**CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON LEP - EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD – EXTENDED MEETING ON 8 NOVEMBER 2017**

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Clare Hayward welcomed everyone to the meeting. List of attendees and apologies received at Annex A.

**2. MINUTES OF LAST EMPLOYERS’SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the extended meeting on 6 September were noted and agreed and Clare thanked Paul Taylor for chairing the last meeting.

Clare Hayward noted the actions arising from the last meeting that were not included on the agenda:

* Paul Taylor and Paul Colman, on behalf of the Employers Skills and Education Board, had met Mark Livesey and Roy Newton on 13 September to discuss **the skills and education perspectives of the transport and housing strategies**. Draft housing and transport strategies will be shared with the Board as soon as they are available. **ACTION: MARK LIVESEY**
* Jim Carroll is leading work on the **communications hub** and following an initial meeting of a small working group, Lloyds Banking Group are currently drafting a series of customer journeys that will inform the functionality required of the communications hub.
* A meeting of the logistics group is planned for 4 December and further discussions are taking place on the scope for establishing employer led groups based around life sciences and manufacturing/engineering.

In response Nicola Newton noted the importance of linking the work of the sector groups into the schools’ networks in Cheshire and Warrington.

3. **PROGRESS REPORTS ON KEY PRIORITIES**

3.1 **Skills and Education Plan**

Clare Hayward emphasised that the Skills and Education Plan was a living document that would be reviewed and updated regularly. The intention was to focus on a few key priorities and work with local partners to start delivery as soon as possible. Other priorities would inevitably arise and would be addressed as the Plan evolved.

Pat Jackson reported that the Skills and Education Plan had been presented to the last LEP Board meeting and had been approved subject to minor drafting changes. Pat agreed to circulate the latest copy of the Plan. **ACTION : PAT JACKSON (COMPLETED)**

3.2 **Pledge**

Paul Colman provided a short overview of how the Pledge had developed to date and the proposal to develop a network of Pledges across Cheshire and Warrington. Paul reported that work is now underway to explore possible governance structures for the Pledge.

Nicola Newton requested that Paul keep key partners in formed as the plan develop. It was agreed that it will be critical to ensure that employers continue to be at the heart of the Pledge. It will also be essential that the Pledge adds value to what is already happening in different localities and does not duplicate existing activities but acts as the ‘glue’ in bringing together existing providers and developing a more coherent approach to working with schools and employers.

It was agreed that it would be helpful to identify existing key activities and Denise Proctor offered to share the work that WEAVE is already doing with local schools **ACTION: DENISE PROCTOR**

**4. INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

**4.1 Background**

Mark Livesey outlined the background to the proposed Institute of Technology (IoT) in Cheshire and Warrington.

The LEP had submitted to the Department for Education an expression of interest in developing an IoT in Cheshire and Warrington and it is expected that the Government will announce a formal invitation to submit bids before the end of the year. The key focus of the Government will be around training and education leading to level 4, 5 and 6 technical qualifications

The bidding process will be in two stages – an initial strategic case with an outline business case and followed by a full business case. The LEP will want to work with partners to align the European Social Funds (ESF) and the Local Growth Fund to support the delivery of the business case.

As the Pledge network succeeds in inspiring and informing about career and progression opportunities it will be important to ensure there is a coherent curriculum offer that addresses the skills and education needs of businesses in Cheshire and Warrington.

Dave Brennan has been asked to help us to develop the proposals for an IoT and the LEP Board will also be asked to fund additional manpower resources for 6 months to drive forward the plans for the IoT.

In response to queries Mark:

* confirmed that the ESF had to be committed by 2019 with business cases prepared and submitted in 2018.
* agreed that the apprenticeship levy and employer investments might be used as matched funding for ESF
* explained that the process for allocating the LEP’s skills funding, would involve the LEP issuing criteria (flowing from the Strategic Economic Plan and the underpinning work of the Skills and Education Board), and inviting projects that look to deliver our priorities. Those projects will be subject to the usual business case requirements and would ultimately go to the LEPs Performance and Investment committee, before any funding would be released.

**4.2 Feedback from Cheshire Business Leaders**

Paul Taylor reported that earlier in the day the Cheshire Business Leaders had hosted a breakfast meeting of key senior business people who are very keen to support the development of an IoT and to ensure that it continues to be business-led. They are committed to become part of the governance arrangements.

The business leaders had stressed the need for the IoT to focus on distance learning and to establish long term collaborations between employers and training and education providers including the sharing of resources.

**4.3 Work on key sectors**

Helen Nellist, Nick Smith and Jan Morris presented an overview of their work with the energy sector.

Helen, Nick and Jan highlighted the impact of the apprenticeship levy as a ‘game changer’ in terms of working with more employers to ensure they can access the levy funding. Urenco and other businesses involved in the Energy Hub have provided positive input to the proposed apprenticeship approach and are keen to develop different progression pathways.

Moving forward it will be important to appoint project managers to work with the different sectors/grouping of employers as part of the IoT delivery. It will also be critical to develop a viable business case to draw down European Social Funds.

**4.4 Possible Governance Arrangements for IoT**

Dave Brennan presented a series of slides outlining possible governance structures. Dave made the following points:

* The Government proposals for IoTs stress the need for strong employer engagement in terms of governance and the Government’s current review of Level 4 and 5 provision will inform further proposals.
* The IoT will rely on co-investments by employers and training providers but could be ‘turbo charged’ by the injection of European Social Funds.
* An IoT that is employer driven and involves all key partners in Cheshire and Warrington would ensure real ownership of the skills and education agenda that should be flexible and able to respond to changes in the needs of the local economy.
* A consortium approach would need to be underpinned by an accountable body to ensure a rigorous audit trail.
* Effective project management resources will be key.
* One of the challenges will be to make standards apply to both the large and smaller businesses.

**5** **Feed-back from Group Discussions**

**Group 1**

* The scope of work is extensive and difficult to tackle all at once.
* It will be essential to engage SMEs in the IoT – possibly through supply chains. For example, could each of the larger companies engage 12 SMEs from their supply chains?
* An IoT must be flexible, sensitive to changes in demand and able to respond quickly
* An IoT could provide an umbrella structure to enable apprentices to move around and acquire different skills in a group of different businesses (an Apprentice Training Agency)
* When European Social Funding ceases there may be replacement funding but the IoT model should be a sustainable as possible.
* Identifying a truly independent chair will be a real challenge – will it be absolutely necessary?

**Group 2**

* An Apprentice Training Agency was established in Cheshire East – we should learn from this experience
* Need clear key performance indicators and good progression opportunities
* It will be important to focus on cross sector issues e.g. digital and recognise that many larger businesses operate across sectors
* Need to manage competition between training and education providers and agree values and behaviours
* The accountable body must be transparent and focus on accountability of funds with the employer- led consortium working together to agree strategic priorities and monitor delivery against priorities.

**Group 3**

* If there is real buy-in to the IoT model in Cheshire and Warrington the scope could be limitless and achieve a real step change in the training and education offer across Cheshire and Warrington
* The governance must be employer-led with strong representation and partnership working with the education and training providers and local authorities
* Need a legal structure for the IoT
* Providers need to get together to work out whether they can work together – this will require trust and different behaviours
* The accountable body must be auditable and independent
* It will be critical to secure employer investments – this will happen if employers see the added value of their engagement
* If the IoT works everyone will benefit
* Could we explore a ‘commission’ approach where an IoT might be paid for making introductions?

**6. Plenary Discussion**

The following additional points were made:

* An IoT model would be multi-dimensional – we must be clear about the initial focus and have a strong governance arrangement that oversees and directs subsequent growth
* Need to recognise the different priorities of different sectors/groups of businesses and ensure we have the right balance of priorities
* Must consider digital as a potential solution for distance/remote learning

**7. Next steps**

Clare Hayward thanked everyone for their contributions. Over the last six months the IoT proposal had been developed by the Employers’ Skills and Education Board in partnership with key partners. The extended meeting of the Employers’ Board with local partners in June, September and November had helped to shape the initial concept and we now needed to identify resources to enable further progress.

Clare Hayward, Mark Livesey and Pat Jackson will reflect on the discussions and develop a proposal for resourcing the next phase of development of the IoT - **ACTION Clare Hayward, Mark Livesey and Pat Jackson**

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 8 NOVEMBER 2017 Annex A**

**Attended by:-**

**Attended by Members of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board:-**

* Clare Hayward (Chair)
* Neil Warren (Jungheinrich)
* James Richards (Network Rail) \* may be late
* Paul Colman (South Cheshire College)
* Paul Taylor (Taylor Business Park)
* Jim Carroll (Mobica)
* Julia Teale representing Lynne Williams (Bentley Motors)
* Dame Pat Bacon (Health Sector)
* Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
* Meredydd David (Reaseheath College)
* Helen Asley representing Jane Ingram (Halifax/Lloyds Banking Group)
* Mark Livesey (LEP)
* Pat Jackson

**Apologies**

* Margaret Cheshire (Essar Oils)
* Lynne Williams (Bentley Motors)
* Fraser Kearney (Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub)

**Extended Meeting included:**

* Gary Byrne (Eddie Stobart)
* Nicola Newton (Warrington Collegiate and Vale Royal College)
* Lesley Coombes (Unilever)
* Bill Carr IOD and Carpe Diem
* Helen Nellist (South and West Cheshire Colleges)
* Leah Maltby on behalf of Charlie Seward (Cheshire West and Chester Council)
* Denise Proctor (WEAVE)
* Rachel Kay (Macclesfield College)
* Martin Howlett on behalf of Chris Hindley (Youth Federation)
* Dave Rowlands on behalf of Andrew Bridge (CITB)
* Tim Wheeler (University of Chester)
* Gary Steen (Talk Talk)
* Linda Dean (Total People)
* Nick Smith (TTE)
* Nick Palmer on behalf of Chris McLinden (University of Liverpool)
* Jan Morris/Charlie Woodcock (University of Chester)
* Aidan McManus (Warrington UTC)
* Mathew Grant (Priestley College)
* Tim Smith on behalf of Andy Farrall (Warrington Borough Council)
* David Brennan

**Apologies from extended invitees**

* Frank Jordan (Cheshire East Council)
* Kerrie Salisbury (AO)
* Chris Smith (Tiger Trailers)
* Dave Terry (Crewe UTC)
* Juliette White and Clare Pattendale (Astra Zeneca)
* Phil White (United Utilities)
* Jonathan Guest (Atkins)
* Mark Duffy (Sellafield)
* Karen Hughes (United Utilities)