**NOTE OF EMPLOYERS’ SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 15 JUNE 2022**

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

* Review key developments since their last meeting on 18 May including further work on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the LEP Delivery Plan
* Review further work on the impact measurement work and agree next steps
* Review progress on Local Growth Fund Skills investments and receive presentations from the University of Chester and Learn more about how our colleges are making effective use of the Local Growth Skills investments
* Receive an update on Skills Bootcamps and provide a steer on next steps
* Reflect an update on the expression of interest for the designation of employer representative bodies to develop Local Skills Improvement Plans in Cheshire and Warrington
* Reflect on the latest developments around the Jobs Portal

**KEY POINTS DISCUSSED**

**1. Welcome, declarations of interest, introductions with members sharing information on any key developments since the last meeting** **on 18 May**

* List of attendees and apologies (Annex A). Kath noted that a number of members were unable to attend because they were attending a meeting with Baroness Alison Wolf at Reaseheath College to discuss Skills Development Funds, Institutes of Technology and Local Skills Improvement Plans
* There were no additional declarations of interest
* Kath noted that Councillor Sarah Pochin had replaced Councillor James Nicholas as the Cheshire East representative. Kath also welcomed Mike MacLoughlin from the Department for Education.

**2. Note of last meeting and outstanding actions** (5 minutes)

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

**3. Updates on Key Developments Since Last Meeting**

* 1. **LEP Board**
* Kath Mackay and Nicola Dunbar noted the LEP’s Chief Executive report to the LEP Board that had been circulated prior to the meeting. Key points on the agenda for the next LEP Board meeting included the LEP budget and delivery plan – including a large section on skills. Nicola Dunbar would also lead a discussion on the Digital Connectivity Board.

**3.2 Pledge**

* In the absence of Paul Colman, Trevor Langston reported that the Pledge were moving to a second year of the careers hub model involving all local secondary schools and colleges. To date 60 of 81 schools had signed up to the model. Trevor also reminded Members of the Pledge celebration event on 30 June.

**3.3 Digital Skills Partnership (DSP)**

* Nicola Dunbar reported that the DSP 2022/23 funding agreement had been signed
* Over the last month there had been input by the Board into the technical specifications for the digital skills bootcamps as well as input to the discussions with local authorities about the priorities for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
* Nicola noted that the Digital Connectivity Board now had closer links with Connecting Cheshire.

**3.4 Accelerate**

* No update was available.

**3.5 Institute of Technology (IoT)**

* In his absence, Dhesi had provided the following update in advance of the meeting:
	+ The wave 2 institutes of technology are at pre-contract award stage – including submitting RIBA stage 2 plans and commercial and sub-licence agreements
	+ The escalation of costs is a big issue nationally - for Cheshire and Warrington the costs had escalated by between 40 and 50%.
	+ The Department for Education has told Cheshire and Warrington colleges to work through the impact of no additional funding and submit proposals by the end of June. It appears that the Department might be sympathetic to some of the escalated cost if they are ‘abnormal costs’ e.g., unforeseen structural issues, linked to the requirement for ‘net zero’ energy to be specified for the building/refurbishment work and/or costs incurred as a result of delays by the Department for Education
	+ College Principals and Chairs of Governors met at the end of May to review progress. They are very supportive of the Institute of Technology but cannot sign off on the escalated costs.
	+ The colleges aim to get more employers engaged in the development of the IoT and Dhesi is meeting the prospective next Chair of the IoT shortly.

3.6 **Data and Labour Market Intelligence**

* The ‘light touch’ evaluation of the data and labour market intelligence has been completed and shared with Members. It highlights the extensive use of the data and labour market reports by a wide range of partners and identifies the need to further extend access and to help further improve the capacity of partners to be able to interpret the data and labour market intelligence. This could help to address the information failure challenges identified in the Skills Report.
* Tim Smith noted that the data and labour market intelligence work had provided the expertise he needed to access numeracy data and intelligence that would inform the Multiply investment plan.
* Kevin Hutchinson suggested there was potential to develop the capacity of the Pledge’s Enterprise Advisors to interpret the data and labour market intelligence so that they could pass on the intelligence more effectively to local schools
* The role of the Jobs Portal in addressing the information failures was also noted as well as the existing link between the Jobs Portal and Learn Live’s ‘Jobs Live’ page. DWP job coaches were also making extensive use of the Jobs Portal.
* Members asked for information about the use of the LEP website – including to access data and labour market intelligence. **ACTION PAT JACKSON**

4. **Skills Bootcamps**

* Pat Jackson reported that the procurement of the initial £1 million programme of skills bootcamps in Cheshire and Warrington had started. Procurement would take place in three lots.
* The first pilot lot involved three bootcamps (HGV driving, digital marketing, and green energy skills). The deadline for bids had been 6 June, the bids had been assessed and contracts for two of the three bootcamps were close to signing. The contract for the third bootcamps was dependant on some further information being supplied but should be completed by the end of June.
* Pat suggested that Members might be matched with individual bootcamps to provide a critical friend role – along similar lines to the roles they play with the Local Growth Fund skills projects.
* Nicola Dunbar suggested that the Digital Connectivity Board members who included some logistics experts might also be able to support the logistics bootcamps **ACTION NICOLA DUNBAR AND PAT JACKSON TO FOLLOW UP**
* The second lot was focused on digital skills and the prospectus would be issued by 22 June.
* The third lot currently comprised of construction and digital bootcamps, but the content would be reviewed in the light of experience from the first two lots
* Work was also continuing on the expectation that the Department for Education would offer further bootcamp funding opportunities later in the year. A number of organisations were in discussion with the LEP to explore possible skills bootcamps including life sciences, rail engineering and professional services. It was suggested that Kim Hardman (Astra Zeneca might want to get involved in proposals for a life-sciences bootcamp. **ACTION PAT JACKSON TO FOLLOW UP WITH KIM HARDMAN**

5. **Local Skills Improvement Plans**

* Kath Mackay reminded Members of the Department for Education’s recent invitation to employer representative bodies (excluding LEPs) to apply to become designated employer representative bodies to lead the development of Local Skills Improvement Plans.
* The deadline for submitting expressions of interest had been the 6th June and an expression of interest had been submitted by Cheshire West and Chester Chamber. Response from the Department for Education are expected by the Autumn.
* Members are very keen to explore how they could work closely with the designated employer representative body in Cheshire and Warrington and it was agreed that Kath Mackay and Nicola Dunbar should work together on this, make contact and potentially develop a framework for future working. **ACTION KATH MACKAY AND NICOLA DUNBAR**
* Mike MacLoughlin reminded Members that one of the assessment criteria for a designated employer representative body is their capacity to engage with LEPs and other key stakeholders.
* Nicola Dunbar stressed the importance of building on the work of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board to date and not ‘re-inventing the wheel’.

6. **Skills Local Growth Fund investments**

**6.1 Overview of all projects**

* Sarah Williams presented a series of slides summarising the results of the re-profiling of the investment projects. Sarah highlighted the RAG ratings that the LEP’s contract manager had attributed to each project. There were three projects that Members noted in particular:
	+ The University of Chester cloud project where they had proposed a significant reduction in outputs for the numbers of learners and the numbers of businesses engaged
	+ The IOTA project where the project had been transferred from Carpe Diem to their delivery partner Creative Hut
	+ The Made Digital project based in Warrington libraries which had exceeded their target for learners engaged but were experiencing problems engaging businesses.

**6.2 Update from University of Chester on their cyber security project**

* Brian Fitzpatrick and Jane Pearson presented a series of slides. Brian noted that they were proposing a reduction in outputs from 12,000 learners and 220 businesses benefitting to 4,100 learners and 75 businesses. This proposal has not yet been agreed by the LEP who are keen to work with the University to improve outputs.
* Members were concerned at the proposed dramatic reduction in outputs and agreed that it would help to share good practice in terms of engagement with employers between the Local Growth Fund skills projects including, the collaborative Advanced Construction Training project and the potential to link to the skills bootcamps and Digital Cheshire (masterclasses to help smaller businesses adapt and grow digitally).  **ACTION SARAH WILLIAMS TO ARANGE MEETING TO SHARE GOOD PRACTICE**

**7 Impact Measures**

* Members noted the paper circulated in advance of the meeting suggesting potential baseline measurements of impact.
* Members agreed to focus the discussion for this meeting on the challenge associated with the significant gender disparities in learning in ICT, Engineering, Health and Social Care, and Construction across all learning routes. Some occupations only draw on the talents of half of the population. Female participation in digital skills is too low at every level, for all ages.
* Sarah Williams outlined some of the activities undertaken to date to encourage more females to develop digital skills and consider careers in digital. Sarah explained that the Pledge and the Digital Skills Partnership have linked employers to a range of activities designed to inspire females to choose computer science as a subject to study and to raise awareness about a range of digital roles and careers.  Employers involved included AstraZeneca, CF Fertilisers, DriveWorks, Encirc and IBM.
* Sarah also outlined some recent pilot work on a survey to explore why young people and adults in Cheshire and Warrington do or do not choose digital careers.
* Members agreed that there was a lot of activity underway but expressed concern around the dangers of too many disconnected initiatives. They recognised the importance of peer-to-peer influences and the potential of digital female ambassadors as well as the influences of parents and teachers.
* Maggie noted that small initiatives tend to get ‘drowned out’ in schools and because of this it was useful to link in with and, where appropriate, amplify existing activities. Maggie suggested that because of the extensive use of TikTok by certain age groups, it could be used as a vehicle to engage young people through demonstrations of video editing.
* Maggie also stressed the importance of confidence building e.g., via ‘Girls in Charge’?
* Tamara agreed with Maggie’s comments and stressed the need to link digital to young people’s interests and work on a bigger scale and achieve more impact by extending the reach of local activities by linking them with national and regional programmes
* Phil Atkinson stressed the need for some great role models. He noted that because digital skills are ubiquitous and cut across all sectors, there was considerable scope to engage young people in digital via a range of very different routes – whatever catches their interest.
* **ACTION MAGGIE AND PAT JACKSON TO FOLLOW UP**

**8. Jobs Portal**

* Sarah Williams presented a series of slides that provided an update on the Jobs Portal.
* Sarah confirmed that the funding for the Portal was due to end on 30 June and she was not confident that further funding could be found. The local authorities and a number of other partners had been approached for a contribution towards the cost of the Portal and although there had been some offers of funding, there was not yet enough funding in place to secure a further 9 months for the Portal. If this was the case the Portal would be switched off on 30 June.
* Members noted that the Portal had been set up in response to Covid when there had ben an expectation of large numbers of people seeking work, but it was now focused on informing people about the local labour market and helping employers fill vacancies. Members agreed that it would be a great shame if funding was not forthcoming, and the Portal was switched off.
* Tim Smith noted there was a possibility of future funding via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund as part of the 4% day-to-day running costs, but this would not be available until the Autumn.

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

**9.1 Date of next meeting**

* Next meeting is on 13 July 2022. Kath suggested scheduling at least one face-to-face meeting into the diary **ACTION KATH AND PAT TO FOLLOW UP**

9.2 **Possible items for next agenda**

* Impact work – reviewing challenges around young people and long-term unemployed
* LEP Delivery Plan and future priorities for the Employers’ Skills and Education Board
* Local Growth Fund skills projects – latest claims data and possible presentation from Made Digital
* UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Multiply
* Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission consultation – with focus on skills and digital inclusion
* Potential links to Cheshire East’s Health and Well Being Board

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 15 JUNE 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)
* \*Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
* Tamara Barker (Engie)
* \*Lucy Liang (AUE Ltd)
* Kevin Hutchinson (SISK)
* Maggie Chen
* Pat Jackson (LEP) \*With voting rights

**Apologies**

* Nicola Johnson/Gemma Betteridge (Bentley Motors)
* Dhesi (Cheshire College South and West – representing the training providers)
* Julia Teale Mid Cheshire Health Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
* Kim Hardman (Astra Zeneca)
* \*Bill Carr (Carpe Diem)
* \*Matthew Smith (Cheshire West and Chester)
* Paul Colman (South Cheshire Chamber)
* Cllr Sarah Pochin (Cheshire East)
* Ben Longworth (BAE Systems)
* Kurt Allman (University of Chester)

**Also attending**

* Brian Fitzpatrick and Jane Pearson (University of Chester), Mike MCLoughlin (DfE), Trevor Langston, David Brennan 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)