**Note of Employers Skills and Education Board Meeting on 20 February 2019**

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Clare Hayward welcomed everyone to the meeting. A list of attendees and apologies is at Annex A.

Clare thanked Vicky Bailey from AO for hosting the meeting. At Clare’s invitation Vicky made a short presentation about AO in Crewe.

**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. NOTE OF MEETING HELD ON 5 DECEMBER 2018 AND ACTION LIST**

The note of the last meeting on 5 December was agreed and the annotated action list from 5 December meeting was reviewed and progress noted.

4. **OVERVIEW OF BIDS FOR INVESTMENT OF EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUNDS**

Pat Jackson reported that earlier in the day the DWP had informed the Pledge Partnership that the bid for £1.1 million of European Social Funds had been successful. All members welcomed this news and Clare Hayward noted that this was a major step towards starting to deliver the key objective of the Employers; Skills and Education Board – to put employers at the heart of inspiring and informing young people about new technologies and career and progression opportunities. A press release would be prepared to mark this major milestone.

Pat also informed Members that the full business case for £15million investment of European Social Funds in the Skills for Growth /Virtual Institute of Technology had been submitted to DWP on 15 February.

The bids for European Social Funds to support unemployed people further from the labour market and young people not in education, employment or training (Investment priorities 1.2 and 1.4) was almost complete and would be submitted before the end of the month. **NOTE** – the bids were submitted on 27 February.

It was proposed that Ali Strathers- Tracy who has been working with all the local authorities to develop the bids should be invited to the next Board meeting. **ACTION- Pat Jackson**

**5. SKILLS FOR GROWTH/VIRTUAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

Maud Duthie apologised that Charlie Woodcock was unable to attend the meeting.

Maud tabled a paper outlining progress in the development of the Skills for Growth/Institute of Technology investment proposal. Maud explained that the University was hoping to start the development of the project from 1 April with delivery starting in September. Work was already underway to develop the procurement process and recruit staff.

In the subsequent question and answer session the following points were made:

* The initial procurement of providers would be critical. It would not give preference to local training providers but there is a desire to use the project to improve the capacity of providers across Cheshire and Warrington.
* Procurement of providers would be undertaken using an ‘open framework’ so that the list of procured providers could be updated regularly to ensure it addresses changing demands for skills from employers.
* There is a real danger that during the procurement process providers would offer to provide significantly more than they can deliver – this risk must be managed during the procurement process to allow ‘off boarding’ of poorly performing providers.
* The role of independent brokers within the Growth Hub will be key to ensuring that training packages are fit for purpose and that groups of employers are encouraged to work together to aggregate demand and to provide enough critical mass of learners to make supply of training commercially viable for training providers.
* A range of training providers would be procured at the start of the project and employers would then be able to choose from the list of procured providers.
* The training packages should include developing the capability and employability skills of individuals not just technical skills
* Nicola Merriman noted that Skills for Nuclear had developed effective quality control systems within robust procurement processes. Nicola agreed to share the processes with the University. **ACTION: Nicola Merriman**
* The procurement of niche training packages will need to include market testing to ensure the best quality, training tailored to business needs is procured.
* The timescales for the procurement process are very tight so the procurement process must be very efficient with limited bureaucracy.
* The development of new training capacity will be critical if the ESF investment is to be focused on delivering real added value. A focus on additionality will be absolutely critical.
* The aggregation of demand for skills from groups of employers was also be a key aspect of the project. The aggregation of demand would develop enough demand to make delivery by local training providers commercially viable. It was also important to recognise that delivery could be at employers’ premises not just in local colleges.

. 6. **LOCAL GROWTH FUND – PROPOSED CONSULTATION**

Pat Jackson reported that, following the circulation of the draft consultation document to Members of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board, there had been a general approval of the draft document.

It was now proposed to circulate the draft to Members of the LEP Board for final agreement to launch the consultation as soon as possible. Employer networks would be used to distribute the consultation. **ACTION: Pat Jackson**

Following the consultation, a small sub-group of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board will be convened to review the responses to the consultation and short-list proposals. Relevant organisations would then be invited to prepare full business cases to support the short-listed proposed investments in the specialised equipment needed to deliver digital and STEM related training across Cheshire and Warrington. Members were invited to volunteer to join the short- listing sub-group. **ACTION: All Members**

**7. SKILLS ADVISORY PANELS**

Mark Livesey reported on the LEP Board decision to launch a recruitment exercise to fill current vacancies on the LEP Board and to delegate responsibility for financial decision making to sub-committees including the Employers’ Skills and Education Board.

Before delegation of financial responsibility, there is a requirement to include representatives of local authorities on each sub-committee and to introduce an open and transparent system to appoint employers with voting rights to the sub-committees. The recruitment process would start over the next few weeks and all Members were invited to submit applications to become voting members. Details of the recruitment process would be circulated to all Members. **ACTION: Pat Jackson**

Mark also noted the need to build upon the existing infrastructure of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board to create a Skills Advisory Panel (SAP). Mark commented that it would be critical to build the SAP on the success of the employer-driven agenda of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board. The LEP will receive a one-off payment of £75K to fund the development of the SAP and fund collection of data and labour market information to inform the development of the SAP. The SAP would need to be established by September 2019.

A note setting out some of the policy questions that might be raised by the SAP and that would need to be informed by data and intelligence would be circulated to Members for comment. **ACTION: Pat Jackson**

It was also proposed that some Members of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board would sit on the underpinning subgroups to oversee the work of the Pledge, Skills for Growth and Digital Skills Partnership. A diagram to illustrate the relationship between the underpinning subgroups was circulated.

Clare invited Members to inform Pat Jackson which sub-group they want to join and to suggest other employers who might be invited to join the sub-groups. **ACTION: All Members**

Members noted the growing importance of the role of the Growth Hub to engage businesses with growth potential. It was suggested that Andy Devaney, the new Director of the Growth Hub should be invited to a future meeting of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board. **ACTION: Pat Jackson**

**8. DIGITAL SKILLS PARTNERSHIP (DSP)**

Mark Livesey reported on the development of the Digital Skills Partnership. Cheshire and Warrington is one of three LEP areas to be awarded a Digital Skills Partnership. This will include a one-off payment of £75K to fund the appointment of a DSP Facilitator to ‘turbo boost’ the development of the DSP.

**9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

James Richards raised the need to consider the social value from Local Authority projects and suggested this needed further consideration of this issues by the Employers’ Skills and Education Board.

There was no any other business.

The next meeting is on Wednesday 20 March 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)
* James Richards (Network Rail)
* Dhesi Jasbir (Cheshire College South and West – representing FE Colleges)
* Elaine Billington (United Utilities)
* Mark Temple (Lloyds Banking Group)
* Julia Teale (Bentley Motors)
* Nicola Merriman (National Skills Academy Nuclear)
* Mark Livesey (LEP)
* Pat Jackson (LEP)

**Apologies**

* Jenny Clucas (Cogent)
* Ian Cottrill (Franklyn Financial Management Ltd)
* Paul Taylor (Taylor Business Park)
* Neil Warren (Jungheinrich)
* Howard Sloane (Essar Oils)

**Also attending**

* Maud Duthie (University of Chester)

**Copied for Information to:**

* Martin Wood (BEIS)