**NOTE OF EMPLOYERS’ SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 25 JANUARY 2023**

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

* Agree the key skills, education and employment priorities for 2023 and how best Members of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board can work together on the priorities
* Review key developments since their last meeting on 16 November
* Discuss the next steps for the Local Skills Improvement Plan

**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 16 November**

* Kath Mackay welcomed Members to the meeting**.** List of attendees and apologies (Annex A)
* There were no further declarations of interest

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

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

**3. Meetings that have taken place since 16 November and progress reports on key work programmes**

**3.1. LEP Board**

* Kath noted the Chief Executive’s report to the Board and confirmed that the last LEP Board meeting had focused on the future role of the LEP Board and the relationship of the LEP Board with the advisory Boards including the Employers’ Skills and Education Board.
* Kath advised that the LEP Board was moving towards becoming more strategic and absorbing some of the strategic roles of the advisory Board. The general direction of travel appeared to be towards standing down the formal advisory Boards and setting up a series of task and finish groups to address specific issues.

**3.1 Pledge**

* Members noted the ‘ask’ for a steer from them as to the priorities for the Pledge Partnership going forward and potential sources of funding to support that work. It was agreed that this would be considered as part of the agenda item on the key skills, education and employment priorities for 2023 and how best Members of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board can work together on the priorities.
* Tim Smith noted that there might be scope to fund some of the Pledge activities via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund but the funding could only be focused on people aged 16+
* Tim commented that the local authorities were most interested in the Pledge’s work with employer networks and rather less interested in the Gatsby benchmarks.

3.2 **Digital Skills Partnership**

* Members noted the ‘ask’ for a steer from them as to the priorities for the Digital Skills Partnership going forward and potential sources of funding to support that work. It was agreed that this would be considered as part of the agenda item on the key skills, education and employment priorities for 2023 and how best Members of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board can work together on the priorities.

**3.3 Local Growth Fund projects**

* Members noted the progress of the Local Growth Fund skills investments and comments from Andy Moore, a member of the Digital Skills Partnership Board, that the use of data analytics in Reaseheath College’s automated dairy project can be applied to a number of sectors. A bank of examples from the projects will be collated to be shared more widely.
* Sarah Williams asked Members to consider becoming project sponsors/critical friends for:
  + Cyber Security and Networking Lab (University Technical College – Warrington)
  + Digital Hub Digital Doorstep (Cheshire College South & West)
  + The Digital Hub - Project 4.0  (Cheshire College South & West)
  + High Performance Private Cloud (University of Chester)
  + STREAM (Cheshire College South & West) presented a series of slides (Annex C) that summarised the evidence collected to inform the update of the Sustainable, Inclusive and Economic Growth Strategy and the recent data and labour market intelligence commissioned via the Data and Labour Market Steering Group.
  + **ACTION All Members to respond to Sarah’s request for project ‘sponsors’**
* Sarah asked project sponsors to meet with projects in February/early March ahead of their next project reports being submitted on 11th April for activity for 2022/23 - Q4. It would be helpful to encourage projects to develop some case studies to demonstrate impact and examples of the use of new technologies invested in across a range of sectors. **ACTION project sponsors**

**3.4 Skills Bootcamps**

* Members noted the details of the 14 bootcamps approved to date and the additional funding approved by the Department for Education.

**3.5 Institute of Technology (IoT)**

* Dhesi reported that £14.2 million had recently been approved by the Department for Education. The project was now moving into the ‘planning permission’ phase. The IoT Board also needed to be strengthened for the next phase of work. Dhesi thanked Members for their support to date and noted the extent to which the £5 million Local Growth Fund investments had provided a foundation for the IoT and Skills Development Funding.

**4. Updates on UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)**

* Tim Smith provided an update on the UKSPF:
  + UKSPF contracts had been issued by central Government in December
  + The spending profile is 12% year 1, 24% year 2, 64% year 3 – and year 1 spend has already started although procurement exercises have not yet started

The UKSPF has 3 investment priorities:

* + - Communities and place (55% of total budget for Warrington)
    - Supporting local businesses – important to understand business needs – not just funding what providers want to deliver)
    - People and skills (similar to but smaller budget that the European Social Fund programme and with some scope to deliver via sub-regional programme – initially between Warrington and Cheshire East)
* The Multiply programme is also funding an adult numeracy programme

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

* Paul Colman provided an update:
* The LSIP is intended to identify key skills priorities for Cheshire and Warrington – with an initial focus on employers in life sciences, care and the manufacturing sectors with digital and green as cross cutting issues
* The Chambers have commissioned the Pledge team to use their employer networks to collect employers’ skills needs
* A project manager is being recruited and the first meeting of the Board is planned for 8 Feb
* A survey is being finalised to go out to employers via the Chambers, Federation of Small Business, CBI, etc and a number of focus groups will be held week commencing 13 January
* Initial findings will be available by the end of March with a finalised 30-page report to be submitted to Ministers in June

**6. Key Skills, Education and Employment Priorities for 2023**

* Pat Jackson presented a series of slides that summarised the evidence collected to inform the update of the Sustainable, Inclusive and Economic Growth Strategy and the recent data and labour market intelligence commissioned via the Data and Labour Market Steering Group. The slides also included a summary of initial views from a number of members of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board and the Digital Skills Partnership Board on key future skills, education and employment priorities
* Members reflected on the key messages from the slides and discussed future priorities. During the discussion the following points were made:
  + **important to ensure parents** (not just young people) are fully informed about new technologies and career opportunities – parents are key influencers
  + **the data and labour market analysis provide a good diagnosis of the skills, education and employment challenges but need to recognise that many of the challenges are behavioural and societal.** Many of the challenges are not unique to Cheshire and Warrington
  + **the challenges are long-standing** - it will take time to see the impact of actions
  + hope that **UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the LEP review provide** **an opportunity to review and refresh partnership working across Cheshire and Warrington** – need everyone to work together to achieve real impact
  + the Pledge needs to consider if **the right local infrastructure is in place for specific locations**
  + need to bring the skills, education and employment agenda **‘alive’ with stories about real people**
  + the challenges are not just about technical qualifications – **the ability to learn, communicate and work in teams are also critical**
  + Covid has accelerated the move to more on-line events and enabled far greater reach – engaging more employers and proving opportunities for people to engage at times that suit different life-styles
  + post-Covid schools and colleges are pushing for **more face-to-face meetings – this is in danger of becoming a barrier to employer engagement.** Face-to-face is not always the preferred option for employers and parents who have work commitments (need a range of options including on-line and evening events)
  + **need better ways of marketing and clearer progression pathways**
  + **teachers tend to underestimate the range of job opportunities** – particularly larger businesses e.g. Astra Zeneca is identified as a science-based business but it also has a wide range of other job opportunities including marketing, sales, finance, HR.  **Teachers need more information to enable them to inspire young people about career opportunities**
  + links between employers and local communities and care leavers were very difficult during Covid – connections need to be re-made and developed further. **Employers need to know how to engage with local communities most effectively**
  + moving forward**, Members are keen to develop task and finish groups to address key issues**
* Pat Jackson to summarise slides (Annex C) to include a summary of Members’ feedback. **ACTION Pat**
* Kath and Pat to develop proposals for next phase of work on key challenges **ACTION Kath and Pat**

Following the discussion

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

* Date of next meeting – 15 February 2023

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 25 JANUARY 2023 Annex A**

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

* \*Kath Mackay - Chair
* \*Tim Smith representing \*Eleanor Blackburn (Warrington Borough Council)
* Kurt Allman (University of Chester)
* Paul Colman (South Cheshire Chamber)
* Dhesi (Cheshire College South and West – representing the training providers)
* Kim Hardman (Astra Zeneca)
* \*Lucy Liang (AUE Ltd)
* Kevin Hutchinson (SISK)
* Sophie Baldock/Nicola Johnson (Bentley Motors)
* \*Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
* Tamara Barker (Engie)
* Leah Maltby representing \*Matthew Smith (Cheshire West and Chester)
* Pat Jackson (LEP) \*With voting rights

**Apologies**

* Maggie Chen
* \*Cllr Sarah Pochin (Cheshire East)
* \*Bill Carr (Carpe Diem)
* Gemma Meadow (Engenda)
* Ben Longworth (BAE Systems)

**Also attending**

* Sarah Williams, Vicky Cooney (DWP)

**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)