

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY, 23 MARCH 2023 AT WELLINGTON HOUSE,
LEEDS LS1 2DE**

Present:

Councillor James Lewis (Chair)	Leeds City Council
Professor Shirley Congdon (Deputy Chair)	Private Sector (LEP Board)
Councillor Silvia Dacre	Calderdale Council
Councillor Jessica Lennox	Leeds City Council
Milton Brown	Private Sector Representative
Tim Craven	Private Sector Representative
Nav Chohan	Advisory Representative (West Yorkshire Skills Partnership)
Alex Miles	Advisory Representative (West Yorkshire Skills Partnership)

In attendance:

Phillip Day	TUC
Jo Ledgard	DWP
Michelle Burton	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Peter Glover	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Michelle Hunter	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Sonya Midgley	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Philip Witcherley	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Phillipa Syers	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Frances Burkinshaw	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Janette Woodcock	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

32. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence received from Councillors - Imran Khan (Bradford) Lynn Masterman (Wakefield) Graham Turner (Kirklees), Andrew Waller (York).
Private Sector Representatives - Mark Cowgill, Orlagh Hunt, Richard Mason, Liz Needleman, Claire Paxman, Michelle Chappell Dixon, Phil Lautman.
Advisory Representatives - Tim Thornton (West Yorkshire Skills Partnership), David Cooper (Headteachers Network), Peter O'Brien (Higher Education), Colin Booth (Further Education), Mike Curtis (NHS), Sharon Riding (DWP), Bill Adams (TUC)

33. Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

The Committee was asked to make decisions related to Skills Bootcamps. In the interests of transparency, members of the Committee with an interest in the delivery of Skills Bootcamps declared an interest.

34. Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There was no exempt information requiring the exclusion of the press and public.

35. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 23 January 2023

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2023 be approved.

36. Chair's Update

The Chair read out a statement regarding the pre-election period expected to commence on 23 March 2023 the date of the meeting.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt, delivered the Spring Budget, setting out measures to reduce inflation and debt and grow the economy. The budget featured a number of skills measures and measures intended to support people to (re)-enter work, increase their working hours and extend their working lives (see detail below). A number of these are likely to be delivered at West Yorkshire level (e.g. Bootcamps)

The Chair handed over to the Head of Employment and Skills Policy to present the Budget Update as follows: -

Skills

- £34.4m funding for an additional 8,000 Skills Bootcamps placements in 2024-25 to reskill in high value sectors such as construction and digital.
- Expanding Sector-Based Work Academy Programme (SWAPs) placements by 40,000 over 23/24 and 24/25 with £28.8m new funding to provide those who are currently out of work with the training and work experience they need to get careers in high-demand sectors.
- An extension of the government's support for Ukrainians who have arrived in the UK under the Ukraine Visa Schemes. £11.5m to offer intensive English language courses and employment support to up to 10,000 individuals.

Work & Health

- Health and Disability White Paper published last Wednesday, setting out plans to reform the welfare system and make it better meet the needs of disabled people in GB. This includes removing the Work Capability Assessment (meaning claimants will now only have to do one health assessment rather than two) and supporting claimants to try work without fear of losing their financial support.
- Pilot WorkWell Partnerships for delivering integrated work and health support in local areas, linking JobCentres, health services and other local organisations to provide wraparound health support for jobseekers, benefits claimants and those at risk of falling out of work

because of their health condition.

- Introducing a Universal Support programme matching disabled and sick people who want to work with existing job vacancies, and ensure they are supported to succeed. Ambition to support 50,000 people annually with a £4,000 allocation per person.
- New funding to expand an existing programme that provides tailored Work Coach support to help disabled people find suitable work.
- Expansion of the existing Individual Placement and Support scheme, which supports people with severe mental illness into employment.
- Introducing employment advisors in Musculoskeletal Health services, helping individuals with MSK conditions to return to or remain in employment and scaling up MSK hubs in community settings so more people can access treatment.
- Digitising the NHS Health Check to identify and prevent more cases of cardiovascular disease; and introducing world-leading free access for digital resources for management of mental health and MSK conditions on the NHS website and NHS app.
- Expand funding for the forthcoming SME subsidy pilot for occupational health services and bring forward two new consultations on how best to increase occupational health across UK employers.

Over 50s

- Enhance digital midlife MOT offer and expanding the Job Centre Plus midlife MOT offer, which provides in-person financial planning and awareness session for UC claimants aged over 50.
- Returnerships: a new offer targeted at the over-50s, which brings together existing skills programmes, focusing on flexibility and previous experience to reduce training length. They will promote accelerated apprenticeships, Sector-Based Work Academy Programme placements and Skills Bootcamps to the over-50s.
- Pension Tax Changes to incentivise staying in/ returning to work:
 - Increase to the Annual Allowance, limit on annual tax-relieved pension savings, from £40,000 to £60,000 from April 2023, and remove the Lifetime Allowance charge.
 - Increase to the Money Purchase Annual Allowance, a restriction of annual tax-relieved pension savings once an individual has flexibly accessed their pension saving, from £4,000 to £10,000.

Universal Credit (UC) Claimants

- Increase to the Administrative Earnings Threshold (AET), the minimum amount a person can earn without being asked to meet regularly with their Work Coach, from the equivalent of 15 to 18 hours of earnings at the National Living Wage for an individual claimant. The couples AET, where a second member of a household may not be asked to look for work if their partner is working, will be removed entirely.
- Expanding work search requirements to encourage over 700,000 lead carers of children on UC to look for work or increase their hours and will

receive additional Work Coach support to do so.

- Strengthening the application of the UC sanctions regime.
- Extending the Youth Offer until 2028 maintaining job search support for young people who are NEET and expand eligibility for the Youth Offer to support young people on UC who are not currently searching for work, including young parents and carers.
- Expanding the Additional Jobcentre Support Pilot to test how intensive support for a period of two weeks can further support claimants, who remain unemployed after 13 and 26 weeks into their UC claim or on low earnings, into work.

Childcare

- Working parents will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week, for 38 weeks of the year, from when their child is 9 months old to when they start school. This will be rolled out in stages from April 2024.
- Uplift to the hourly rate paid to providers to deliver existing free hours offers. (£204m of additional funding this year, £288m by 2024-250.)
- Confirmed changes to the staff-to-child ratios for 2-year-olds, moving from 1:4 to 1:5.
- Start-up grants for new childminders, including for those who choose to register with a childminder agency.
- LAs in England are receiving £289m over two academic years, from September 2024, to set up wraparound childcare in schools.
- Parents on Universal Credit will receive childcare support up-front when moving into work / increasing their hours, rather than in arrears.
- Increase of the Universal Credit childcare cap to from £646 to £951 for one child and £1,108 to £1,630 for two children.

In addition to the workforce measures, the Chancellor also announced West Yorkshire as one of the places to get a new Investment Zone with £80m over 5 years. £35m flexible spend, split 40:60 between resource spending and capital spending. Tax incentives can cover up to 600ha across 3 sites over 5 years: stamp duty, business rates, employer contributions – as well as skills development, specialist business support, planning and investment in local infrastructure. Subject to business case to be co-created with Government this year.

Local Skills Improvement Plans

Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) are funded by the Dept for Education to provide an agreed set of actionable priorities that employers, providers, and stakeholders in a local area can get behind to drive change. They are led by employer representative organisations and in West Yorkshire this is Mid-Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce and West and North Yorkshire Chamber.

Martin Hathaway, MD of Mid-Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce, and the nominated representative on the Employment and Skills Committee on behalf of the LSIP gave a verbal update to the Committee

Officers of the Combined Authority and Local Authority's have been invited to join the (advisory) board of the LSIP and are concerned about its slow progress, lack of direction and confusing messages to providers and businesses. We understand that colleges and other providers have contacted the Department for Education regarding their concerns. A report on the LSIP's priorities is due to be submitted to DFE at the end of March. Given the lack of progress currently, it is possible that board members will not feel able to support the report. Chamber representatives have been invited to attend a Directors of Development meeting but are not available until the May meeting.

In addition, The Department for Education has written to colleges inviting their applications for the LSIF (Local Skills Improvement Fund) to support the LSIP but applications are due before the timescales for the LSIF report

Committee members discussed and provided comments which Combined Authority Officers have noted.

37. Green Jobs Taskforce

The Committee considered a report to provide an update on the progress and next steps of the Mayor's Green Taskforce.

Over the last year the Mayor has led a Taskforce on green jobs and skills bringing together a range of experts to unlock the potential in West Yorkshire to develop the right skills needed to achieve our ambitious climate ambitions.

The Committee was presented with an overview of the Taskforces's work and its draft report and recommendations and gave feedback on the report and next steps to support the development of a robust action plan to deliver on the recommendations that will be overseen by the Employment and Skills Committee which will be published in Summer 2023.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the update on the work of the Green Jobs Taskforce and feedback from the Committee on the considerations and next steps be noted.

38. Adult Skills and Approval of Bootcamp Funding

The Committee considered a report to update on:

- The latest data on the challenges West Yorkshire faces in Adult Skills.
- To provide an overview of Combined Authority led provision which tackles these issues.
- To outline future activity on adult skills in the region.
- To provide the Adult Education Budget End of Year Report outlining the progress made in year 1 of devolution.
- To seek approval to extend the delivery period for the Department for Education Funded Bootcamps from September 2023 to September

2024 and to accept and spend an additional £3,649 for the next wave of delivery which was shown in Appendix 3 of the report.

At the last meeting of the Employment and Skills Committee it was agreed different employment and skills topics be considered starting with the evidence base and current labour market information, current delivery activity and the next steps to address gaps and innovations prompted by the labour market intelligence and performance of current programmes and landscape.

The Head of Employment and Skills introduced the paper and Officers from the Combined Authority gave a summary of the labour market context and a summary of the end of year report for Adult Education Budget (AEB) which was followed by a summary of the recommendation for Skills Bootcamps

The Committee noted and commented on the AEB End of Year report.

The Committee was requested to approve:

- i. The change request to the Skills Bootcamps programme to accept and spend up to £3,649,369 from the Department for Education, increasing the total programme value to £7,338,369 and to extend the delivery timeframes from September 2023 to September 2024.
- ii. Future approvals are made in accordance with the assurance pathway set out in Appendix 2 of this report. This will be subject to the scheme remaining within the tolerances outlined in this report.

The Committee was also asked to approve the request to accept and spend Wave 4 funding for Skills Bootcamps and to extend the delivery timeframes from September 2023 to September 2024.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the comments from the Committee on the Adult Education Budget End of Year report be noted.
- (iii) That the Committee approves:

The change request to the Skills Bootcamps programme to accept and spend up to £3,649,369 from the Department of Education, increasing the total programme value to £7,338,369 and to extend the delivery timeframes from September 2023 to September 2024

Future approvals are made in accordance with the assurance pathway set out in Appendix 2 of the report. This will be subject to the scheme remaining within the tolerances outlined in the report.

- (iv) That the Committee approves to accept and spend `Wave 4 funding for Skills Bootcamps and to extend the delivery timescales from September 2023 to September 2024.

39. Future Funding Priorities

The Committee considered a report seeking endorsement to proceed with the development of employment and skills packages for future funding which included an update on UKSPF Pillar 3 – People and Skills with detail to be brought to a future meeting.

The next phase of support for Investment Priority 2: Skills and training for people will focus on digital and green skills and employer support. The report provided an overview of the rationale and envisaged outcomes for the proposed skills packages across two key themes and skills interventions:

1. Workforce Development and Growth
 - a. Digital and green skills offer for businesses
 - b. Mayor's SME graduate pilot
 - c. Skills support for employers

2. Workforce for the Future
 - a. Digital Inclusion
 - b. Regional careers campaign
 - c. Green skills engagement with young people from primary age
 - d. Further education development fund
 - e. Digital Workforce for the future

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the development of employment and skills packages for future funding be endorsed.
- (iii) That the update on UKSPF Pillar 3 – People and Skills be noted.

40. Monitoring Indicators

The Committee considered a report and verbal update to present the latest State of the Region monitoring indicators relating to employment and skills together with an analysis of more time timely labour market indicators.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the latest intelligence relating to employment and skills in West Yorkshire and the current performance of West Yorkshire against the State of the Region indicators be noted.