**NOTE OF EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 13 NOVEMBER 2019**

1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Clare Hayward welcomed everyone to the meeting. The list of attendees and apologies is at **Annex A.**

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following standing items are noted:

* Paul Colman – involvement in the development of the Pledge partnership network across Cheshire and Warrington.
* Clare Hayward – working for Cirrus recently 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
* Cllr David Jefferay - Employee of Wood Nuclear
1. **NOTE OF THE LAST MEETING OF THE EMPLOYERS’ SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD ON 16 OCTOBER**

The note of the meeting was agreed, and the revised action list noted.

1. **PROGRESS REPORT ON ACCELERATE CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON**

Charlie Woodcock reported progress:

* the contract for Accelerate had been received from DWP, signed and returned.
* spending will start from 2 December and there are effectively 26 months to deliver the investment.
* Targets and profiles for spend and learners have been agreed.
* the dynamic procurement framework is in place.
* recruitment of independent brokers to be based in the Growth Hub is underway.
* job roles to be based at the University are agreed and recruitment and appointments are on track (1 project delivery team leader, 4 project co-ordinators to support the independent brokers, 1 project monitoring officer, 4 financial officers, 2 procurement staff)
* there will be an initial ‘test of the system’ before full roll out in the New Year.
* training providers will be required to complete a questionnaire and meet certain requirements in order be included in the list of Accelerate’s training providers.

Charlie stressed the importance of seeing Accelerate as a ‘legacy project’ that would change the way employers invest in training and work together with training providers to develop the training they need to introduce new technologies and new business processes.

In discussion it was agreed that there needs to be a clear marketing message and all Members of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board must be involved in developing a pipeline of learners for Accelerate.

Julia Teale explained the work that Bentley had done to prepare for Accelerate. Bentley have identified 4 key areas for investment to achieve business transformation: manufacturing, digital, process improvement and compliance. Julia expressed some concerns around the requirement that individual learners have to complete forms to apply for funding – she suggested that there may be push back from employees that will need to be addressed.

Philip Cox stressed the importance of ensuring compliance with European Social Fund regulations but also recognised the need for a flexible approach. 19,000 learners must benefit from the investment in training, but it is crucial that we deliver a culture change in the way employers invest in skills and work together with training providers. To achieve additionality, it will be important to ensure the training is focused on business improvement and transformation – particularly in the development of digital and STEM-related skills, and not just what the employer would have been doing anyway.

All agreed that Accelerate must also be delivered in an integrated way to ensure cross referrals between the Pledge and the Digital Skills Partnership as well as the more general Growth Hub offers. Any investment of Accelerate must be additional to what employers are already funding – there should be no displacement.

Maud Duthie explained that she is working with Catherine Walker to agree a marketing/PR specification. The delivery of the marketing/PR must be ready to start immediately after the end of the purdah period associated with the General Election. Phil Atkinson asked for business cards with the core messages about the skills offer to be distributed as soon as possible – this did not need to wait until after purdah.

Charlie Woodcock highlighted the need to have a view about whether residents of Cheshire and Warrington working outside the area for example, in the NHS, could benefit from Accelerate. Charlie also highlighted the need to check state aid compliance for the work with larger employers.

Maud explained that the University are now awaiting a project initialisation visit from DWP – this will include a check on all processes and paperwork, HR evidence of employment and a procurement plan.

All members were asked to provide Maud with lists of potential training providers as soon as possible so that they could be informed about the opportunities of supplying training through Accelerate. Nicola Merriman agree to send the list of the National Skills Academy for Nuclear approved training providers. **ACTION ALL MEMBERS**

Maud confirmed that the dynamic procurement system will remain open to allow addition training providers and training requirements to be added to the existing lists via mini competitions. Maud confirmed that funding is available for e-learning and non-accredited learning and suggested that because of the need for providers to demonstrate financial viability, some providers may need to collaborate.

Charlie raised the question of the domain name for Accelerate and all agreed this should be ‘Accelerate Skills’. Further work would now be needed to fit this within the overall marketing strategy. **ACTION MAUD DUTHIE AND CATHERINE WALKER.**

Next steps will involve setting up the Governance Board and all Members were asked to comment on the draft terms of reference previously circulated and to provide Clare Hayward with nominations for the Board. **ACTION ALL MEMBERS.**

An initial list of potential Members of the Accelerate Governing Board included:

* Phil Atkinson
* Matthew Grant (representing the training providers)
* Louise Higgins
* Julia Teale or Andy Moore and om Russell
* Roz Atherton

A further meeting with the University to work through more details about Accelerate delivery is planned for 28 November (10.15hrs to 11.45 hrs) and any Members wishing to join the meeting should contact Pat Jackson as soon as possible. **ACTION ALL MEMBERS**

Andy Devaney reported that he and Maud had recently visited a Liverpool project that is delivering skills for the workforce in a similar way to that planned for Accelerate. During the visit they had identified examples of good practice that could be applied to Accelerate**.**

1. **APPRENTICESHIP AMBASSADOR NETWORK**

Julia Teale presented a series of slides to explain the role of the North West Apprenticeship Ambassador network. Julia sits on the network’s Governing Board.

The network would like to develop more local networks to promote apprenticeships, support key stakeholders and champion and support marketing and events. There are already a number of local ambassadors – BAE Systems, Iceland, Eddie Stobart, European Metal Recycling (EMR), Barclays, BT, Santander, United Utilities, Brownlow.

Julia is keen not to set up separate meetings for the Apprenticeship network but to integrate them with the Pledge and Employers’ Skills and Education meetings. The key messages from the Apprenticeship Ambassador network are all very much in line with the work of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board and the associated Pledge programme, the Digital Skills Partnership and Accelerate.

Julia will follow up with Trevor Langston but, in the light of recent discussions with Julia the local Pledge

Board are already linking to local Apprenticeship Ambassadors and Julia will be keen to encourage this further. We might also want to consider the Employers’ Skills and Education Board having a more detailed session on apprenticeships and perhaps meet with the Cheshire and Warrington Apprenticeship Ambassador Network once or twice a year to provide feedback on key issues.  **ACTION JULIA TEALE TO FOLLOW UP WITH TREVOR LANGSTON**

Nicola Merriman raised the issue of underspent apprenticeship levy and suggested that the Employers’ Skills and Education Board should do some work on this – perhaps drawing on the example of Manchester and the Apprenticeship Hub in Liverpool. It was also suggested that we might build on the EEF awards scheme.

It was agreed that Julia Teale, Nicola Merriman, Tim Smith, Chloe Taylor and Jackqui Kawczak (United Utilities) would convene a meeting chaired by Julia to review the options and come back to the Employers’ Skills and Education Board with proposals. **ACTION JULIA TEALE, NICOLA MERRIMAN, TIM SMITH, CHLOE TAYLOR AND JACKQUI KAWCZAK**

1. **DATA AND LABOUR MARKET INTELLIGENCE**

David Brennan presented a series of slides to highlight the type of data and labour market information that he could produce to inform the work of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board.

There was considerable interest in ward level data and David said that he could produce similar ward level data based on ethnicity, gender and digital skills levels. Overlaying completion data with the index of deprivation would also be interesting. David stressed that the data needed careful interpretation and should not be used to jump to conclusions about reasons for variations at ward level – it was more helpful to use the data to help identify potential solutions. The Data and Labour Market Steering Group would need to work together to understand and interpret the data.

There was some concern that the apprenticeship data is distorted because larger employers do not advertise apprenticeships however other Members highlighted the importance of advertising posts as a means of ensuring a diverse workforce.

It was noted that the Data and Labour Market Steering Group had held its first meeting and the terms of reference of the Steering Group were noted. Members were now considering the data they would need to inform their curriculum panning and well as to inform the Pledge, Accelerate and the Digital Skills Partnership.

Membership of the Data and Labour Market Steering Group includes all the colleges and local authorities as well as LTE Group, the University and the LEP. The LEP have used its £75K budget from DfE to pay for the first-year subscription to EMSI data for all the colleges and the LEP and the recruitment of David Brennan to work to the end of December. The remaining budget would be used to appoint someone to work with the Data and Labour Market Steering Group during the first 3 months of 2020.

1. **LOCAL GROWTH FUND**

Pat Jackson informed Members that the first tranche of contracts for 8 investments would all be sent out over the next few days. The remaining tranche of investments would be presented for final approval to the Employers’ Skills and Education Board on 16 December. The process has been delayed because of the purdah period associated with the General Election. Details of the contracted investments would be circulated to Members as soon as the contracts have been signed but the investments cannot be publicised until after purdah.

In January the LEP will hold a meeting with all the investments to share good practice and identify synergies and scope for joint work. The LEP will also hold a separate meeting with libraries across Cheshire and Warrington to share good practice and identify opportunities for sharing equipment.

**8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**8.1** It was noted that Cavendish Nuclear are sponsoring the roll out of Primary Engineer in Warrington **-** <https://www.cavendishnuclear.com/cavendish-nuclear-supports-the-roll-out-of-primary-engineer-programme-in-warrington/>. James has already made an introduction to the Pledge.

**8.2 HE representation on the Employers’ Skills and Education Board**

Pat Jackson reported that the DfE had suggested that there should be HE representation on the Employers’ Skills and Education Board. Members were not supportive of this idea. They noted that the University was invited to all meetings as required and was also a full member of the Data and Labour Market Steering Group. Pat was asked to speak to Dhesi about the extent to which he might represent HE providers. **ACTION PAT JACKSON**

**9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Next meeting to be held on 16 December possibly at Cirrus offices in Wilmslow. Pat Jackson will confirm details. The next meeting will include a focus on branding and communications.

**CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON LEP Annex A**

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 13 NOVEMBER 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)
* Paul Colman (South Cheshire Chamber)
* Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
* Cllr David Jefferay (Cheshire East Council)
* Louise Higgins (United Utilities)
* James Richards (Network Rail)
* Chloe Taylor (Cheshire West and Chester Council)
* Stephen Fitzsimons (Warrington Borough Council)
* Philip Cox
* Pat Jackson (LEP)

**Apologies**

* Bill Carr (Carpe diem)
* Jasbir Dhesi (Cheshire College South and West – representing the training providers)
* Paul Taylor (Taylor Business Park)
* Faye Van Flute (Lloyds Banking Group)
* Martin Wood (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) – observer

Also attending Sarah Williams (LEP), Peter Skates (Cheshire East Council), Charlie Woodcock and Maud Duthie (University of Chester), Andy Devaney (LEP)