**NOTE OF EMPLOYERS’ SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 18 May 2022**

**The main purpose of the meeting was for Members to:**

* Review key developments since their last meeting on 13 April  - including UK Shared Prosperity Fund
* Review further work on the impact measurement work and agree next steps
* Learn more about how our colleges are making effective use of the Local Growth Skills investments
* Receive an update on Skills Bootcamps and provide a steer on next steps
* Reflect on the recently issued guidance for expressions of interest for the designation of employer representative bodies to develop Local Skills Improvement Plans
* Reflect on the latest developments around the Jobs Portal

**KEY POINTS DISCUSSED**

**1. Welcome, declarations of interest, introductions with members sharing information on any key developments since the last meeting** **on 13 April**

* List of attendees and apologies (Annex A)
* There were no additional declarations of interest
* Kath Mackay welcomed Tamara Barker who has replaced Sarah Hopkinson (Engie)

**2. Note of last meeting and outstanding actions**

* The note of the last meeting was approved, and the updated action list reviewed.

**3. Updates on Key Developments Since Last Meeting**

**3.1 Current State of Labour Market**

* Members noted:
* the number of current vacancies (at least 23,000) was significantly larger than the numbers of unemployed (around 16,000)
* the level of employment is still below pre-Covid levels
* the structure of unemployment has changed significantly with a large increase in the numbers of long-term unemployed and economic inactive.

**3.2 LEP Board**

* Kath Mackay referred to the LEP CEO report to the LEP Board and highlighted the items on the budget and delivery plan for next year. Both Kath and Pat would be attending the LEP Board later in the day to report on the work of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board

**3.2 UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

* Members noted the slides providing an overview of the Shared Prosperity Fund that had been shared in advance of the meeting.
* Matt Smith commented that across Cheshire and Warrington £1.5 million has been ring-fenced to improve adult numeracy via the Multiply programme. Multiply could complement the Adult Education Budget because it can be used to fund more intensive support to unemployed adults and those in work. Matt is keen to capture employers’ views on Multiply and the opportunities to improve the numeracy skills of employed people.
* Gemma Betteridge suggested that Multiply might be used to support numeracy for early career people in Bentley and other businesses.
* Matt noted that there are few baseline figures on adult numeracy but there was scope to work with Jobcentre Plus to link with their work in accessing the literacy, numeracy and digital skills of jobseekers. Multiply could also link to work in foodbanks and other charities.

**3.3 Pledge and Careers Hub**

* In Paul Colman’s absence Pat Jackson provided the following update:
* The grant offer letter has been received from the Careers and Enterprise Company confirming funding for the academic year 2022/23. This includes the expansion of the Careers Hub to all schools and colleges.
* A recruitment exercise is currently being run and a full staffing structure is expected to be in place by the end of Summer
* A light touch stakeholder evaluation of the Pledge, including the Careers Hub is planned to help inform future planning
* 224 people have registered to attend the Pledge celebration event on 30th June at Alderley Park. [**https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-pledge-celebration-tickets-308675876857**](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.eventbrite.co.uk%2Fe%2Fthe-pledge-celebration-tickets-308675876857&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cf7232a58ad224409841808da12d85619%7Ce4addc4bb5eb4594ab58f3bcd515a98a%7C0%7C0%7C637843017625320760%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=Ud6myoBl6qkwOVtNwpBL6CI5BdWeRJijYF0zPMC3z7U%3D&reserved=0)
* Local Hub school/college planning meetings have been held in each local authority area to discuss challenges to the use of careers as a means to improving outcomes for disadvantaged young people- the discussions have shaped local support in the short term and will inform strategic planning for the Pledge and Careers Hub
* Additional tailored support is being provided for the schools/colleges not yet meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks
* On the 10th May the team delivered a pilot parental engagement event with Blacon High School in Chester. Over 200 families attended. Feedback is being collated to form a case study.
* A pilot with 8 employers is being run to offer paid summer undergraduate internships with SMEs from Cheshire and Warrington targeted at undergraduates who are residents of Cheshire and Warrington but studying away from the area.  This is part of trying to tackle the fact that 5,000 young graduates leave the sub region to study and don’t return once they graduate.
* The first of four young professional networks has been established with Macclesfield Chamber, to support employees in local businesses at the early stages of their career.  The other three networks are planned to start in the coming weeks.
* A new Pledge website is being developed to help connect, inform, and support our key audiences. We are also developing a platform specifically for SEND students.

**3.4 Digital Skills Partnership**

* The following update was provided:
* **Grant funding for 2022/23** has been secured and is likely to be paid by mid-June subject to agreement on the MOU.
* **Digital Skills Partnership Board Meeting 20th April** focused on the addressing the shortage of computer science teachers and digital continuous professional development (CPD) for teaching staff. Tablet Academy and Cheshire and Wirral Computing Hub - presented at the Board meeting and subsequently at a Pledge Team meeting. Tablet Academy are offering free programmes of digital skills development for young people and teachers supported by partners including Microsoft, Adobe and Intel.
* **Digital Skills Partnership Board Meeting 18th May** – a small number of Members met to review and provide feedback on the digital skills bootcamps and provide views on sub-regional digital skills challenges and how these might be addressed with funding from the Cheshire and Warrington UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
* **Digital Skills and Careers Data and Labour Market Intelligence** – work is taking place to explore why young people and adults don’t choose digital related careers or develop digital skills. A task and finish group has been established and a questionnaire was piloted with 44 young people and parents/guardians at a careers event at Balcon High School on 10th May. The group are further developing this work with a wider reaching survey, the results will be included in the refresh of the Digital Skills Report.

3.5 **Accelerate**

* No update was available

**3.6 Data and Labour Market Steering Group**

* Pat noted that the draft report on the ‘light touch’ evaluation of the data and labour market work had been shared with Members in advance of the meeting. In the light of the report, the Data and Labour Market Steering Group had agreed to start the refresh of the Digital Report (now 2 years old) and then undertake the updates of the Young People and Adult reports when it was expected at least some of the latest census data would be released.

**3.7 Institute of Technology (IoT)**

* Dhesi noted that plans are progressing towards the target date for submission of the detailed IoT plans in early June. However, there is currently some frustration that the Department for Education has not responded to concerns from the colleges’ governing boards who over the last 6 weeks have been seeking reassurance about the conditions under which funds might be clawed back by the Department.
* Lucy asked about the role of Reaseheath College in the IoT and whether the Board should provide a letter of support. Dhesi agreed to follow up with Marcus Clinton and then speak to Pat Jackson about the suggestion. **ACTION DHESI**
* Lucy also asked if there will be sufficient students to fill the IoT and Dhesi confirmed that the labour market analysis shows a current deficit of people with Level 3 and 4 technical skills.

4. **How our colleges are making effective use of the Skills Local Growth Fund investments**

* Sarah Williams explained that the dashboard showing the progress of all the Local Growth Fund skills projects will be available at the July meeting after the projects have submitted their latest quarterly returns.
* Two videos illustrating the impact of the skills investments were shown – one focused on the investment in cyber security at the Warrington University Technical College (UTC) and another on Advanced Construction Training led by Warrington Vale Royal College in partnership with Reaseheath College, Cheshire College South and West, Macclesfield College and Warrington UTC. The videos will be shared more widely including on social media, as soon as final editing has been completed. **ACTION SARAH WILLIAMS**
* Dhesi noted that the Local Growth Fund skills investments had provided the foundations to access other sources of funding including the support for the IoT.

5. **Impact Measures**

* Kath Mackay referred to the working paper that had been circulated in advance of the meeting showing progress to date and including some baseline measurements. Kath suggested that, at future meetings, individual members might lead the discussions on each of the topics. Members had already agreed that each challenge could only be addressed by partners working together – Kath Suggested that Board Members needed to consider how they could help to achieve the impacts.
* Members agreed to have an initial focus on the first challenge of address information failures. In the subsequent discussion the following points were made:
  + Need to target particular geographical areas e.g., Crewe and Ellesmere Port and consider how we can help in these different locations.
  + Not all the schools and colleges have achieved Gatsby benchmarks – what more can we do to support them to achieve the benchmarks?
  + Need to review the baselines (currently they are a mix of process and impact measures)
  + Consider developing a logic framework showing inputs, outputs and impacts
  + Need to consider wider issues that are constraining progress e.g., transport and childcare.
  + Could we work with other partners to develop a programme of taster events?
  + The Adult Education Budget is designed to support the unemployed up to Level 2 – for these learners could we open up the programme and provide more flexibility?
* Members agreed to update the paper and focus on one of the other challenges at the next meeting **ACTION ALL MEMBERS**

**6. Skills Bootcamps**

* Pat Jackson provided an overview of progress to date. An offer letter from the Department for Education had been received for just over £1 million for the first phase of our skills bootcamp programme. The first phase of the bootcamps will be run in three tranches. The first tranche will cover digital marketing, HGV driving, and green energy skills followed by a second and third tranche covering a range of digital and construction skills bootcamps.
* Further funding opportunities are expected later in the year and discussions are continuing with a range of employers and training providers about the subjects for future funding opportunities – including life sciences.
* Members have subsequently been informed that the prospectuses for our first 3 skills bootcamps are now live on the LEP website <https://cheshireandwarrington.com/what-we-do/skills-and-education/skills-bootcamps/> .

**7. Local Skills Improvement Plans**

* Kath Mackay noted the Department for Education guidance on submitting an expression of interest to become a designated employer representative body to lead the development of Local Skills Improvement Plans. Given that LEPs are not able to apply, we need to consider how can we work with the designated body.
* Dhesi suggested that we need to wait to see how the employer groups in Cheshire and Warrington come together – it is important that this latest initiative does not lead to a re-invention of what has gone before but builds on progress to date.

8. **Jobs Portal**

* Sarah Williams noted that work was still in progress to try to identify possible funding sources form June to March 2023. Sarah presented a series of slides to summarise progress to date.

**9. Any Other Business and Date of Next Meetings**

**Date of next meeting** 115 June 2022

* Data and Labour Market Steering Group evaluation of progress and impact to date
* Consultation by the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission
* Update on Careers Hub and Gatsby benchmarks?
* Impact measurement – to focus on one of the challenges
* Another presentation from a Local Growth Fund skills investment
* Post-16 Qualifications at Level 2 consultation (check with Dhesi beforehand)

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 18 MAY 2022 Annex A**

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

* \*Kath Mackay - Chair
* Dhesi (Cheshire College South and West – representing the training providers)
* \*Matthew Smith (Cheshire West and Chester)
* Tamara Barker (Engie)
* \*Lucy Liang (AUE Ltd)
* Kim Hardman (Astra Zeneca)
* Gemma Betteridge (Bentley)
* Pat Jackson (LEP) \*With voting rights

**Apologies**

* \*Nicola Dunbar (Deputy Chair)
* Paul Colman (South Cheshire Chamber)
* Kurt Allman (University of Chester)
* Julia Teale Mid Cheshire Health Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
* \*Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
* Kevin Hutchinson (SISK)
* Ben Longworth (BAE Systems)
* Maggie Chen
* Cllr James Nicholas (Cheshire East)
* Tim Smith representing \*Eleanor Blackburn (Warrington Borough Council)
* \*Bill Carr (Carpe Diem)
* Kevin Hutchinson (SISK)

**Also attending**

* David Brenna and Sarah Williams, for specific agenda items

**Papers copied to**:

* Trevor Brocklebank (Deputy Chair of LEP)
* Martin Wood (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy)
* Councillor Sarah Pochin (Cheshire East)
* Jamie Zucker (DfE)
* Clare Cassidy (DfE)
* Mike McLouglin (DfE)
* Peter Skates (Cheshire East Council)
* Kirstie Simpson (University of Chester)
* Nicola Said (LEP)
* Joe Manning (LEP)
* Andy Devaney (LEP)
* Sarah Williams (LEP) and Trevor Langston (LEP)
* Andrew Bridge and Dave Rowlands (CITB)