**Note of Employers’ Skills and Education Board Meeting 0n 19 February 2020**

List of attendees and apologies at Annex A.

1. **Welcome and introductions**

Clare Hayward welcomed Members to the meeting – in particular, Councillor James Nicholas who was attending the meeting for the first time.

1. **Note of last meeting on 15 January 2020**

The note of the last meeting was agreed.

Clare thanked all Members for sponsoring the Local Growth Fund investments and attending the meetings with the investment projects.

The Local Growth Fund meetings were very well attended meetings and key issues that were identified for action during the meeting included scope to collaborate on procurement and opportunities for sharing equipment. On procurement Dhesi explained that there were significant barriers that deterred colleges from collaboration on procurement i.e. the requirement for colleges to procure according to their own financial regulations which will differ between colleges. Timing for the procurements is also tight. It was suggested that projects might negotiate purchases collectively but still use their separate procurement systems. **ACTION PAT JACKSON TO FOLLOW UP WITH DHESI.**

1. **Declarations of Interest**

The existing declarations of interest were noted, James Richards and Phil Atkinson agreed to provide an update on their interests. **ACTION JAMES RICHARDS AND PHIL ATKINSON**

1. **Actions from Last Meeting**

The list of outstanding issues was reviewed.

It was agreed that Accelerate outstanding issues would be covered during the Accelerate agenda item.

Trevor Langston has provided a list of schools that are wanting to recruit an Enterprise Advisor. These include:

* Knutsford Academy (Macclesfield Pledge)
* Tytherington School (Macclesfield Pledge)
* Fallibroome Academy (Macclesfield Pledge)
* Reaseheath College (Nantwich Pledge)
* Eaton Bank (Mid Cheshire East Pledge)
* The Whitby High School (Ellesmere Port Pledge)
* Cardinal Newman (Warrington Pledge)
* Woolston Brook (Warrington Pledge)

Would any Member interested in becoming an Enterprise Advisor our who know someone who might want to become an Enterprise Advisor please contact Trevor Langston directly**. ACTION ALL MEMBERS**

1. **Accelerate**

Phil Atkinson chaired this agenda item.

Charlie Woodcock reported that the project initiation visit (PIV) from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) had gone well. No major issues had been identified although, because of delays in the start of the project, the University will need to agree a change control with DWP.

Charlie highlighted a number of key points:

5.1 **Marketing and Events**

Discussions on marketing budget have taken place between the University and the LEP and it is proposed that the marketing budget (£50,000) will be moved to the LEP. The University are in discussion with DWP on how this might be achieved without the need for a change control.

There are a number of budget headings associated with marketing and events for Accelerate – in total these amount to £230,000.

Andy Farrall (LEP) is currently drafting a framework for marketing and promoting Accelerate – to include all Accelerate’s marketing and events budgets as well as the budgets of other skills and education priorities of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board.

The Accelerate marketing and events budget will need to be spent in line with the European Social Fund rules but working within a shared framework will ensure a coherent message and comprehensive set of skills and education offers to young people and local businesses.

The framework will be positioned within the whole LEP marketing effort and work in partnership with others to target the ‘hard to reach’ groups. For example, there is potential to link to the National Career Service referral system for individuals in work seeking to progress. Note money must be spent in line with the funders of the activities but there is considerable scope for collaboration.

5.2 **Dynamic Procurement System**

The first phase of work to produce an initial list of providers who can deliver Accelerate funded training should be complete by the end of February. The training providers will be informed about the outcome of the first phase of procurement and then the list of providers will be shared with employers. This should all take place within the timescale greed with DWP. Charlie confirmed that training providers can apply at any time to become an Accelerate training provider.

It was suggested that some Members of the Employers’ Skills and education Board and the LEP should have ‘read-only’ access to the dynamic procurement system. **ACTION CHARLIE WOODCOCK**.

5.3 **Structures of teams**

Charlie reported that the structures of the University and LEP independent broker teams had been agreed with DWP.

The University is experiencing difficulties recruiting an IT expert – the University will advertise again and if unsuccessful may need to review salary level.

Members queried whether we have the right balance of resources within the Accelerate team – between the resources that are customer facing and those that are internal process facing? They noted that there are 14 individuals largely focused on internal processes and at present only one independent broker.

Charlie explained that the project coordinators will be based in the University, their job is to ensure the paperwork is in place and look after all the details needed to meet European Social Fund and DWP requirements. Members stressed the need to clarify the way the independent brokers and project coordinators interact - in due course the brokers might be geographically based.

5.4 **Independent Brokers Based in the Growth Hub**

Andy Devaney reported that one independent broker (Mark Shepherd) has now started work and a second broker will be in place by 2 March. Andy agreed with Members that brokerage needs to be agile and focused on business need not focused on training needs analysis and selling prepared packages of training. There is also a need to consider focusing the efforts of brokers and being more proactive in creating demand in certain geographical areas of Cheshire and Warrington.

**5.5 Time- table of Key Tasks**

Members expressed concern about the delays in getting learners into training as soon as possible in order to start achieving the outputs and impacts on businesses and individual learners.

Charlie confirmed that the current profile of learners needs reprofiling - the timetable will roll forward and we will still have 3 years in which to deliver the outputs. The University will reprofile once they have a clearer idea of timescales and have identified any other change control needs. The change control will probably be required when DWP do their first check against the contract profiles at the end of quarter 1.

Members considered the processes to be followed through in Accelerate from both a supply and demand side perspective. A flow diagram of key actions was developed – initial draft for Members to check that all processes are adequately covered. A revised version with appropriate will then be produced.

5.6 **Pipeline of learners**

A pipeline of learners is being developed but Members urgently need one-page briefings to enable them to explain the details of Accelerate and the process by which employers apply for Accelerate investments.

Learners will also be generated via the Growth Hub and business development teams in colleges, local authorities, etc. It was recognised that there is a significant opportunity to reach potential beneficiaries via the Growth Hub and the wide range of intermediaries that operate across Cheshire and Warrington.

Members suggested intermediaries should be brought together for a briefing session – bearing in mind our aim to build the capacity of ‘our’ training providers. **ACTION** as part of marketing campaign to intermediaries and businesses and individual learners – arrange series of events. As a first step arrange event with information that can be disseminated to intermediaries/ambassadors. A set of frequently asked questions should also be developed. **ACTION** **ANDY DEVANEY** – first event by end of March.

Given the limited number of independent brokers it is essential that they do not become blockages in the process of identifying business needs, aggregating demand and agreeing the training to be delivered. We must have a stream-lined system and colleges and local authorities need to understand the process as soon as possible. **ACTION** **ANDY DEVANEY AND MARK SHEPHERD TO FOLLOW UP WITH DHESI.**

It is also critical that IT systems are compatible and enable data to be shared where necessary. **ACTION ANDY DEVANEY.**

5.7 **Customer Relationship Management System**

Charlie confirmed that the customer relationship management system is currently being developed and will be tested on 6 March with Bentley.

5.8 **Key Performance Indicators**

Members agreed that the current Accelerate roadmap should be updated and rebranded. Julia Teale (and subsequently Phil Atkinson) have suggested some amendments and Members were asked to review the latest draft and provide suggested revisions - **ACTION ALL MEMBERS**

Members discussed the importance of measuring the impact of Accelerate on productivity and improvements in business performance – not just the outputs agreed with DWP in the ESF contract.

They suggested that salary levels could be a part measure but we need to have clarity from each business about why they are committing to the training to be funded by Accelerate. The University agreed to circulate the key performance indicators they have already developed.

5.9 **Marketing**

Members stressed again the need for clear one-pagers that would engage businesses and individual learners without the need to provide the details of the ‘wiring’. The University has already produced a three-pager that might be used to brief intermediaries but also need one pagers for ambassadors – highlighting the purpose of Accelerate (building on the road map), also urgently need one-pager for individuals and employers – these documents must be engaging and provide the ‘initial hook’ into Accelerate. **ACTION** Marketing Cheshire/Catherine Walker to produce by end of February and present to next meeting of Employers’ Skills and Education Board.

5.10 **Membership and Terms of Reference of the Accelerate Governing Board**

The terms of reference as detailed in the Service Level Agreement between the University and the LEP were noted with no additional comments.

5.11 **First meeting of Governance Board** **in March.**

The first meeting of the Governance Board should be held as soon as possible in March.

A breakdown of key tasks will be shared by the University at first Governance Board. **ACTION CHARLIE WOODCOCK**

Members suggested that the Governance Board meetings should be held back-to back with Employers’ Skills and Education Board meetings.

Phil Atkinson and the Vice Chancellor of the University of Chester will co-chair the Board.

A number of Members of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board will become members of the Governance Board including Julia Teale, a representative of the colleges (Dhesi to identify a nomination from the colleges) and a representative from Cheshire East who will represent all the local authorities. **ACTION – PHIL ATKINSON AND CLARE HAYWARD TO FINALISE EMPLOYER MEMBERSHIP**

Members noted the need to manage conflicts of interest but also noted that the Governance Board will not make investment decisions.

**5.12 Key Performance Indicators**

There is a series of key performance indicators that the University have developed based around the funding requirements (**ACTION UNIVERSITY TO SHARE THE KPIs**). However, Members stressed the need for more comprehensive, more strategic KPIs based on their original ambitions for Accelerate. For example, building local capacity of training providers, economic growth, inclusivity, impact on business performance, keep it relevant and agile (must get bigger, faster and cheaper).

6. **Proposal from University for Further Bid for European Social Fund to support employees (Investment Priority 2.1)**

Charlie Woodcock tabled a paper with initial proposals for a bid for the remaining European Social Fund budget (£1.9 million) to support training and upskilling of employed people across Cheshire and Warrington.

Members were in general supportive of the proposal but asked for a separate conference call to be arranged to enable a more detailed discussion.

In general Members noted:

* the potentially significant impact of coaches and mentors on attainment of learners.
* the need to avoid conflict with employers deciding that they will use Accelerate mark II with no need for them to contribute rather than mark I which requires a 60% contribution by employers.
* to avoid competition between Accelerate Mark 1 and 2, Members expressed a preference to use the additional budget to target specific groups – for example, STEM and digital teachers and college staff and providers of careers advice and guidance.
* the opportunities of developing on-line learning that would leave a legacy.

**ACTION PAT JACKSON TO ARRANGE MEETING AND ALL MEMBERS TO PROVIDE COMMENTS ON UNIVERSITY PROPOSAL**

**7. Local Growth Fund**

Given the late running of the Accelerate agenda item it was agreed to set up a conference call to discuss the Local Growth Fund paper. Members asked for a matrix to be prepared for the call to illustrate the technology, skills and potential gaps in the current investment plaans for the Local Growth Fund. It was also suggested that we should consider potential gaps around the energy and sustainability themes. **ACTION PAT JACKSON TO ARRANGE A CONFERENCE CALL – INVITE ALL MEMBERS**.

**8. Next meeting of Employers’ Skills and Education Board**

Agenda for next meeting to include Pledge, Data, Comms Hub – (invite Marketing Cheshire)

Next meeting to be held in Life-Style Centre, Winsford if possible.

**Annex A**

**List of Attendees to Employers’ Skills and Education Board Meeting 0n 19 February 2020**

* Clare Hayward (Chair)
* James Richard (Network Rail)
* Cllr James Nicholas (Cheshire East Council)
* Julia Teale (Bentley Motors)
* Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
* Jasbir Dhesi (Cheshire College South and West representing the training providers)
* Stephen Fitzsimons (Warrington Borough Council)
* Charlie Woodcock (University of Chester)
* Pat Jackson

Also attending:

* Sarah Williams (LEP)
* Andy Devaney (LEP)
* Mark Shepherd (LEP)
* Chris Koral (University of Chester)

Apologies:

* Nicola Dunbar (Deputy Chair)
* Paul Colman (South Cheshire Chamber)
* Paul Taylor (Taylor Estates)
* Bill Carr (Carpe Diem)
* Philip Cox (LEP)
* Nicola Merriman (NSAM)
* Lisa Harris (Cheshire West and Chester Council)
* Louise Higgins (United Utilities)

Papers also shared with:

* Martin Wood (BEIS)
* Jamie Zucker (DfE)
* Clare Cassidy (DfE)
* Catherine Walker (LEP)
* Maud Duthie (University of Chester)
* Trevor Langston (LEP)
* Peter Skates (Cheshire East Council)