**NOTE OF EMPLOYERS’ SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 16 NOVEMBER 2022**

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

* Review key developments since their last meeting on 19 October
* Review progress of the Local Growth Fund projects including the collaboration between projects
* Review the future funding options for the Pledge and Careers Hub and provide a steer
* Agree the proposed approach for the next phase of skills bootcamps and identify any further employers that may want to get involved
* Discuss the next steps for the Local Skills Improvement Plan
* Provide a steer on further work with Jobcentre Plus, Local Authorities and other partners on plans to support long-term unemployed and economically inactive people.
* Agree the key messages and any follow up action needed from the refreshed evidence to support the economic strategy and the Digital Skills Report

**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 19 October** (10 minutes)

* List of attendees and apologies (Annex A)
* Kath Mackay expressed thanks for Nicola Dunbar’s support as Deputy Chair and noted with regret, her decision to step down. Kath invited members to express an interest in becoming the Deputy Chair
* No additional declarations of interest were noted

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

* The note of the last meeting on 19th October was approved and the updated action list was reviewed.

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

**3.1 LEP Board**

* + - * Kath Mackay asked for the LEP CEO report to be shared – **ACTION PAT JACKSON**
			* Kath noted the current level of political instability and the forth coming Autumn statement.
			* The LEP Board meeting later in the day would focus on the LEP review and consider the future structure and size of the LEP Board to ensure it was fit for purpose. It would also be necessary to consider the future structure and size of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board – this should be a future agenda item for the Employers’ Skills and Education Board – **ACTION KATH MACKAY AND PAT JACKSON**

3.2 **Local Growth Fund**

* Karen Roberts (Cheshire College South and West) presented a series of slides outlining the key aspects of the Cheshire College South and West projects that had received £1.3 million Local Growth Funds.
* Karen highlighted the extent to which the projects had facilitated the introduction of the latest technologies and the transfer of knowledge about the new technologies to local small businesses as well encouraging collaboration between colleges. The investments had formed the platform for further investments including the Institute of Technology and the Strategic Development Fund.

3.3 **Innovation, Skills and Business Support**

* In the light of the ending of European Structural Funds, there will be significant reductions in funding for innovation, skills and business support across Cheshire and Warrington.
* Kurt referred to recent investments in the Manchester (Innovation Catapult, the Royce Centre and the Graphite Institute) and the £6 million investment in the Liverpool Innovation Launch Pad to support 5,000 businesses. Kurt asked if anyone had any information to the references in press notices that the funding would include support for businesses in Daresbury and Cheshire. **ACTION KURT TO FOLLOW UP WITH LIVERPOOL AND PAT JACKSON TO FOLLOW UP WITHIN THE LEP**

3.4 Pledge and Care**ers Hub future funding options**

* Trevor presented a series of slides and invited members views on future funding options.
* In discussion the following questions were asked, and points made:
	+ Information about the level of funding required at local level would be available to share in approximately 2 weeks **ACTION TREVOR LANSTON**
	+ Members agreed that a decision to fund the Pledge and Careers hub via corporate funding could risk changing the Pledge approach to working with employers and young people. If corporate funding was attracted, it would necessitate the Pledge adopting a strong identity and clear purpose to avoid becoming unduly influenced by individual corporations.
	+ Paul Colman stressed that the Pledge or something very like the Pledge, was required to inspire young people about new technologies.
	+ It was also noted that when the Pledge was first started in Crewe it did attract some local funding – including from Cheshire College South and West
	+ Tamara commented that she recognised the value of keeping the Pledge as a single entity across Cheshire and Warrington but there were also merits in local management groups where local employers were more likely to engage. For example, Equans is more focused in Cheshire East.

**4. Skills Bootcamps**

* Sarah Williams presented a series of slides. Details of all live bootcamps are on the LEP website – [Cheshire and Warrington Skills Bootcamps (candwopportunities.co.uk)](https://www.candwopportunities.co.uk/skills-bootcamps-learner-page/).
* Members were invited to comment on the approach to bootcamp investments in 2023/24.
* In the subsequent discussion Matthew Smith noted the decision to use Ofsted to oversee the quality of bootcamps and expressed some concern at a recent Ofsted report on the delivery of apprenticeships by one of the bootcamp training providers.
* In response to a query from Lucy Liang it was confirmed that investment in bootcamps was being informed by the latest data and labour market intelligence including current job vacancies
* Paul Colman noted that a recent discussion with local employers and the Bank of England had noted a slow-down in the demand for HGV drivers.

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

* Paul Colman provided an update on the development of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Skills Improvement Plan.
* Paul reported that the Chamber was working with other Chambers and employer representative bodies to develop a plan that would identify the key technical skills needed for post-16 adults. Paul stressed that the plan would evolve over time and was not intended to duplicate existing activities.

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

* Pat Jackson reported progress to date on work with Jobcentre Plus, Local Authorities and other partners to develop a better understanding of the different cohorts of people who are unemployed or economically inactive.
* A workshop is planned on 23 November for key partners to work together – identifying any gaps or duplication of support. The outcome of the workshop will be reported on 6 December.
* In discussion Members made the following points:
	+ A lot of hard work is required to support people who are furthest from the labour market
	+ In the current tight labour market, there is an increasing need for employers to adopt more flexible recruitment practices
	+ There was support for further on-line job fairs to fill seasonal as well as longer-term job vacancies

**7. Update of Evidence to Support Economic Strategy and Digital Skills Report**

* Pat Jackson presented some of the key findings from recent data and labour market intelligence. Key issues include:
* **Cheshire and Warrington employers more likely to have skills vacancies and shortages** and reporting bottom-line business impact
* **Strong and increasing demand for Level 3+ skills – the proportion of the Cheshire and Warrington working age population with Level 4+ skills is comparable with England** but rate of growth of L4+ has reduced significantly and converged with the English average – this has an impact on productivity. Also, significant reduction in apprenticeships
* **Impact of Covid** and other recent shocks to the labour market – we now have a tight labour market but also increased numbers of long-term unemployed and economically inactive and reduction in numbers of people able to afford digital connectivity
* **The gaps in attainment and progression rates of young people eligible for free school meals** c.f. those not eligible for FSMs is too big and has been for last 15 years and likely to increase as a result of Covid
* **Where young people live** affects their level of attainment and progression
* **The gender gaps** – some occupations only drawing on the skills of half the population
* **Information failures** - local residents not aware of new technologies or job/career opportunities
* Members reflected on the key messages and Dhesi noted that the need for more people with higher level technical skills was the key driver for the development of an Institute of Technology
* Pat Jackson will share the slides from the update of the evidence to support the economic strategy as soon as they are available **ACTION PAT JACKSON**

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

* Date of next meeting 14 December 2022
* Items for agenda of next meeting to be agreed.
* Future structure of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board to be discussed in January

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 16 NOVEMBER 2022 Annex A**

The following members of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board are expected to attend the meeting:

* \*Kath Mackay - Chair
* Paul Colman (South Cheshire Chamber)
* Kurt Allman (University of Chester)
* Dhesi (Cheshire College South and West – representing the training providers)
* Tamara Barker (Engie)
* \*Lucy Liang (AUE Ltd)
* \*Matthew Smith (Cheshire West and Chester)
* Pat Jackson (LEP) \*With voting rights

**Apologies**

* \*Bill Carr (Carpe Diem)
* Sophie Baldock/Nicola Johnson (Bentley Motors)
* \*Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
* Kim Hardman (Astra Zeneca)
* Kevin Hutchinson (SISK)
* Gemma Betteridge (Bentley Motors)
* Gemma Meadow (Engenda)
* \*Tim Smith representing \*Eleanor Blackburn (Warrington Borough Council)
* Maggie Chen
* \*Cllr Sarah Pochin (Cheshire East)
* Kevin Hutchinson (SISK)

**Also attending**

* Karen Roberts (Cheshire College South and West, Sarah Williams, Trevor Langston

**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)