**Note of Employers Skills and Education Board Meeting on 6 September 2018**

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Clare Hayward welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Matthew Grant and his team for their hospitality and tour of Priestley College.

Clare noted apologies – list of attendees and apologies at **Annex A**.

Clare was also pleased to note that James Richards (Network rail) had re-joined the Board.

Clare also welcomed Sandra Rothwell, Gary Coyle, Charlie Woodcock, Trevor Langston and David Brennan to the meeting.

**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.
* David Brennan – supporting South Cheshire Chamber in the development of the Pledge.
* 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. FE REPRESENTATIVE TO ATTEND BOARD MEETINGS**

Clare noted that Meredydd David was no longer able to attend Board meetings as a representative of the FE Colleges and the Colleges had been unable to identify a system for selecting a replacement to Meredydd.

Following a Board discussion, it was agreed that the FE representation should be on a rolling annual basis with a nominated deputy who would be the next in line to be the main representative.

Members were keen to stress the importance of the role of the FE representative to reflect the views of the other Principals and, if possible, other training providers at the Board meeting. Members were keen to encourage more collaboration between training providers.

It was agreed that the order of attendance should be alphabetical as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
| College to attend meetings as main representative | Cheshire College, South and West (Dhesi Jasbir) | Macclesfield College (Rachel Kay) | Reaseheath College (Marcus Clinton | Warrington and Vale Royal (Nicola Newton) |
| College to attend as deputy if main representative unavailable | Macclesfield College (Rachel Kay) | Reaseheath College (Marcus Clinton | Warrington and Vale Royal (Nicola Newton) | Cheshire College, South and West (Dhesi Jasbir) |

**ACTION**: **CLARE HAYWARD AND PAT JACKSON to relay this proposal to the College Principals.**

**4. NOTE OF LAST MEETING ON 13 JUNE 2018 AND PROGRESS REPORT DATED 7 JULY 2018**

The note of the last meeting of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board on 30 April was reviewed and agreed and Members also noted the progress report that had been issued on 7 August at the request of Members in the absence of Board meetings in July and August.

**5. MATTERS ARISING**

Members reviewed the action list from the last meeting. They noted the following outstanding actions:

* The need to agree a logo for the virtual Institute of Technology **– ACTION CLARE HAYWARD**
* The importance of Members notifying David Brennan of key training providers they use and of any training needs they are currently unable to access. This action has subsequently been overtaken by a request to complete a demand survey.
* All Members to notify Pat Jackson of potential new Board Members **- ACTION ALL MEMBERS**

**6. DIGITAL SKILLS**

Clare Hayward invited Gary Coyle to explain the background to the development of the Digital Skills Partnerships at national and local levels. Gary noted that the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport are seeking to identify a further 3 local Digital Skills Partnerships by April 2019. Expressions of interest must be submitted by 28 October.

Gary also noted the launch of a £1m Digital Innovation Fund.

Gary summarised the issues raised by Cheshire and Warrington training providers earlier in the day:

* The current skills and education system is too rigid and does not allow providers to ‘flex’ the system in order to respond to employers needs or the needs of individuals who need to access training in a more flexible way.
* There is a lot of good practice in the development and delivery of digital skills but not enough sharing of good practice – the local ‘Playbook’ microsite explains how to set up a local Digital Skills Partnerships.
* Partners in Cheshire and Warrington were keen to access some of the support being developed at national level – for example, Lloyds Banking Group’s Digital Champions model.
* The development of an Industrial Strategy in Cheshire and Warrington is an opportunity to focus on the digital challenges.
* A local Digital Skills Partnership in Cheshire and Warrington could work very effectively with the Pledge to inspire young people about new digital technologies.
* The development of the virtual Institute of Technology in Cheshire and Warrington could be the big ‘vanguard’ project that would help to deliver the Digital Skills Partnership in Cheshire and Warrington.
* The big challenge is to provide the right ‘open-source’ environments where people can access new technologies and share knowledge and good practice whilst learning how to take advantage of digital opportunities. There needs to be somewhere people can go – we cannot just rely on virtual networks.
* There is already a lot of analysis and reports about digital skills needs and current provision – e.g. the reports by IPPR and the Northern Power House. Cheshire West also has a report on digital skills of residents. The fast-moving nature of digital means that traditional skills mapping is too slow. There is an opportunity to access this from the new Growth Hub in Cheshire and Warrington.
* We also need real time labour market information with strong working relationships between employers and training providers – this is already happening very successfully with some employers e.g. Warners and Priestley College and the Fuse project in Cheshire College South and West.
* Tax incentives could do more to encourage employers to access new technologies and address skills gaps but it is clear there do need to be incentives in order to change behaviour of training providers and employers.
* We need to develop a more collaborative approach between employers and training providers with sharing of equipment, active problem solving. A useful start would be to develop some technical ‘challenges’ or problems where learners could develop new skills at the same time as solving the problems together. For example, a challenge around the congestion charge in London could be solved using a variety of ‘digital’ solutions. It would be particularly helpful if these technical challenges could be mapped across to the new T-level qualifications. The challenge could be part of the 42-day work experience needed as part of the T-level qualification.

Gary reported that the meeting with training providers had concluded that there was a need for a small working group to scope out the proposals to establish a Digital Skills Partnership in Cheshire and Warrington. The working group would explore the possibility of building a network of digital skills hubs – based around existing hubs of digital expertise and knowledge. The network of hubs would provide access to specialist equipment and enable business to share good practice and knowledge about new technologies and develop new digital skills.

The working group would explore the opportunities for working with a range of employers to help design some challenges/problem solving scenarios where young people can learn and apply new digital skills as part of the new T level qualifications. Saul Peake from Carpe-diem had volunteered to chair the first working group meeting.

The colleges had offered to produce an initial list of ‘digital’ equipment that is needed to deliver key digital training packages. Partners could then identify if the equipment is currently available and whether there are opportunities for sharing and/or filling gaps where necessary.

In the subsequent discussion Members noted that digital was a key cross cutting as well as sector specific skills need. They welcomed the opportunity to bid for a local Digital Skills Partnership in Cheshire and Warrington as long as it did not involve establishing another infrastructure. A Digital Skills Partnership in Cheshire and Warrington could become part of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board structure and link very effectively with the Board’s two priorities of establishing a Pledge network and a virtual Institute of Technology. There were also opportunities to link to the ‘Made Smarter’ programme.

It was noted that there is a big opportunity to ensure that the Shared Prosperity Fund is designed to be flexible enough to allow more bespoke packages of training and to support the work of the local Digital Skills Partnerships. It was agreed that the current funding model is not fit for purpose and partners had already decided that they needed to be clear what they wanted to deliver and not have to deliver just what the current funding models ‘allowed’.

**In conclusion** it was agreed that:

* Cheshire and Warrington would submit an expression of interest in establishing a local Digital Skills Partnership.
* A Digital Skills Partnership could be established quickly within the existing infrastructure of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board and it could be ‘docked’ into the virtual Institute of Technology.
* The small working group chaired by Saul Peake could develop a proposal for a Digital Skills Partnership and Julia Teale, Paul Taylor and Charlie Woodcock agreed to support the development of the expression of interest.

**7. LOCAL GROWTH FUND**

Pat Jackson tabled a draft paper outlining a draft call for bids to invest in the £5m Local Growth Fund. The Local Growth Fund could only support capital investments but could complement the revenue investments proposed for the European Social Funds.

Members suggested that the draft should be more specific and suggested a focus on creating a specialist equipment ‘library’ where businesses and training providers could access specialist equipment – particularly the type of ‘digital’ equipment needed to support a Digital Skills Partnership. Members wanted to explore how a network of hubs might provided access to a range of equipment – from the world class facilities at Daresbury and in some of our employers to the more routine, cheaper equipment that was needed in order to deliver key training packages in local colleges. There might even be opportunities to loan the equipment and generate some income for maintenance and/or refreshing of the equipment.

Members wanted the draft call to require applicants to demonstrate how they would be collaborating with employers and training providers across Cheshire and Warrington and how they would ensure the equipment would be maintained and ensure that people of the right calibre were available to train individuals to make most effective use of the equipment and solve real business problems. Employers should be part of an application.

Members would also like to see proposals where the equipment would be available outside normal working hours.

**ACTION**: **PAT JACKSON to revise the draft and recirculate it for agreement. (Completed - revised draft circulated with this note of the meeting on 26 September).**

Subject to any further comments by Members, the revised draft will be presented to the main LEP Board and probably go ‘live’ in January. Paul Taylor, Julia Teale and Phil Atkinson all agreed to review the revised draft.

**8. PROGRESS REPORTS**

Clare Hayward informed Members of the Board that they had received requests from both the Pledge and the University of Chester to present progress reports on their work with local partners to develop bids for a virtual Institute of Technology and a Pledge network.

**8.1 INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

Charlie Woodcock thanked Members for the opportunity to present a progress report on the development of a bid for European Social Funds to support the development of a virtual Institute of Technology.

Charlie made the following points:

* the targets/outputs required to trigger the ESF are challenging including over 19,000 learners with a minimum of 11% gaining basic skills, 25% level 2, 8% level 3.
* the initial expression of interest has to be submitted by 28 September and was being designed as a legacy project that would produce sustainable changes in the way employers work with training providers to design the curriculum and training packages and to build the capacity of training providers across Cheshire and Warrington.
* the Institute of Technology is a real opportunity to move away from a provider-led to an employer, demand-led system not based on rigid classroom-based training, but training delivered as and when required by employers – not dictated by term times. This will require a culture change within colleges and within employers. Investments should not just be for short-term gains but for the longer term.
* to achieve the volumes/outputs required by the ESF it would be necessary to aggregate employer demand.
* subject to the DWP’s appraisal of the expression of interest, the final full application with a detailed business plan would probably need to be submitted around Christmas. Charlie would like to present a draft of the full application and business plan to the October meeting of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board.

Charlie asked Members to help shape the bid by completing a demand survey which would be circulated after the meeting. **ACTION:PAT JACKSON (Survey sent to Members on 10 September)**

In the subsequent discussion the following key points were made:

* Members want to ensure that the Cheshire and Warrington employers (large and small) can deliver their growth and productivity targets over the next few years. To help achieve this they should be supported to identify the skill areas critical to that success.
* Members’ intention is to build a broker service that will aggregate the skills demand across the employers, so that we can deliver the skills of today and tomorrow as efficiently and effectively as possible.  It is anticipated that these learning programmes will be delivered by Further Education providers, private training providers and by a cohort of employers and the learning will be delivered via a multi- channelled approach.
* This is a very exciting vision that will help to ensure the future success of Cheshire and Warrington.
* A number of key aspects of the Institute of Technology were identified by Members as absolutely key to delivering the vision that the employers have developed:
  + There is a real opportunity to use the European Funds to create a futuristic and fundamentally different approach to skills delivery in Cheshire and Warrington – we agreed that we need a process that is led by a clearly articulated demand from employers.
  + To achieve this major shift in skills delivery and to ensure the shift is sustainable, employers must be at the heart of the governance structure.
  + The European Social Funds will be a means to achieving our ambition and to do that we need a shift in mindset to deliver a fundamentally different approach.
  + Employers are excited at the prospect of being able to access targeted modules of training as and when they need it, as well as full qualifications.
  + We recognise that the current funding system tends to encourage competition rather than collaboration between training providers, but to achieve our vision and to build the capacity of our local training providers we believe it is essential that training providers collaborate and share best practice – drawing on the best even if that can only be accessed outside Cheshire and Warrington.  We must ensure that the ‘customers’ receive the training they really need from the best provider.
  + We appreciate that, for the purposes of the ESF application the ‘customers’ will need to be the individual learners, however to deliver our vision it is essential that employers as well as individual learners are seen as the customers.  We do not see this as presenting any dichotomy if our vision is delivered properly.
  + It is absolutely critical that there are a number of independent brokers who will work with groups of employers to identify the need, both in terms of the understanding the need and the method in which the teaching and learning is delivered and assessed.
  + The independent brokers will be based within the new Growth Hub, so we can establish a truly employer-led approach with clear routes to market. The brokers will use the market intelligence from the Growth Hub and from the work with groups of employers to aggregate demand so there is sufficient critical mass for the training providers to be able to offer commercially viable training packages.
  + Because of the uncertainties associated with the take-up of the apprentice levy, the funding model need to include a significant grant offer to employers where they can claim back some (perhaps for key priority skills, up to 50%) of the costs of the training.
  + There needs to be a development fund which can, with agreement of employers, be used to invest in building the capacity of training providers to deliver new skills required by employers.

Members noted that many of these points are reflected in the call for bids that was issued by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Members said they were very keen to work with Charlie to help communicate the opportunities of this new approach and help to stimulate demand before the Institute of Technology goes live.

Members also recognised the challenges of the Department for Education’s current funding system and are very keen to work with the training providers to challenge existing models and shout about the successes as the new approach to training starts to deliver in Cheshire and Warrington. They also agreed to distribute the demand survey that Charlie discussed during the meeting.

The Employers’ Skills and Education Board would be very keen to meet College Principals to talk through some of these issues if that would be helpful.

Clare Hayward agreed to provide Charlie with a note summarising the key points discussed with Charlie – **ACTION CLARE HAYWARD (COMPLETED).**

**8.2. PLEDGE DEVELOPMENTS**

Trevor Langston thanked Members for the opportunity to present his progress report. Trevor noted the following points:

* The ESF bid was submitted on Monday 3rd September
* The bid has Changing Young Lives as the accountable body.  The majority of the delivery staff, including Trevor, will be employed by the LEP.
* Adverts for Careers and Enterprise Co-ordinator posts will be going live very soon as the funding for these posts is not dependant on ESF monies.  Trevor would appreciate help from partners to circulate the advert and encourage people to apply.  Other posts will be subject to the success of the ESF bid.  If any Member has any staff who might be interested in an internship please get in touch with Trevor.
* The Pledge Partnership Board (the Governing Board) will be established over the coming weeks and the proposed governance structure, terms of reference of the Board and proposed membership in terms of representation from key sectors and key geographies will be circulated as soon as possible. **ACTION: TREVOR LANGSTON**

**8.3 FUSE PROJECT**

Helen Nellist was unable to attend the meeting – **ACTION PAT JACKSON** to reorganise for a future meeting.

**9. MEMBERSHIP OF THE EMPLOYERS’ SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD**

Clare Hayward noted that a number of potial new Members had been suggested and these individuals were being contacted with a view to inviting them to attend a meeting of the Board before committing to becoming a Member. **ACTION: PAT JACKSON**

Clare reminded Members to notify Pat Jackson of any other potential new members. **ACTION: ALL MEMBERS**

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

There was no any other business.

The next meeting will be held on 17 October at Macclesfield College. The main meeting will be held between 13.30 and 15.30 hrs but members are invited to arrive at 13.00hrs for coffee and a short tour of the Pledge careers fair that is being held at the College.

**The meeting closed at 15.30 hrs**

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 6 SEPTEMBER 2018 Annex A**

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

* Clare Hayward
* Julia Teale (Bentley Motors)
* Paul Taylor (Taylor Business Park)
* Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
* Howard Sloane (Essar Oils)
* Ian Cottrill (Franklyn Financial Management Ltd)
* Nicola Merriman (National Skills Academy Nuclear)
* Judith Holcroft (representing Jenny Clucas)
* Mark Livesey (LEP)
* Pat Jackson

**Apologies**

* Paul Colman (South Cheshire Chamber)
* Neil Warren (Jungheinrich)
* James Richards (Network Rail)
* Jim Carroll (Mobica)
* Carol Parkes (Lex Autoleasing/Halifax/Lloyds Banking Group)
* Jenny Clucas (Cogent)

**Also attending**

* Gary Coyle (DCMS)
* Sandra Rothwell (Advisor to LEP
* David Brennan (Advisor to LEP)
* Charlie Woodcock (University of Chester)
* Trevor Langston

**Copied for Information to:**

* Lynne Williams