**NOTE OF EMPLOYERS’ SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 13 APRIL 2022**

**The main purpose of the meeting was for Members to:**

* Review key developments since their last meeting on 16 March including
* Receive an update on Skills Bootcamps and the LEP review
* Review lessons from Accelerate
* Review progress on Local Growth Fund skills investments including feedback from Members who support each investment – following quarter 4 returns
* Review further work on the impact measurement work

**NOTE OF KEY POINTS DISCUSSED**

**1. Welcome, declarations of interest, introductions with members sharing information on any key developments since the last meeting** **on 16 March**

* List of attendees and apologies (Annex A).
* Dhesi declared an interest in the agenda item on skills bootcamps. No other declarations of interest were noted.
* Kath Mackay noted that Sarah Hopkinson (Engie) had changed her job role and will be replaced by Tamara Barker

2. **Note of last meeting and outstanding actions**

* The note of the last meeting was approved, and the action list reviewed.

**3. Lessons from Accelerate**

* Kirstie Simpson presented a series of slides that summarised the University’s report on lessons from Accelerate. A full evaluation will be produced at the end of the programme.
* Kirstie stressed that the University was keen to establish a shared understanding of the issues.
* Kirstie highlighted the issues relating to:
  + The nature and profile of the original invitation to bid for European Social Funding
  + The delivery and financial models
  + The absence of a customer relationship management system
  + Staffing resources
* In the subsequent discussion Philip Cox noted that the incentives offered to employers was not enough and there were also challenges in terms of employers being prepared to release staff for training. Philip commented that it would have been helpful to pilot the Accelerate programme before a full launch.
* Dhesi noted that Train to Gain was not the only reason that employers are not prepared to train – currently employers are training because of the tight labour market. Dhesi commented that Accelerate was seen as an addition to the existing infrastructure compared with the Institute of Technology which will build on and complement the existing infrastructure. Accelerate was also positioned as in competition with the Adult Education Budget.
* Tim Smith noted that 40% discount of programmes was not unusual for European Structural Fund programmes
* Phil Atkinson reported that he had received a lot of feedback from employers about the levels of bureaucracy and complexity associated with Accelerate and the demand for ‘slicker’ systems.
* Paul Colman commented on the high levels of ‘white noise’ that employers have to deal with – the systems need to be simpler ad better designed around the needs of employers. Paul noted that the presentation about Accelerate to local employers in Crewe had not ‘landed well’.

4. **Skills Bootcamps**

* Philip Cox and Pat Jackson shared a series of slides providing an update on skills bootcamp plans. Philip noted that the Employers’ Skills and education Board long-term role was to advise on how best to engage with employers. The LEP’s Performance and Investment Committee’s role was to ensure the LEP has robust systems in place to ensure an effective delivery of the skills bootcamps and to minimise any risks of failure.
* Philip explained that the Department for Education were offering initial funding of approximately 50% of the LEP’s original bid. The LEP was currently looking at options for reducing the cost of the programme and asked the Employers’ Skills and education Board to allow the Steering Group that had been established to make the final decision on the shape of the initial programme of bootcamps.
* Matt Smith noted it would be useful to have a focus on Level 3 training.
* Tim Smith stressed the need for agile providers who have experience of delivery in Cheshire and Warrington
* In response to a query from Maggie Chen, Pat confirmed that social capital would be taken into account as part of the appraisal of potential bootcamp providers.
* Members stressed the need to take account of early employer feedback from the pilot phase of the programme.
* It was agreed that Pat and Sarah would contact Members separately for their input to the technical specifications of the bootcamps and as potential ‘sponsors’ of bootcamps. **ACTION PAT AND SARAH**

**5. LEP Review**

* Philip Cox provided an update on the LEP review. Following recent correspondence from Ministers, the Government sees LEPs playing 4 key roles in future:
  + Embedding s strong, independent local business voice into local democracy
  + Continuing to undertake strategic economic planning – building and maintaining a robust local evidence base that identifies local strengths, challenges and opportunities
  + Continuing to use their convening powers to bring together businesses, education and other local economic stakeholders
  + Continuing to deliver functions on behalf of Government departments including Careers and Enterprise Hubs, Growth Hubs and the delivery of skills bootcamps
* Within the context of a tough spending review some of the LEP funding has been reduced, but has been increased elsewhere, including the funding for skills bootcamps.
* The LEP needs to prepare a delivery plan for submission to Ministers by June and then a Delivery Plan for 2024/5 and beyond by 25th November.
* The LEP Board will meet in May to set the budget for this year and in early September will consider the next delivery plan.
* In the subsequent discussion Paul Colman noted the period of change and stressed the importance of the Pledge continuing consistently regardless of infrastructure.

6. **Impact of Skills and Education Work**

* This item was deferred to the next meeting because of lack of time **– ACTION PAT JACKSON TO INCLUDE ON AGENDA.** It was suggested that the current draft report on proposed measures of impact should identify how and who would be the prime deliverers.

7. **Feedback from key meetings/activities since last Employers’ Skills and Education Board**

* Members noted the list of meetings that had taken place since the last Employers’ Skills and Education Board meeting.

7.1 **LEP Board**

* Members noted the Chief Executive’s report to the March and April LEP Board in March and April.
* Maggie suggested that Kath and Pat might attend a future meeting of the Engagement Board **– ACTION MAGGIE AND PAT**

**7.2 Institute of Technology and Skills Accelerator**

* Dhesi reported that the work on the Institute of Technology was at ‘pre-award stage’ with partners in negotiation with the Department for Education and aiming to sign contracts in June. This involves a lot of detailed work and putting commercial agreements in place. Partners are also aiming to secure an independent Chair.

7.3 **Pledge**

* Paul Colman provided the following update:
* A letter of assurance from the Careers and Enterprise for funding in 2022/23 has been received and a grant offer is expected shortly. This is the last piece of the jigsaw to support funding up until Autumn 2023.  Longer term funding is less clear and options for possible delivery and funding models are being explored.
* Invitations to the Pledge Celebration and Next Steps event on 30th June have been issued and nearly 150 people have signed up. Anyone who has not booked and wants to attend can do so at [**https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-pledge-celebration-tickets-308675876857**](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.eventbrite.co.uk%2Fe%2Fthe-pledge-celebration-tickets-308675876857&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cf7232a58ad224409841808da12d85619%7Ce4addc4bb5eb4594ab58f3bcd515a98a%7C0%7C0%7C637843017625320760%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=Ud6myoBl6qkwOVtNwpBL6CI5BdWeRJijYF0zPMC3z7U%3D&reserved=0).
* A recruitment campaign for more Enterprise Advisors (volunteers from business) to provide strategic support to careers leaders in our schools and colleges is underway. The area of greatest need is for SEND schools. Support in raising awareness amongst networks would be appreciated.
* The hub schools have local meetings in the coming couple of weeks to look at coordinated work for the coming term
* Targeted support is being focused on all schools/colleges not yet meeting the CEC’s Gatsby Benchmark floor targets- this is minimum 2 benchmarks fully achieved by end of the academic year for non-Hub and 3 for Hub.
* A mock assessment day was run recently as a culmination of a year-long employment readiness programme for year 13 students looking for an apprenticeship as their progression from A-Levels.  100 young people from 12 6th forms and colleges and 20 employers met at Alderley Park that supported applicants, employers, new apprentices and teachers.

8. **Local Growth Fund Skills Investments**

* Sarah Williams shared a series of slides and noted a change in the lead partner for the IOTA project.
* Lucy reported on her very positive recent site visit to the automated dairy project at Reaseheath – the project has been designed with employers and offers training between 7 am and 7 pm.

9. **Any Other Business and Date of Next Meetings**

* Members noted:
  + The Data and Labour Market Steering Group evaluation of progress and impact to date
  + The consultation by the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission
  + Post-16 Qualifications at Level 2 consultation
* There was no further business.
* Date of next meeting 18 May 2022

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 13 APRIL 2022 Annex A**

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

* \*Kath Mackay - Chair
* \*Nicola Dunbar (Deputy Chair)
* Tim Smith representing \*Eleanor Blackburn (Warrington Borough Council)
* Paul Colman (South Cheshire Chamber)
* Kirstie Simpson (representing Kurt Allman University of Chester)
* Dhesi (Cheshire College South and West – representing the training providers)
* \*Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
* \*Matthew Smith (Cheshire West and Chester)
* \*Lucy Liang (AUE Ltd)
* Maggie Chen
* Kevin Hutchinson (SISK)
* Ben Longworth (BAE Systems)
* Pat Jackson (LEP) \*With voting rights

**Apologies**

* \*Bill Carr (Carpe Diem)
* Tamara Barker (Engie)
* Cllr James Nicholas (Cheshire East)
* Nicola Johnson (Bentley Motors)
* Kim Hardman (Astra Zeneca)
* Julia Teale Mid Cheshire Health Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
* Kurt Allman (University of Chester)

**Also attending**

* Philip Cox and Sarah Williams, for specific agenda items

**Papers copied to**:

* Trevor Brocklebank (Deputy Chair of LEP)
* Martin Wood (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy)
* Jamie Zucker (DfE)
* Clare Cassidy (DfE)
* Mike McLouglin (DfE)
* Peter Skates (Cheshire East Council)
* Kirstie Simpson (University of Chester)
* Nicola Said (LEP)
* Joe Manning (LEP)
* Andy Devaney (LEP)
* Sarah Williams (LEP) and Trevor Langston (LEP)
* Andrew Bridge and Dave Rowlands (CITB)