**annexCHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON LEP - EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD – EXTENDED MEETING ON 6 SEPTEMBER 2017**

A list of those who attended the meeting and apologies received are at **Annex A**.

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Clare Hayward welcomed everyone to the meeting – in particular, the two new members of the Board – Margaret Cheshire and Phil Atkinson. List of attendees and apologies received at Annex A.

**2. MINUTES OF LAST EMPLOYERS’SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD AND MATTERS ARISING**

Clare noted that the note of the last meeting had been circulated to Board members and asked them to let her know during the meeting if there were any corrections or clarifications needed to the notes. If not they would be agreed as an accurate record of the last meeting. **ACTION; Board members.**

Clare thanked members who had completed their declarations of interest and asked anyone who had not done so to please send their declarations to Pat Jackson as soon as possible**. ACTION: BOARD MEMBERS**

**3. WORK TO DATE ON THE THREE PRIORITIES OF THE EMPLOYERS’ SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD**

Clare asked attendees to bear in mind the continuing importance of skills and education – particularly in the light of Brexit. Skills and education and a strong talent pool are essential for the future success of the UK and Cheshire and Warrington.

Clare noted the 3 priorities for action that the Employers’ skills and Education Board had identified and asked the Board members who are leading on each priority to provide a short summary of progress to date.

3.1 **SKILLS PLEDGE**

Paul Colman explained the background to the development of the Skills Pledge and the extent to which the Employers’ Board have identified the Pledge as an example of good practice and a means of putting employers at the heart of inspiring, informing and communicating about new technologies, career opportunities and progression pathways to young people, parents, teachers and individuals who are seeking work or who want to progress in work across Cheshire and Warrington.

Paul explained that the Pledge is hosted by South Cheshire Chamber but not ‘owned’ by the Chamber. As a network of Skills Pledges are developed across the sub-region it will provide the ‘glue’ to bring employers together with the plethora of careers advice and guidance initiatives currently on offer and to inspire individuals about new technologies and deliver more coherent messages about career and progression opportunities.

The Skills Pledge is currently being delivered by a small team and the intention is to increase their capacity so they work with partners across Cheshire and Warrington. They are currently developing a sustainable business model and agreeing governance arrangements to achieve this.

**In the subsequent discussion** Tim Smith noted that he had been meeting with Trevor Langston and Mark Waters to explore opportunities for Warrington and Co to work with the Pledge and he also had links with the ‘Be Inspired’ project being run by the Skills and Growth Company. Tim commented that the activity being developed in Warrington was not currently badged as ‘the Pledge’ but could be. He stressed the need for a business model that was sustainable.

**3.2 COMMUNICATIONS HUB**

In the absence of Jim Carroll, Paul Colman and Pat Jackson outlined progress to date on the communications hub.

The Hub will support the delivery of a communication strategy designed to inspire individuals to consider all the career and progression opportunities open to them. It will reduce and rationalise the plethora of information that is already being transmitted about career and progression opportunities (so much noise that key messages are not heard) and connect to up to data and information about local economies and local businesses.

The Hub will be designed so that it is sustainable and have tangible benefits to employers as well as young people, their parents and teachers and individuals who are seeking work or who want to reskill or progress in work.

**3.3 INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

Mark Livesey outlined the problems that an Institute of Technology might solve:

* The current mis-match between the skills and education required by employers and the skills and education being delivered by training providers in response to demand from students.
* The need to re-skill and up-skills the ageing population in Cheshire and Warrington.
* The plethora and overlap of existing training and education provision.
* The need for employers to help inspire individuals about new technologies and career opportunities.
* The speed of innovation and changing skills and education needs required more organic, long-term relationships between employers and training and education providers.

Paul Taylor noted that employers wanted to press ahead with an Institute of Technology regardless of whether it would attract Central Government funding – if an Institute was important it should be delivered and was not just about chasing Government funding. However, an announcement from Government was expected shortly.

Paul Taylor explained the interest from the Cheshire Business Leaders in an Institute of Technology and outlined their plans to host a breakfast meeting in November with a small group of CEOs to gauge their commitment to being involved in an Institute of Technology in Cheshire and Warrington – including involvement in the governance arrangements. Paul said that the CEOs would want to keep governance arrangements as simple as possible. Cheshire Business Leaders planned to ask the CEOs the same questions that had been posed at the earlier workshop on 13 June.

Lynne Williams outlined the conclusions of the 13 June workshop to the following questions:

**Do we need an Institute of Technology in Cheshire and Warrington?** – The workshop was generally positive but not unanimous but all agreed on the need for further work.

**What would an Institute of Technology look like?** - All agreed that there was no need for another physical building but it would provide a mechanism for greater collaboration between groups of employers and the training and education providers.

**What would be the measures of success?** – They included the need to close the STEM and digital skills gap, share resources and expertise between businesses and with training and education providers, deliver more training and retraining of individuals in Cheshire and Warrington. The Institute of Technology would also need to be employer-led with appropriate governance arrangements.

**4. SHORT UPDATE FROM MARGARET CHESHIRE, HELEN NELLIST AND NICK SMITH ON THEIR INITIAL COLLABORATIVE WORKWITH EMPLOYERS IN THE ENERGY SECTOR**

Margaret presented a set of slides, outling the progress of work with employers in the energy sector.

In the subsequent discussion the following point were made:

* The need for employers to be actively engaged in shaping and changing the current qualification standards to shape them into something that employers really wanted.
* The benefits of employers working together to share expertise and resources and provide a critical mass of students to make training financially viable.
* The apprenticeship levy is a ‘game changer’ in terms of increasing employer involvement in training the employees and working with local schools and colleges.
* Larger employers that are part of international businesses can join international graduate development programmes but there is still a need to work locally – ideally with groups of other local businesses.
* A comprehensive and high quality training and development offer in Cheshire and Warrington could help to attract other employers into the area.
* The dairy sector had worked with Reaseheath College to develop a similar collaborative model to the energy model described by Margaret Cheshire.
* Groups of employers could work together to agree core training and education needs and then tailor the provision to the specific needs of each business.
* In the rail sector it was important to simplify what training was required as a core offer and then differentiate for different businesses using the work based element of the training.

**5. BREAK INTO THREE SECTOR FOCUSSED GROUPS TO EXPLORE THE PRACTICALITIES AND ADDED VALUE OF AN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY IN CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON**

Attendees broke up into three sector groups – covering energy (chaired by Margaret Cheshire), logistics (chaired by Neil Warren) and Manufacturing and engineering (chaired by Lynne Williams).

Each group was asked to address the following issues:

* **how** groups of employers in each sector might work collaboratively with the training providers and other key partners to create a flexible and resilient system that delivers the training that employers need and the students that the training providers need to be viable
* **what outcome**s they would want to achieve
* **the scope and types of activities** they would want to undertake together (packages of distance learning, specialised equipment facilities, developing skills and refreshing skills for new technologies, retraining and skilling for employment opportunities).
* **a rough estimate/order of magnitude of the cost** of supporting groups of employers to work together with training providers and possible funding sources from both employers and the public sector (including European Funds)
* **next steps**

**6. PLENARY SESSION TO HEAR FEED BACK AND AGREE NEXT STEPS**

**6.1 Engineering and manufacturing**

The group reported the following key issues

* Need to do more to link engineering and science (e.g. Network Rail and Daresbury)
* Need a more coherent training and education offer across Cheshire and Warrington – at present too many offers that do not reflect employer needs
* Need offer that reflects social and cultural issues (work c.f. college cultures). Colleges need to do more to emulate employer cultures.
* To develop a coherent offer need employers and training providers to work together across Cheshire and Warrington. This needs to include, in some way, smaller businesses and sole traders.
* Could there be stronger links to the UTCs who are already developing this approach?
* Need to establish stronger networks of employers and training providers - to achieve this there must be trust between the various parties
* Need to focus on retraining, upskilling, side skilling existing workforce as well as the future workforce. As an example James Richards highlighted Network Rail’s current ‘engineeriing conversion’ programme with Sheffield Hallam University.
* Only option is to base training and reskilling around existing standards but do need to be less rigid (Lynne Williams to provide Pat Jackson with industry current lobbying document). ACTION: Lynne Williams
* To achieve this ambition across Cheshire and Warrington need a project manager who can work across the network of businesses and all the colleges and other training providers.

**6.2 Energy**

The group reported the following issues

* Need to understand what is available in Cheshire and Warrington and how it could be used by employers
* Must have a collaborative approach that draws from the strengths of individual training providers
* The LEP should facilitate the collaborative working – could the LEP support a more collaborative approach by underwriting the first cohorts of students? ACTION: Energy Group to produce a short proposition to put to LEP.

**6.3 Logistics**

The group reported the following issues that had been discussed by the logistics group

* There is an appetite for a further meeting to take forward the ideas generated during the extended meeting
* Logistics is not a high-profile career and yet it offers a wide range of opportunities. Need to develop an ambassador role in schools and colleges and local communities
* An Institute of Technology could be really important in supporting collaborative working across the sector and with training providers.
* Need to change mind-sets where young people and employers see young people as working for the businesses not the colleges. Work experience needs to be more structured within the training and education provision. Also need enhanced work experience.
* Careers, advice and guidance should be ‘turned on its head’ with a focus on questions such as ‘how much do you want to earn’ and ‘what life style do you want’

**6.4 General Discussion**

In the subsequent discussion the following points were made:

* Do employers really know what core capabilities they need?
* There is scope for more groups of employers to work together to identify the core skills they need as well as the culture and employability skills they want to develop.
* Need a collaborative model built around an Institute of Technology project
* Key outcomes that employers are seeking include a more resilient workforce and more resilient training providers capable of dealing with innovation and change
* More employers and more training providers working collaboratively – this can only be achieved if there is trust between the different parties.
* Self knowledge – so that individuals have a better understanding of their preferred learning styles. Could this be built into the Pledge?
* More retraining and up-skilling of the existing workforce – on this issue the apprenticeship levy is too inflexible.
* Is there scope to build on the UTC model to develop a more collaborative approach with groups of employers?
* The proposed work would involve considerable cost in time – need project managers to take forward .

**7 NEXT STEPS**

The following next steps were agreed:

* Establish six sector groups of employers and training/education providers – building on the discussions held at this extended meeting and involving 2 or 3 additional employers in each group. Further meetings of each group to scope out what they need to do within the overall context of an Institute of Technology.
* The future, more collaborative, model could be based around a virtual model with a communication/central hub that is built around existing provision in colleges and in employers’ premises – need to understand what could be available within employer premises.
* If initial work of sector groups is completed during October there could be a follow up extended meeting in November. **ACTION Clare Hayward to discuss at next Employers Skills and education Board**
* Need to consider more regular cycle of meetings where employers and college Principals and other partners meet separately (as now) but then come together in extended meetings of the Employers Skills and Education Group.

**8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Next meetings:

* 11 October (14.00 to 16.00 hrs) at Crewe UTC
* 8 November (13.30 to 15.30 hrs) at Warrington and Vale Royal College
* 6 December (14.00 to 16.00 hrs)

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

**Attended by:-**

* Clare Hayward (Chair)
* Neil Warren (Jungheinrich)
* James Richards (Network Rail)
* Paul Colman (South Cheshire College)
* Paul Taylor (Taylor Business Park)
* Fraser Kearney (Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub)
* Lynne Williams (Bentley Motors)
* Dame Pat Bacon (Health Sector)
* Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
* Margaret Cheshire (Essar Oils)
* Meredydd David (Reaseheath College)
* Mark Livesey (LEP)
* Pat Jackson

**Apologies**

* Jim Carroll (Mobica)
* Mark Roach (Grosvenor)
* Eilis Rattigan (Waters)
* Jane Ingram (Halifax/Lloyds Banking Group)

**Extended Meeting included:**

* Gary Byrne (Eddie Stobart)
* Nicola Newton (Warrington Collegiate and Vale Royal College)
* Helen Nellist (South and West Cheshire Colleges)
* Chloe Taylor (Cheshire West and Chester Council)
* Rachel Kay (Macclesfield College)
* Tim Smith (Warrington and Co)
* Nick Smith (TTE)
* Phil McLinden (University of Liverpool)
* Charlie Woodcock (University of Chester)

**Apologies from extended invitees**

* Kerrie Salisbury (AO)
* Mark Duffy (Sellafield)
* Karen Hughes (Unilever)
* Lesley Coombes (Unilver)
* Frank Jordan (Cheshire East Council)
* Andy Farrall (Warrington Borough Council)
* Charlie Seward (Cheshire West and Chester Council)
* Mathew Grant (Priestley College)
* Kerry Kirkwood (Sir John Deane’s Sixth Form College)
* Linda Dean (Total People)
* Lee Barber (Warrington TC)
* Dave Terry (Crewe UTC)