

**CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON LEP**

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 3 MAY 2017**

The meeting was an opportunity to review proposals and agree next steps on how to put employers at the heart of inspiring, informing and communicating to young people and individuals in work or wanting a job about new technologies, job opportunities and progression pathways.

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Clare Hayward welcomed members of the Board to the meeting and invited everyone to introduce themselves. Clare noted the apologies received.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Dame Pat Bacon had previously asked the Board to note that her husband chairs the Crewe Pledge.

Jenny Clucas had previously asked the Board to note that Cogent Skills are sub-contractors to Calderdale College and partners with the Career Enterprise Company.

**3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND FOLLOW UP ACTIONS**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed and Clare Hayward noted that all the actions from the previous meeting were included in the agenda.

**4. SKILLS PLEDGE**

Paul Colman and Trevor Langston presented proposals to develop the Skills Pledge as the basis of a programme of actions designed to put employers at the heart of inspiring, informing and communicating to young people and individuals in work or looking for work about new technologies, job opportunities and progression pathways.

During the presentation the following issues were raised:

* **Impact to date** – Trevor explained that to date larger businesses had been involved in the Skills Pledges in Crewe and Macclesfield but there were also smaller businesses including Bumble Bee – a social enterprise. Trevor explained that businesses were increasingly sharing good practice e.g. on work experience (Virgin had shared their work experience template) and assessing candidates for jobs.
* **Measuring Success and Impact in the Future** – the Board members agreed that the key impacts should include shifts in behaviour, increase in the take up of STEM and digital skills and education. Members also wanted to see more coherence in working with employers and schools. They expressed interest in extending the scope of activities to primary schools and Trevor advised the Board members that some pilot work with primary schools had started.
* **Scalability –** Members were concerned to understand if the Skills Pledges in Crewe and Macclesfield were scalable in terms of geographical spread and level of engagement. They were keen to see the Pledge become a brand that young people and parents contact directly as well as working through schools.
* **Value for money and efficiency** – Members need to be convinced that the Pledge is efficient and represents good value for money. Demonstrating efficiency and added value would help to secure sponsorship.
* **Next steps** - Paul and Trevor were asked to prepare a business plan to help inform further development and potential business sponsorship and public sector funding. A draft plan could be presented to the next Board meeting on 13 June with a final version to be ready for the July meeting of the employers Skills and Education Board.

Trevor and Paul advised Board members that they were holding a meeting on 5 May with a small group of partners in Chester to explore the scope for developing a Skills Pledge n Chester. Board members were invited to join the meeting if possible.

**5. Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC)**

Jan Pinkerton, Head of Network at the CEC gave a short presentation on the work of the CEC. They have been operating for 2 years, are employer-led and focused on inspiring and preparing young people for the world of work. Jan noted that youth unemployment is three times higher than adult unemployment and referred to the Gatsby Trust’s benchmarks for helping young people into work.

Jan referred to the research by Anthony Mann which suggests the role of employers is critical in inspiring and informing young people about career opportunities and progression pathways.

Jan also referred to the note on the Enterprise Programme being delivered in Cheshire East by Sam Norfolk – part funded by the CEC **.**

Jan has subsequently provided a short note which provides more detail about the Company and also the scale of their activities.

**6. ESF Project led by the Skills and Growth Company**

Steve Bellairs tabled a note on the results of a survey of young people in Cheshire East. Steve outlined the scope of the ESF project and noted that part of the project includes development of a ‘communication hub’ which has already been procured. He suggested that Board members might want to explore how this hub could link to the plans for the Skills Pledge. It was agreed that a small group should meet with Steve to discuss this issue and agree next steps.  **ACTION**

Board members welcomed the opportunity to discuss next steps and stressed the need to consider the legacy of the ESF project. They emphasised again the need for the Pledge proposals to be sustainable.

7. **National Career Service and Inspiration Advisors**

**P**at Jackson noted that the National Career Service had been unable to attend the Board meeting and drew Members attention to the note circulated prior to the meeting about the National Career Service and the Inspiration Advisors. In discussion, it was noted that the National Career Service will have local providers as well as inspiration advisors.

**8. Growth Hub**

Karen McKean explained the role of the Growth Hub and highlighted the potential opportunities for the Growth Hub to introduce employers to the Skills Pledge. Karen demonstrated the Growth Hub website (candwgrowthhub.co.uk), including the range of business support services available. She drew attention to the levels of duplication and the short-term nature of much of the support. Karen was asked about the extent of the Growth Hub’s business and agreed to provide further information on this**.**

**9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**9.1 Area Based Review** - Mark Livesey noted the successful merger of the South and West Cheshire. Mark confirmed that Warrington Collegiate and Mid Cheshire College were working towards a merger. Mark also reported that Macclesfield College and LTE were in discussions about a federation arrangement but the General Election announcement had slowed the progress of the discussions.

**9.2 Institutes of Technology** – Mark Livesey outlined the information that we had received to date about Institutes of Technology:

* there are likely to be around 10 to 15 institutes of technology across the country,
* it is unlikely that there will be one institute in every LEP area
* they will probably be focused on urban areas,
* they will be built around outstanding colleges/FE provision – not new build
* they will focus on technical skills (level 3, 4 and 5)
* the government has only attached £170m to this initiative.

Cheshire and Warrington LEP has been talking to the 3 local authorities, the colleges and a number of employers in Cheshire and Warrington about how best to respond to an invitation to bid for an Institute of Technology – we assume the invitation will now be issued after the general election.

We know that most of the FE colleges and the University of Chester, as well as a number of employers in Cheshire and Warrington, want to develop bids but numerous bids from Cheshire and Warrington are unlikely to succeed because the Government has said it is only looking to approve a maximum of 15 Institutes across the country.

It appears that the only way a Cheshire and Warrington bid might succeed is if it is developed around the USP of Cheshire and Warrington and developed in partnership with all the colleges and the university with strong support from employers and from all the local authorities and the LEP.

Mark agreed to report on further progress at the next Board meeting - **ACTION**

**9.3 Promotion of Apprenticeships -** Pat Jackson reported that Cheshire and Warrington LEP has worked with the local authorities and the Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub to produce a set of short films to demonstrate the benefits of apprenticeships to small businesses as well as the individual apprentices. Links to the films will be circulated after the General Election as soon as the material is posted on the LEP and/or local authority website.  **ACTION**

**9.4 Review of ESF Projects -** Pat Jackson reported that at the request of the Board, the seven European Social Fund Projects (ESF) had been asked to supply information about their progress to date. A summary of the projects was tabled.

Board members made the following comments:

* There are too many ESF initiatives with a lot of duplication and targeted at similar types of individuals
* The priorities set out for the current and the next funding round (and the allocated funding amounts) do not reflect the priorities identified for the Cheshire and Warrington area
* The progress to date of the projects has been slow until now and disappointing
* In terms of number of NEETS or unemployed the targets and objectives do not seem to match the scale of the challenge
* Employers think there is a big need to review the ways of working together in order to achieve a more coherent approach
* Several employers offered to engage directly (e.g. with appropriate vacancies and progression opportunities) to help the projects to deliver

As a next step a meeting has been arranged with all the ESF project managers on 24th May at Reaseheath College. (Meredydd David has subsequently agreed to chair the meeting). We will use the meeting to review objectives, address any key issues affecting delivery and explore better opportunities of working more coherently with employers. We will report back to the next Employers Skills and education Board meeting. **ACTION**

**9.4 Northern Gateway Development Zone/Constellation -** Pat Jackson reported that Regeneris Consulting has recently been appointed to develop an employment and skills strategy for the Constellation Partnership (previously called the Northern Gateway Development Zone) that includes parts of Stoke and Staffordshire and Cheshire and Warrington.  The research is looking at how the area can:

* **maximise the economic and employment benefits from HS2**: focused on the construction phase of HS2, and how we can equip people and businesses with the skills they need to secure employment and supply chain opportunities.
* **provide the workforce for long term growth**: this is a broader piece of research looking at the longer term growth potential of the Constellation area, and the key priorities which will need to be addressed to ensure future skill needs are met.

Regeneris are keen to discuss their research with individual members of the Employers Skills Board. Pat agreed to circulate further information to Board members following the Board meeting. **ACTION – COMPLETED.**

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

The next meeting of the Employers Skills and Education Board is at 15.00 hrs on 13 June. Bentley have offered to host the meeting at Legends in Crewe.

The following meeting will be held at 09.30 hrs on Tuesday 18 July. Pat Jackson will issue invitations - **ACTION COMPLETED**

At this point of the meeting (approximately 10.30 hrs) Claire Hayward invited the guests to leave and asked members to stay behind to continue the discussion on next steps. The following left the meeting Jane Ingram, Lynne Williams, Steve Collier, Steve Bellairs, Trevor Langston, Jenny Clucas, Jo Tipa and, Jane Pinkerton.

**11. Further Discussion on Next Steps**

Clare Hayward invited members’ views on what they had heard from the various presentations. The following points were made:

* Duplication is a major issue – some concern was expressed about existing projects and the tendency for some organisations to extend beyond their agreed remit. In addition to the information already received from the Careers and Enterprise Company and the Growth Hub it would be helpful to understand the remit of the Skills and Growth Company.
* Need co-ordination – possibly from the LEP but the key will be to keep the Pledge at grass roots, ensuring effective governance at local level and buy-in to a trusted brand.
* The Pledge needs to demonstrate and promote the fact that employers are at its heart, it must be sustainable and flexible - able to respond to the needs of employers, students and schools/communities in different geographical areas
* The Pledge should include a centralised hub/communication function. This could also become a marketing tool for Cheshire and Warrington – demonstrating the quality of our human resources
* The Pledge should attract sponsorship from employers and should consider a focus on the wider population (parents, individuals in work and seeking work)
* The Cheshire Growth Hub could have a key role engaging more employers in the Pledge.
* Need to consider how the Pledge might include key messages about self-employment and starting up new businesses
* It will be important for the Pledge to engage local communities – not just schools, and there needs to be a strong focus on disadvantaged communities.
* There must be clarity about the roles and added values of individual partners/projects
* Could the Pledge arrange courses, run by employers for young people to explain what skills and education/knowledge employers are seeking. The courses might be focused on interview techniques, employability skills, etc.

Following the discussion Paul Colman was asked to prepare a business plan – to include a possible communication hub. Paul would be invited to make a presentation of the initial drat business plan at the June meeting of the Employers Skills and Education Board with the completed business plan to be presented to the July Board meeting. **ACTION**

In the interim a small group of Board members (including Clare Hayward, Jim Carroll and Paul Colman) would meet to discuss the scope of the proposed hub. **ACTION**

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 3 MAY 2017**

Attended by:-

* Clare Hayward (Chair)
* Lynne Williams (Bentley)
* Jim Carroll (Mobica)
* Dame Pat Bacon (Health Sector)
* Paul Taylor (Taylor Business Park)
* James Richards (Network Rail)
* Paul Colman (South Cheshire College)
* Jo Tipa (Nuclear Skills Academy)
* Karen McKean (Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub)
* Jenny Clucas (Cogent Skills)
* Jane Ingram Halifax/Lloyds Banking Group)
* Steve Collier (Bentley Motors)
* Jan Pinkerton (Careers and Enterprise Company)
* Trevor Langston (South Cheshire Chamber)
* Steve Bellairs (Skills and Growth Company)
* Mark Livesey (LEP)
* Pat Jackson

**Apologies**

* Neil Warren (Jungheinrich)
* Meredydd David (Reaseheath College)
* Mark Roach (Grosvenor)
* Eilis Rattigan (Waters)
* Christine Lowery/Niki Ball (Q Hotels)