**NOTE OF EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 15 JANUARY 2020**

1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Clare Hayward welcomed everyone to the meeting. The list of attendees and apologies is at **Annex A.** It was noted that Faye Van Flute had not responded to any recent correspondence or attempts to contact her. Faye’s name would be removed from the membership list. **ACTION PAT JACKSON**

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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 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.
* Paul Colman – Board members of Cheshire College South and West
* Paul Taylor – Director of Wire, Warrington
* James Richard – Director of 4WardFutures
* Bill Carr and Dhesi – applicants for Local Growth Fund.
* Peter Skates – general local authority involvement with Macclesfield College
1. **NOTE OF THE LAST MEETING OF THE EMPLOYERS’ SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD ON 16 DECEMBER**

The note of the meeting was agreed, and the revised action list was reviewed. The following actions and progress reports were noted:

* It was agreed that Pat Jackson would make initial enquiries as to replacing Lloyds Banking Group with another financial services business – **ACTION PAT JACKSON**
* Julia Teale is arranging a meeting to discuss levy transfers and is working with Trevor Langston to develop stronger links between the Pledge and the Apprentice Ambassador network.

All the other action points would be picked up during the meeting.

1. **PROGRESS REPORTS AND ANY ISSUES REQUIRING A STEER FROM MEMBERS**

**4.1 ACCELERATE**

Maud Duthie and Charlie Woodcock provided an update on Accelerate.

Key points to note include:

* The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) have named a contract officer to work with the University as the accountable body.
* The contract officer has already agreed that we can use ‘Accelerate’ as the name of the investment programme but requires this to be confirmed in writing.
* Any changes to Accelerate documentation can only be made after the Project Initiation Visit (PIV) – now planned for 4 February.
* Eunice Simmons, the University’s new Vice Chancellor will be meeting the Accelerate team next week for the first time.
* The aim is to organise an Accelerate Governing Board meeting after the PIV and once the Vice Chancellor has had an opportunity to learn more about Accelerate. It was agreed that the first Accelerate Governing Board meeting should be held before the next meeting of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board meeting on 19 February – **ACTION CHARLIE WOODCOCK AND MAUD DUTHIE**
* Maud expressed some concerns about the Service Level Agreement between the University and the LEP but Charlie Woodcock reassured the Members that there were no major issues that needed to be addressed.
* Maud noted that any changes to documentation needed to be approved by DWP.
* Maud also noted that a project delivery plan would be required.
* The University has now recruited 14 full time equivalent staff to manage Accelerate and the LEP is in the process of appointing 3 independent brokers. Maud agreed to re-circulate the management structure. **ACTION MAUD DUTHIE**
* Members asked that information about Accelerate could be shared via SharePoint. **ACTION MAUD DUTHIE –** access rights would be agreed to avoid any conflicts of interest.
* The deadline for submitting expression of interest into the first dynamic procurement exercise had passed – 93 expressions of interest and 37 applications had been received as a result of the first exercise. The Dynamic Procurement System would be opened again to applicants after completion of the first round.
* Urgent work was needed to agree key performance indicators that reflect the ambitions of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board – not just the European Social Fund deliverables agreed in the contract with DWP.
* Nicola Merriman agreed to share with the University the quality control procurement processes developed by Skills for Nuclear by 22 January 2020 **ACTION NICOLA MERRIMAN**
* A group should be established as soon as possible to discuss the potential for submitting an application for the additional European Social Funds that have been released as a result of changes in the Euro/£ exchange rate. **ACTION PAT JACKSON, TREVOR LANGSTON, CHARLIE WOODCOCK, LISA HARRIS AND TIM SMITH**. Initial ideas included addressing the underemployment of people e.g. graduates, in the labour market. Pat Jackson will also ask Tim Smith for a note outling what might be eligible investments for the European Social Funds. **ACTION PAT JACKSON/TIM SMITH**
* It was also agreed that a small working group would be established to work through in granular detail the processes of applying for and securing funds from Accelerate. The working group should include Julia Teale and representatives from Bentley, Maud and Charlie Woodcock, two training providers and Bill Carr or Paul Colman plus the organisation appointed to market Accelerate. **ACTION JULIA TEALE AND MAUD DUTHIE – to arrange the meeting before 19 February.**
* It was also agreed that the University would provide for employers and providers one-page notes explaining Accelerate – these could then be used by all Members. **ACTION CHARLIE WOODCOCK AND MAUD DTHIE.** Catherine Walker noted that developing a marketing toolkit was also be within the remit of the organisation appointed to market Accelerate.

4.2 **LOCAL GROWTH FUND**

Members noted the progress in issuing contracts for the first and second tranche of Local Growth Fund investments and noted the status of the remaining two bids. They approved the bid submitted by Blue Beck and asked for a recommendation on the final bid to be presented to the next meeting of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board on 19 February. If no progress has been made on the final bid by the 19th February, then the money should be released and used to fill any gaps identified during the workshop on 21 February.

All Members had received invitations to attend the workshop on 21 January and Members agreed the list of sponsors identified for each investment. It was noted that Lisa Harris should be allocated one of the investments to sponsor. **ACTION LISA HARRIS**

4.3 **DIGITAL SKILLS PARTNERSHIP**

Nicola Dunbar noted the progress report that had been circulated prior to the meeting. Nicola then reported on a meeting held on 14 January where potential members of the Digital Skills Partnership Board had met for the first time. Nicola commented that attendees to the meeting came from across Cheshire and Warrington and had an amazing range of experience of running digital businesses. They had discussed the challenges to digital businesses and to the adoption of digital technologies across all sectors.

Nicola and Sarah Williams would produce a note of actions from the meeting but there is clear need to provide more opportunities for digital businesses to network and share good practice on a peer group basis. Clare Hayward stressed the need to engage a wider group of businesses across Cheshire and Warrington. **ACTION NICOLA DUNBAR AND SARAH WILLIAMS**

**4.4. THE PLEDGE**

James Richards noted that all the Key Performance Indicators to the end of December had been met except for the recruitment of Enterprise Advisors. Trevor Langston would circulate a list of schools that still needed to be matched with an enterprise advisor. **ACTION TREVOR LANGSTON**

James noted that local Pledge Management Board had now all been established and performance of Cheshire and Warrington against the Gatsby benchmarks had improved significantly from well below average (12 months ago) to average and the trajectory was very promising so James should be able to report further progress at future meeting of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board.

**4. DATA AND LABOUR MARKET INTELLIGENCE**

Members noted progress in the work of the Data and Labour Market Steering Group and the proposals for commissioning further consultancy support. Members were invited to send Pat any comments or suggested additions to the proposals for further work. **ACTION ALL MEMBERS**

**5. COMMUNICATIONS, BRANDING AND MARKETING**

Catherine Walker was welcomed to the meeting and presented a series of slides outlining plans to develop a hierarchy of logos/brands. Catherine also noted the plans to produce a video library of Local Growth Fund investments and to run a series of ‘LEP talks’ on key issues – the first talk is likely to be focused on skills.

Members in general agreed with the series of goals and outcomes for marketing the skills and education priorities that Catherine suggested but Members also stressed the need for measurable goals and outputs. **ACTION CATHERINE WALKER**

In discussion the following points were made:

* Businesses need to be given a seamless service that integrates skills with the wider support for business growth – this is the reason why Accelerate brokers will be based in the Growth Hub.
* Need to focus on businesses that are ‘disruptive’ and likely to have strong growth.
* Need to develop a URL/# to build awareness of Accelerate with a common message being delivered by all partners.
* Catherine invited Members to suggest our five word story about Accelerate – suggestions please on a postcard. **ACTION ALL MEMBERS**
* Need to link the ‘purpose’ of Accelerate to the skills and education road map.
* Catherine suggested campaign weeks linked to events where target businesses were already coming together for meetings or discussion groups.
* Also need to make extensive use of digital channels.
* It was agreed that a task and finish group (Nicola Merriman and Paul Colman) would work with Catherine on the marketing and communications plans. **ACTION CATHERINE WALKER, NICOLA MERRIMAN AND PAUL COLMAN.**

**6. MEMBERSHIP OF BOARDS**

Members noted the membership of the Pledge Management Board, the Digital Skills Partnership Board and Accelerate and agreed the list of sponsors for Local Growth Fund investments. Lisa Harris would confirm which Local Growth Fund she will sponsor**. ACTION LISA HARRIS**

**7. REFESH OF SKILLS AND EDUCATION PLAN**

This agenda item was postponed for discussion at the next meeting of the Employers’ Skills and Education board meeting on 19 February. In the interim Clare Hayward and Pat Jackson would discuss how best to take forward this work.

**8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no any other business.

**9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on 19 February at Wyvern House. Items for the agenda would include the Digital Skills Partnership, Accelerate, Marketing and Communications and the Skills and Education Plan.

Further updates on the Pledge would be scheduled for the March meeting.

The meeting closed at 15.30 hrs.

**CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON LEP Annex A**

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 15 JANUARY 2019**

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

* Clare Hayward
* Nicola Dunbar
* Julia Teale (Bentley Motors)
* Nicola Merriman (National Skills Academy Nuclear)
* Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
* Paul Colman (South Cheshire Chamber)
* Bill Carr (Carpe Diem)
* Jasbir Dhesi (Cheshire College South and West – representing the training providers)
* Charlie Woodcock (University of Chester) – left meeting after agenda item on Accelerate
* James Richards (Network Rail)
* Lisa Harris (Cheshire West and Chester Council)
* Pat Jackson (LEP)

**Apologies**

* Cllr James Barber (Cheshire East Council)
* Louise Higgins (United Utilities)
* Paul Taylor (Taylor Business Park)
* Martin Wood (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) – observer
* Stephen Fitzsimons (Warrington Borough Council)
* Philip Cox
* Peter Skates (Cheshire East Council) – observer

**No response**

* Faye Van Flute (Lloyds Banking Group) – Faye has not been in touch for several months

Also attending:

* Sarah Williams (LEP),
* Maud Duthie (University of Chester),
* Andy Devaney (LEP).