**Note of Employers Skills and Education Board Meeting on 20 March 2019**

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

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

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Clare invited Members to declare any interests. The following standing items were 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.

**3. NOTE OF MEETING HELD ON 20 FEBRUARY 2019**

The note of the last meeting on 20 February was agreed. Note that Sarah (McLoughlin) represented Jenny Clucas from Cogent.

4. **ANNOTATED ACTION LIST FROM 20 FEBRUARY MEETING**

The annotated action list of actions was reviewed and updated. The following points were agreed.

4.1 **Membership of Subgroups**

* **Pledge Partnership** (Paul Colman, Paul Taylor, Nichola Merriman)
* **Digital Skills Partnership** (Mark Temple, Elaine Billington/Jacqui
* **Skills for Growth/Virtual Institute of Technology** (Julia Teale, Dhesi, Phil Atkinson, Paul Taylor)

4.2 **Terms of reference of Employers’ Skills and Education Board**

* Revisit terms of reference in preparation for move into Skills Advisory Panel– **ACTION Clare Hayward and Pat Jackson**

4.3 **Stakeholder Engagement Plan**

* Develop stakeholder engagement plan – **ACTION Clare Hayward/ Pat Jackson to prepare draft.**

4.4 **Virtual Institute of Technology/Skills for Growth**

Members raised a number of concerns:

* Dhesi reported that the Principals’ Group were concerned about the proposed procurement process and stressed the need to include within the procurement framework criteria around social value/social responsibility.
* Other Members echoed this concern and stressed the importance of ensuring the procurement approach did not just reward good bid writers. Successful bidders needed to demonstrate capacity and capability of delivering high quality training.
* More general concern was also expressed around the use of a framework – Members suggested this would be too inflexible and not sufficiently dynamic to respond effectively to changing training need – particularly for digital training.
* Members were concerned that the project was drifting away from the original concept of a Virtual Institute of Technology that had been designed to encourage employers to work together to aggregate demand and to achieve a step change in the quality of training available in Cheshire and Warrington.
* It was agreed that Charlie Woodcock should be invited to meet Clare Hayward, Julia Teale, Dhesi, Phil Atkinson and Paul Taylor **before** the next meeting of Employers’ Skills and Education Board meeting to share concerns about the proposed procurement process and the need to retain the original concept of a Virtual institute of technology – **ACTION Pat Jackson to arrange – meeting arranged for 10 April.**
1. **UPDATES**

5.1 **European Social Funds**

Pat Jackson reported that the bid from the University of Chester for investment in the Skills for Growth/Virtual Institute for Technology programme had been submitted to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on 14 February and the two bids from the Local Authorities for investments to support unemployed and economically inactive people had been submitted on 27 February. Despite a number of telephone calls, the projects had not yet been assigned to DWP appraisal officers. Members expressed deep concerns about these delays within DWP and agreed that if no progress was made by 29 April, a letter should be sent to DWP requesting urgent action to start the appraisal process. **ACTION CLARE HAYWARD and PAT JACKSON**

**5.2 Pledge Partnership**

Pat Jackson reported on the progress for the Pledge Partnership.

**5.2.1 Progress of European Social Fund (ESF) Application**

The DWP have recently confirmed that the ESF bid has been approved and have now issued a draft funding agreement. The funding agreement should be signed and funding released over the next week. A recruitment process to fill the posts that will be ESF funded has started and interviews are planned for April. A full team should be in place in May.

**5.2.2 Membership of Main Management Board and local Boards**

Discussions are underway to identify potential members of the main Pledge Management Board and local Boards. Pat Jackson would inform Trevor Langston of the Members’ interests. **ACTION PAT JACKSON**

**5.2.3 Launch of Pledge Partnership**

A launch event is planned for June – further details will follow.

**5.2.4 Governance and Career Strategies**

The new Enterprise Coordinators (Emma Dalzell and Mark Bosworth) have focused on working with secondary schools in Cheshire West and Chester. Over the last three months sixteen schools and two FE colleges have signed up to work with an Enterprise Advisor and Enterprise Advisors have already been appointed to work with the senior leadership teams in five of the schools to support the development and delivery of careers strategies and delivery plans.

**5.2.5 Developing Programme of Inspirational Events**

Over the last few months the Pledge Partnership has also been maintaining its work in Crewe and Macclesfield. They have organised careers fairs in Crewe and Macclesfield involving nearly 80 businesses and over 1000 young people.

The Pledge Partnership has also supported other careers fairs including events run by Barclays, Warrington and Co and Cheshire College South and West.

**5.2.6 Support for Employers to Fill Vacancies including Apprenticeships and Work Placements**

A number of businesses including Siemens, Astra Zeneca, Bentley, Cheshire Police and Unieeed have agreed to work with the Pledge Partnership to help fill vacancies and pilot work is currently being planned with Balfour Beatty and its supply chain to run mock assessment centres to inspire and inform young people about job opportunities and the skills that young people need to demonstrate in order to be short listed for jobs.

Work has also been undertaken with DfE to support work placements linked to T levels. This has resulted in a £4,000 grant to fund a series of activities designed to encourage more employers to offer work placements.

In addition, the LEP was awarded £3,000 to encourage the promotion of apprenticeships across Cheshire and Warrington.

5**.2.7 Links to the Digital Skills Partnership**

A number of national organisations have already made contact with the LEP to explore opportunities of working with Cheshire and Warrington’s Digital Skills Partnership. Many of these initial contacts are interested in working with young people to inspire and inform them about digital related career opportunities. This is a big opportunity for the Pledge Partnership.

In the subsequent discussion Members stressed the importance of including a focus on primary as well as secondary schools – perhaps building on the success of Primary College currently run at the Crewe and Ellesmere Port campuses of Cheshire College South and West. It was agreed that this should be followed up by the three Members who had agreed to join the Pledge Partnership Board (Paul Colman, Paul Taylor and Nicola Merriman)

It was also noted that in considering the longer-term sustainability of the Pledge Partnership, lessons might be learnt from the Chester and North Wales Young Chamber funding model.

Jenny Clucas also referred to the Children Challenging Industry model and agreed to send details to Paul Colman. **ACTION: Jenny Clucas COMPLETED**

**5.3 Local Growth Fund Consultation**

Pat Jackson reported that the draft consultation had been circulated to the LEP Board and the deadline for responses was 22 March. Clare Hayward agreed to raise the issue at the LEP Board meeting later in the day. **COMPLETED LEP Board has approved consultation and this is now on the LEP website.**

**5.4 Digital Skills Partnership (DSP)**

Press notices announcing the Cheshire and Warrington DSP have been issued by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Cheshire and Warrington LEP and a vacancy notice for the DSP Coordinator had also been issued with a closing date of 1 April. The LEP was currently exploring the possibility of a Minister attending the formal launch of the Cheshire and Warrington DSP – probably in mid to late May after the local elections.

Mark Temple referred to the recent Lloyds report ‘Digital Access for All’. He suggested this should be shared with Members.

1. **LOCAL INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY**

Andy Hulme reported progress since his last presentation to the Employers’ Skills and Education Board in December. The evidence base that will inform the Local Industrial Strategy has recently been published on the LEP website and last week the LEP published a summary of the key evidence, the grand challenges and proposed actions.

Over the last few months the LEP has held a series of approximately 20 consultations on the Local Industrial Strategy involving around 400 stakeholders.

The headlines on skills are based on the Skills and Education Plan that was developed by the Employers’ Skills and Education Board. There will also be a strong focus on inclusive growth and the need for progression in work to address the fact that over 20% of the workforce is earning below the living wage – focused in particular in the care and hospitality sectors.

The Local industrial Strategy is focusing around three areas of activity:

* Improving productivity (the gap between productivity in Cheshire and Warrington and other areas of the country has narrowed with Warrington seeing the biggest decline)
* Increasing economic resilience (Cheshire and Warrington has good levels of start-ups with good survival rates but not much churn in non-VAT registered businesses suggesting a level of stagnation and limited innovation)
* The earning power of our residents with a need for more progression in work and more entry level opportunities.

One of the themes of the Local Industrial Strategy will be People and Inclusive Growth – to be led by Mark Palethorpe (Cheshire East) and Pat Jackson.

The Local Industrial Strategy will be a great opportunity to flag up barriers and opportunities in conversation with Ministers – this is what Cheshire and Warrington could achieve and this is where we need help from Ministers.

In the subsequent discussion Jenny Clucas queried how the Local Industrial Strategy will dovetail with national sector strategies and it was noted that some sectors have been better than others at engaging locally.

It was also suggested that the roll-out of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) competitiveness model might be piloted in Cheshire and Warrington.

Andy noted that a number of local industrial strategies are also being developed to underpin the Cheshire and Warrington industrial Strategy. These include strategies for Chester, Ellesmere Port, Warrington, Crewe and Macclesfield.

Clare Hayward also queried how the measures of success of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board will be aligned with the measures of success for the Local Industrial Strategy – there was some concern that the key priorities of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board were not going to be reflected in the Local Industrial Strategy.

Andy noted these comments and added that there is still a need to develop an evaluation framework for the Local Industrial Strategy.

1. **DATA AND INTELLIGENCE NEEDS TO INFORM FUTURE WORK**

Pat Jackson presented a series of slides summarising the Employers’ Skills and Education priorities, key beneficiaries, impacts/outputs and inputs and key challenges and ’asks’ of Government. Members were asked to review the slides **ACTION ALL MEMBERS**

It was agreed that a small group (Clare Hayward, Dhesi, Paul Colman, Julia Teale and, if possible, Jenny Clucas would meet to review the proposed impact/output measures and agree SMART targets. **ACTION Pat Jackson – Meeting arranged for 10 April.**

In discussion the following points were raised:

In the nuclear sector it is difficult to recruit apprentices without the ability to guarantee that they can complete the apprenticeship

Could the apprenticeship levy be used to fund/support:

* activities that would inspire and inform young people about new digital and STEM related technologies and career opportunities?
* investment in building a pipe-line of people for the digital and STEM related jobs of the future?
* employers who ‘over train’ for their supply chains?
* apprentices sharing schemes?
1. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no any other business.

1. **Date and Venue for Next Meeting**

Next meeting will be held on 17 April at Alderley Park Conference Centre

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 20 MARCH 2019 Annex A**

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

* Clare Hayward
* Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
* Julia Teale (Bentley Motors)
* Paul Colman (South Cheshire Chamber)
* Dhesi Jasbir (Cheshire College South and West – representing FE Colleges)
* Jacqui Kawczak representing Elaine Billington (United Utilities)
* Mark Temple (Lloyds Banking Group)
* Paul Taylor (Taylor Estates)
* Nicola Merriman (National Skills Academy Nuclear)
* Jenny Clucas (Cogent)
* Pat Jackson (LEP)

**Apologies**

* James Richards (Network Rail)
* Neil Warren (Jungheinrich)
* Howard Sloane (Essar Oils)
* Mark Livesey (LEP)

**Copied for Information to:**

* Martin Wood (BEIS)