/Digital apprenticeships and other non- STEM related apprenticeships.
* Members stressed the need to focus more on future skills needs rather than historical data and suggested that Andy might invite employers to complete the demand survey that was already being used to collect data to inform the development of the detailed business case for the Institute of Technology **ACTION PAT JACKSON TO SEND ANDY A COPY OF THE SURVEY FORM**
* Members also agreed to send Andy and Pat Jackson copies of any case studies or examples where employers are experiencing difficulties in recruiting people or developing the skills base of their current workforce. **ACTION ALL MEMBERS**

Clare thanked Andy for his presentation and suggested he might return for an update in February or March.

**4. PLEDGE PROGRESS REPORT**

Trevor Langston reported that the bid for European Social Funds to invest in the Pledge network was progressing well – it was ‘virtually’ approved but some due diligence work needed to be completed before a formal contract could be signed. It was hoped that the contract would be issued by the end of December or early January.

Clare congratulated Trevor on the progress and Trevor thanked all Members for their support.

In terms of next steps the following was discussed:

* Trevor asked Members to continue to support the Pledge to ensure it kept employers at the heart of the Governance arrangements as well as involved in direct delivery.
* Trevor invited Members to identify any members of staff who might be seconded to the Pledge. **ACTION ALL MEMBERS**
* There should be a press release to announce the contract award and then a PR exercise leading to a launch event in March. A task and finish group should be established to help drive this work. **ACTION TREVOR LANGSTON**
* Advertisements for the new posts to be created would be issued once the contract was awarded and Members offered to circulate the adverts across their networks - **ACTION ALL MEMBERS**
* It was important to engage smaller businesses as well as the larger corporates.
* It was also important to make effective use of digital channels to reduce the direct contact hours required from employers.
* Members were invited to become involved in the governance structure of the Pledge – Paul Taylor, Paul Colman volunteered, and it was also suggested that Ian Cotterill would join the governance structure.
* Dhesi offered to suggest names of smaller businesses that might be involved – particularly from Cheshire West -**ACTION DHESI**
* Further information was needed on the number of work placements undertaken by pre, as well as post 16year olds – there also needed to be a breakdown of STEM and Digital related work placements.
* Clare would arrange a meeting with Andrew Warren (the new Regional Schools Commissioner) – to involve Clare, Pat Jackson and Trevor Langston - **ACTION CLARE**

**5. LOCAL GROWTH FUND**

Clare reminded Membersthat they had already advised that the £5m Local Growth Fund allocated to investment in skills should be focused on investment in specialist equipment that would support:

* raising awareness of digital and STEM-related skills via the Pledge network or
* the delivery of digital and STEM-related skills via the Virtual Institute of Technology.

The specialist equipment could be located in key locations across Cheshire and Warrington to provide easy access for the effective delivery of digital and STEM-related training.

Given the general consensus about the need to focus on these priorities. It had also been proposed that the LEP should go out to consult on this specific proposal early in the New Year rather than just issue a general invitation to bid for the funds. The consultation would invite views on the equipment that should be purchased and how it would add value to existing provision.

Clare invited Members to advise on:

* the other key questions to be asked during the consultation,
* how proposals should be assessed and
* the extent of the consultation.

Following discussion in groups, Members suggested the following:

**Key Questions To Be Asked During Consultation**

* What will be the added value of the specialist equipment?
* How will the specialist equipment enhance the Digital and STEM related training packages? that employers are prioritising for investment by the Virtual Institute of Technology?
* How will the investment improve productivity of local businesses?
* Who will be able to access the equipment?
* How many individuals(beneficiaries) will be able to use the equipment and what will be the make-up of the individuals (age, gender, geographical location, etc)? We need to ensure the equipment is used by individuals who currently do not have easy access to specialist equipment.
* How will the equipment be maintained and who will be trained to use the equipment?
* Who will pay for any materials needed to run the equipment?
* Will the equipment be purchased or leased?
* Will it be possible to borrow the equipment for use in events such as career fairs or for use by other training providers?
* How will the equipment be used to engage the next generation of employees and the existing workforce?
* How will the investment contribute to innovation in the delivery of training/ the curriculum?
* Governance - who will own the equipment?

**Who Should be Consulted During the Consultation**

* The consultation should be as representative of the local economy as possible
* As many local networks as possible should be used encourage responses to the consultation
* The consultation should include a request to complete the training/skills survey that the Virtual institute of Technology is using to aggregate demand for training

**Decision Criteria and Selection Process**

**General points**

* To be able to select proposals quickly, all the questions and selection criteria should be set out in the consultation paperwork.
* Need more data to determine what the key roles/areas we need to target are, including demand data – this must link to the Digital and STEM related skills priorities being established for the Virtual institute of Technology.
* Run workshop in advance of proposals to assist with the development of collaborative proposals.
* Need to see proposals on how to reach the ‘not easily reached population’.
* The pot of capital available could be spilt into a number of sub-pots (2-3).
* Match funding is not compulsory, but we could ask for major ‘bidders’ to supply match.

**Possible criteria**

* Skills impact across the region – what skills are being focussed on? (Need to be able to demonstrate how this would be achieved and how measured).
* Reach/breadth across the region
  + Reach: into rural areas not just conurbations, and also areas of deprivation. How access the chosen focus?
  + Age profile: What breadth of age range is proposed (e.g. Influence at early age (primary), direct the focus of students at key decision points, upskilling & reskilling the workforce, multiple age ranges, …).
  + Mobility/access: How to take equipment to people so not just a physical location that people must visit.
* Demonstrate sustainability of the proposal and legacy.
* Degree to which proposal will help inspire people to go into roles Cheshire and Warrington is struggling to fill.
* Demonstration of how the equipment will be used to ensure delivery of the impact (e.g. through linkage to existing projects in the region; setting up new projects).

**Selection Process**

* This does not need to be a ‘competitive’ process if the equipment is seen to have a wide benefit across Cheshire and Warrington. For example, there might be equipment which would be of international standard that could be based in one location, some equipment of national standard that could be based in two or three locations and then more general equipment based in a larger number of locations.
* Look for opportunities to build links between proposals and encourage collaboration across Cheshire and Warrington – possibly run a workshop after the consultation to review the responses received.
* Consider pilots to test ideas – could pilot on a sub-regional basis.
* Could fund investments on a gradual basis don’t need to do it all at once.
* A judging panel to assess all proposals against the criteria as a paper exercise and determine a short list of proposals that meet the criteria.
* Re-assess shortlist:
* If proposal is of low value make decision without interview process [*would need to set limits for low and high value proposals*].
* Higher value proposals interview proposers/advocates to make final decision.

Clare thanked Members for their suggestions and again emphasised the need for the specialist equipment to focus on the two priorities of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board – the Pledge network and the Virtual Institute of Technology.

Julia Teale and Paul Taylor offered to support the development of the plans for the consultation.

To note an initial list of specialist equipment that has been drawn up by colleges. This is for illustration only and is intended to stimulate ideas during the consultation.

**6. UPDATE ON BIDS FOR EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUNDS**

Pat informed Members that one full business case (for the Pledge network) and four outline bids had been received by the Department for Work and Pensions.

The full business case for the Pledge had received the necessary score required for approval and the local European Structural and Investment Fund Committee had confirmed that the bid fitted strategically with the skills and education priorities in Cheshire and Warrington. Subject to due diligence, a contract should be issued over the next month.

One of the four outline bids had failed the DWP appraisal but the other 3 bids (two from a partnership of all the local authorities in Cheshire and Warrington and one from the University of Chester for the Institute of Technology had all received sufficient scores to move into the next phase of producing detailed business plans.

The business plan for the Institute of Technology required strong, detailed evidence of demand from employers and all Members were asked to complete the demand survey form. **ACTION PAT JACKSON TO DISTRIBUTE THE SURVEY FORM – COMPLETED. ACTION ALL MEMBERS TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY**

**7. NOTE OF LAST MEETING ON 17 OCTOBER 2018**

The note of the last meeting of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board on 6 September was agreed.

**8. MATTERS ARISING AND ACTION LIST FROM 6 SEPTEMBER MEETING**

An updated action list has been prepared.

**9. DIGITAL SKILLS PARTNERSHIP**

Pat Jackson advised Members that recommendations from DCMS officials about who should be awarded a Digital Skills Partnership was about to be submitted to Ministers.

**10. Any Other Business and Date of Next Meeting**

There was no any other business.

The next meeting is on Wednesday 23 January between 13.30 and 15.30hrs – venue to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 15.30 hrs

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 5 DECEMBER 2018 Annex A**

The following members of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board attended the meeting:

* Clare Hayward
* Paul Colman (South Cheshire Chamber)
* Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
* Paul Taylor (Taylor Business Park)
* Dhesi Jasbir (Cheshire College South and West – representing FE Colleges)
* Jenny Clucas (Cogent)
* Julia Teale (Bentley Motors)
* Jacqui Kawcsak (representing Elaine Billington, United Utilities)
* Pat Jackson (LEP)

**Apologies**

* James Richards (Network Rail)
* Ian Cottrill (Franklyn Financial Management Ltd)
* Neil Warren (Jungheinrich)
* Howard Sloane (Essar Oils)
* Nicola Merriman (National Skills Academy Nuclear)
* Mark Temple (Lloyds Banking Group)
* Elaine Billington (United Utilities)
* Mark Livesey (LEP)

**Also attending**

* Andy Hulme Cheshire and Warrington LEP)
* Trevor Langston (Pledge)

**Copied for Information to:**

* Martin Wood (BEIS)