**NOTE OF EMPLOYERS’ SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 19 OCTOBER 2022**

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

* Review key developments since their last meeting on 21 September including the launch of the LEP’s annual review and the publication of the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission Report
* Review further work on the impact measurement work with particular focus on the long-term unemployed and economically inactive people. Agree next steps
* Review follow up work from the sub-group investigating the issues around the information failures and the progression of young people in disadvantaged communities, and agree next steps
* Receive an update on Skills Bootcamps and provide a steer on next steps
* Review the future plans of the Pledge and Careers Hub and provide a steer
* Review progress of the Local Growth Fund projects including the collaboration between projects
* Note the recent update of the Digital Skills Report (presentation will be made at December meeting)

**KEY POINTS DISCUSSED AND AGREED ACTIONS**

**1. Welcome, declarations of interest, introductions with members sharing information on any key developments since the last meeting** **on 21 September**

* List of attendees and apologies (Annex A)
* Kath noted that it had not been possible to attract sufficient Members to a face-to-face meeting and a number of Members had sent apologies due to Covid-related ill health
* There were no additional declarations of interest
* Members noted some of the key meetings that has taken place since 21 September

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

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

**2.1 Accelerate**

* + - Kurt Allman noted that a total of 1388 people had participated in Accelerate funded training. A significant amount of the training was focused on business development, personal development, and well-being (an indication that Accelerate had responded to the Covid-related changes in the labour market).
    - Kurt reported that the DWP audit of Accelerate had been completed with no non-compliances and no financial penalties. Kurt will check to see if the report can be shared with Members. **ACTION KURT**
    - Kurt also reported that Mickledore are undertaking an evaluation of Accelerate – Kurt will also share this report if possible. **ACTION KURT**
    - Kurt asked if there was any information about the Manchester project that was very similar to Accelerate and funded via European Social Funds. **ACTION PAT JACKSON TO CHECK**

2.2 **The Impact of Ending European Structural Funds**

* Kurt raised concerns about the impact of the ending of European Structural Funds on the ability of universities to support local business to innovate and develop new skills, products, and services.
* Kurt advised that the University of Chester was working with a number of universities in the North-West and the Productivity Institute to explore how they might work collaboratively on innovation and skills with the possibility of submitting a funding proposal to the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy.
* Tim Smith noted that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is available to fund work force development, but the level of funding is significantly less than was available from the European Structural Funds and was being administered by local authorities who might not all have the same investment priorities.
* Pat Jackson asked if there was an overall assessment of the impact of the University’s programmes that had been funded via European Structural Funds – it would be helpful for partners to understand what Cheshire and Warrington would be losing if the University was no longer able to deliver the projects funded by European Structural Funds. Kurt agreed to check if an evaluation was available to share. **ACTION KURT**

2.2 **Institute of Technology and Strategic Development Fund**

* In Dhesi’s absence, Pat Jackson reported that in June 2022 the colleges had received revised costs for the separate capital schemes that would form the Institute of Technology (IoT). At this stage the costs had increased by circa 32%. Since June colleges have review each scheme to try to bring the costs back in line with the original estimate, whilst identifying costs specifically associated with net zero carbon/sustainability and abnormals. As a result of this work the Department for Education (DfE) have confirmed the revised total grant to be £14,119,888 – an uplift of £1,121,234 allocated for either sustainability/net zero carbon or abnormals.
* Despite the increased grant allocation, two schemes remained over budget but during September further work was undertaken to bring these two schemes within budget. The financial model has subsequently been updated with a start date for the IoT of September 2024. The model has been further reviewed to ensure learner numbers per year and the KPI’s are accurate following the revision of the capital schemes and been sent to the DfE. The DfE are finalising all legal agreements and associated schedules for signing.
* Schedules which will be incorporated within the commercial agreement are currently being written and once completed all legal documents will be circulated to colleges and partners for signing and sealing. The DfE are aiming for all documents to be signed and sealed as soon as possible to mitigate potential issues around continued inflationary price rises and potential policy changes. We are aiming to have everything signed and completed by mid-November 2022.
* Each college board will need to agree to the revised capital schemes, learner numbers and KPIs and approve the Commercial Agreement. It is recommended that given how dynamic the situation is delegated powers are given to defined Governors and or Executives to approve this Commercial Agreement. Each Core Partner and the University will need to sign the final commercial agreement and sub licenses. These documents will be sent by Cheshire College South and West to each of the core partners.
* Letters of intent are also required. Letters will be sent to colleges and employer partners to be signed and returned.
* Discussion with a potential Chair for the IoT Board are ongoing. Following completion of all the legal documents a further step will be to appoint an IoT Director who will oversee the future project management of the IoT.
* An update on the Skills Strategic Development Fund was not available.

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

**3.1 LEP Board and Economic Summit**

* Kath Mackay reported on the LEP Board away day where there had been a focus on the LEP review and future priorities.
* The LEP Board would be meeting later on 19th October.
* Kath also noted the recent LEP Economic Summit and asked for the video shown at the summit to be shared with Members **ACTION PAT JACKSON**
* Kath also noted that the Local Authorities had recently submitted proposals for investment zones (7 sites in Cheshire East, 1 site in Cheshire West and 3 sites in Warrington

3.2 **Pledge and Careers Hub**

* In the absence of Kim Hardman andPaul Colman, Pat Jackson reported that Kim Hardman had agreed to chair the Pledge and Career Hub Management Board. Pat agreed to share a longer progress report.

3.3 **Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission report**

* Pat Jackson asked Members to note the recent report by the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth

Commission and the note outlining how the Employers’ Skills and Education Board were contributing to the sustainable and inclusive growth agenda and invited Members’ comments.

3.4 **Digital Skills Report**

* Members noted the summary of the report. A review of the summary will be arranged for the next meeting of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board
* Sarah noted that work was planned to produce an infographic to summarise the Digital Skills Report – she hoped that Members would help to shape the infographic
* It was also noted that the LEP is planning some consultancy work to develop a better understanding of the barriers to digital adoption – it is hoped that this work will inform future investment plans e.g., UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
* Lucy Liang noted the lack of girls engaged in digital and asked if funding was available to support more focus on girls
* Members also noted the need to develop digital skills of the workforce more generally e.g., in the health sector.
* Sarah Williams suggested that we could explore the scope for the Local Growth Fund projects to focus more on engaging with girls. **ACTION SARAH WILLIAMS**
* Tim Smith confirmed that digital inclusion is a focus of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund but is not able to focus on primary school students

**4. Skills Bootcamps**

* Pat Jackson and Sarah Williams thanked Members for helping to review the technical aspects of bids received.
* It was noted that there are currently 6 live bootcamps and proposals for a further 6 bootcamps that will start delivery in November have been appraised with contracts being awarded over the next week. The LEP website contains details of all the live bootcamps and will be updated regularly as more bootcamps come on-line ([Cheshire and Warrington Skills Bootcamps (candwopportunities.co.uk)](https://www.candwopportunities.co.uk/skills-bootcamps-learner-page/).
* Pat Jackson asked if Lucy, in her new role on the Board of the Countess of Chester hospital, could encourage the hospital to make use of the skills bootcamp funding to develop the digital skills of their workforce **ACTION LUCY AND PAT TO FOLLOW UP**

5. **Local Skills Improvement Plan and Designation of Employer Representative Body**

* Paul Colman was not available to provide an update.
* Members noted that South Cheshire Chamber had been nominated by the Department for Education as the designated employer representative body to lead the development of the Local Skills Improvement Plan in Cheshire and Warrington

6. **Unemployed and economically inactive people and ambitions to increase earnings**

* Colin Billingsley (DWP) provided an update on Cheshire and Warrington’s current labour market and work to support people into work and to progress in work. Colin made the following points:
* There are record low levels of unemployment
* 12,000 people are looking for work and a significant number of these people have been unemployed for more than 3 years
* The number of people with no requirement to work has increased from 11,000 to 18,000
* DWP want to support people who are working 9 to 12 hours per week to progress in work, increase their working hours and increase their salaries. We need to support these people to reskills and upskill
* Labour market analysis is taking place and there is a move to look at local, place-based priorities and action plans
* It is expected that the numbers seeking work will increase as a result of the focus on in work progression and also as more of the 17,500 people currently on legacy benefit programmes (e.g., Jobseekers Allowance) and tax credits (numbers not yet available) move to Universal Credit.
* Moving forward, it is possible that the Government’s current review of spending will result in a ‘tighter’ benefits regime. DWP are keen to build on local partnership and collaborative working to date and work with local partners to better understand the local place-level priorities
* DWP and local partners have agreed to share and develop agreed local priorities and action plans. A joint meeting of the Into Work Board and the Economic and Workforce Recovery Group will review progress on 6 December
* In the subsequent discussion the following points were made:
  + As a consequence of increased sharing of data and labour market intelligence, there is now a work coach in Crewe who is focused on supporting long-term unemployed in Crewe
  + Employers could get more involved in supporting in-work progression by tailoring their recruitment practices including the application process for over 50s. Employers could also help by taking part in mentoring circles.
  + Colin agreed to provide a few scenarios to help employers to understand how they might adapt their recruitment practices **ACTION COLIN BILLINGSLEY**

7. **Impact Measures – Work with Young People to address information failures and in particular support young people in the most disadvantaged areas of Cheshire and Warrington**

* Pat Jackson reported that following the meeting chaired by Paul Colman with local authorities and other partners to establish a better understanding of how best to support young people access the information they need to make informed decisions about subjects to study and careers to follow, local authorities and the LEP had met to establish a better understanding of the data about where young people go after completing education at 16 and 18 and their levels of attainment and progression.
* This work is ongoing and should be in a position to report back in November

**8.**  **Local Growth Fund Investments**

* Sarah presented a number of slides) showing progress of the Local Growth Fund projects following the updates at the end of September. The slides indicate significant progress in delivering outputs although engagement with businesses remains a challenge.
* Members noted the outcome of the event where the Local Growth Fund projects had shared good practice – in particular, engagement with business.

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

* **Date of next meeting** 16 November 2022
* **Items for agenda of next meeting:**
  + review of progress in addressing the issues identified in the Skills Report and the skills and education elements of the LEP Delivery Plan?
  + Skills Challenges of Netzero – what are the training priorities of employers?
  + Cheshire and Warrington Life Science businesses – what are their skills and employment needs – can the public sector help?
  + LGF Skills project update from Cheshire College South and West (Karen Roberts)
  + Digital skills report – the big challenges?
  + In work progression – scenarios from DWP
  + Share updated data and evidence that will inform the development of a sustainable and inclusive economic strategy

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 19 OCTOBER 2022 Annex A**

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

* \*Kath Mackay - Chair
* \*Nicola Dunbar (Deputy Chair
* \*Bill Carr (Carpe Diem)
* Kurt Allman (University of Chester)
* \*Lucy Liang (AUE Ltd)
* Kevin Hutchinson (SISK)
* Maggie Chen
* Tim Smith representing \*Eleanor Blackburn (Warrington Borough Council)Kevin Hutchinson (SISK)
* Ben Longworth (BAE Systems)
* Pat Jackson (LEP) \*With voting rights

**Apologies**

* Paul Colman (South Cheshire Chamber)
* Kim Hardman (Astra Zeneca)
* Dhesi (Cheshire College South and West – representing the training providers)
* Cllr Sarah Pochin (Cheshire East)
* \*Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
* Tamara Barker (Engie)
* Julia Teale Mid Cheshire Health Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
* Nicola Johnson/Gemma Betteridge (Bentley Motors)
* \*Matthew Smith (Cheshire West and Chester)
* Gemma Meadows (Engenda)

**Also attending**

* Colin Billingsley (Jobcentre Plus), Mike McLoughlin 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)
* 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)