
Report to: Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership Board (LEP Board)

Date: 26 March 2019

Subject: **Employment and Skills Panel**

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1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide the LEP Board with a report on the work of the Employment and Skills Panel.
- 1.2 To seek delegated approval for sign-off of Delivery Agreement review reports by the Chair of the Employment and Skills Panel.
- 1.3 To seek endorsement for the recommendation that the Skills Advisory Panel remit should be taken forward through the Employment and Skills Panel.

2. Information

Future-Ready Skills Commission

- 2.1 The Panel was provided with an update on the launch of the Commission for a Future-Ready Skills System in a Devolved UK.
- 2.2 This independent Commission was launched at a meeting on 21 January 2019. A press release is available at <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/news/future-ready-skills-commission-to-challenge-status-quo/>. It is intended to shape the future of the skills system, so that it better meets the needs of individuals, businesses and the economy. There is a particular interest in how the skills system can better serve the ambitions of local areas.
- 2.3 The Commission is chaired by Cllr Hinchcliffe as Chair of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Leader of Bradford Council. The full membership of the Commission is provided at **Appendix 1**. Chris Jones (former College Principal) and Jonathan Barr (OECD) have also been invited to act as expert advisers to the Commission.
- 2.4 The Commissioners were provided with an overview of the proposed scope and objectives of the Commission and why skills are so important. They were also given an overview of three proposed key themes:

- Technical education and training
- Careers information and inspiration
- Workforce skills

2.5 A Call for Evidence has been launched to gather views from a broad range of stakeholders with a deadline for responses of 12 April <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/about-west-yorkshire-combined-authority/call-for-evidence-skills-commission/>

Skills Advisory Panels

- 2.6 The Panel was given an update on the implementation of Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs). SAPs are a government initiative to strengthen the capability of LEPs with regard to understanding and addressing local skills challenges.
- 2.7 SAPs will bring together local employers and skills providers so that they can develop a shared understanding of local skills needs and the actions required to address them, by marrying supply with demand. This will be under-pinned by an evidence-based approach grounded in high quality labour market analysis. SAPs will consider current skills needs and skills challenges that are likely to emerge in future. All areas are expected to have SAP arrangements in place by autumn 2019. DfE plans to undertake a review of local implementation of SAPs commencing summer 2019.
- 2.8 DfE acknowledges that in those areas where LEP employment and skills sub-boards and panels are working well, that it makes sense to build on existing arrangements and allow them to take on the additional functions of Skills Advisory Panels. The Employment and Skills Panel considers that Leeds City Region falls into this category in view of its established analytical capability and long-standing and robust governance arrangements.
- 2.9 The Panel agreed that it is already carrying out the majority of the SAP functions and commented that any additional analysis needed to add value by influencing provision, investment decisions or the decision-making of businesses and individuals.
- 2.10 The Panel supported the proposal that the LEP should take on the Skills Advisory Panel functions as part of the ESP's remit, and that its terms of reference should be amended accordingly, including consideration of representation of the voluntary sector.

T Levels

- 2.11 The Panel was given an update on the development and implementation of Government's T Levels programme, and members' views were sought as to future priorities and role of the LEP / Combined Authority in relation to preparing for the roll-out and awareness raising of T levels.
- 2.12 T Levels are new courses which will start roll out from September 2020, which will follow GCSEs and will be equivalent to three A Levels. These 2-year

courses have been developed nationally in collaboration with employers and businesses with the aim of ensuring that the content meets the needs of industry and prepares students for work. They will offer students a mixture of classroom learning and 'on-the-job' experience during an industry placement of around three months. They are intended to provide the knowledge and experience needed to access skilled employment, further study or a higher apprenticeship.

2.13 The Panel's comments were as follows:

- There is a risk that T Levels may have a negative impact on the take up of apprenticeships
- It is unclear whether Universities will accept T Levels under their entry requirements
- There is a heavy work placement element for T Levels which may be challenging for some businesses
- Young people in receipt of benefits are unlikely to be ready for T Levels and would need extensive support to prepare them
- T levels present an opportunity to respond to local need

2.14 The Panel agreed that the LEP and Combined Authority should seek to maximise the value of T Levels. The Panel felt that workplace encounters and work experience should be a priority, whether this is via Apprenticeships, T Levels, and other qualifications as well as work experience. An "Agile Squad" will therefore be formed to explore how to encourage and support employers to engage with workplace encounters, including by building on existing Enterprise in Education and Apprenticeship activity.

Delivery Agreements

2.15 The Panel was given an update on the progress and recent review of the Delivery Agreements with the seven Further Education Colleges in West Yorkshire.

2.16 During 2016/17 Delivery Agreements were developed and published for each of the seven Further Education Colleges in West Yorkshire, setting out individualised and measurable expectations of how Colleges have agreed to work towards the Combined Authority and LEP's priorities for the Leeds City Region. Delivery Agreements are intended to influence the full range of college provision and are an important next step in strengthening broader relationships with providers and influencing the curriculum offer to meet the needs of businesses and individuals.

2.17 A report recording the outcomes and findings from the first formal review of the Delivery Agreements is planned to be published in spring 2019.

2.18 The Panel considered and welcomed the key themes from the reviews and proposed that approval for sign-off of the formal review reports should be delegated to the Chair of the Employment and Skills Panel.

Apprenticeship Grants for Employers

- 2.19 A number of changes to the grant criteria endorsed by the LEP Board at its last meeting have now been implemented. These changes are intended to increase take-up of the grant by businesses. The revised grant criteria were launched in mid-February and will be reviewed after three months to assess their impact on take up and employer participation in apprenticeships.
- 2.20 The value of the core grant has been increased from £1,500 to £2,000 to provide a greater incentive for businesses to offer apprenticeship opportunities, the eligibility has been expanded to include businesses with 249 or fewer employees (previously 50) and to include all recognised apprenticeship frameworks and standards (previously in limited sector subject areas).
- 2.21 Board members are asked to raise awareness of the grant among their networks www.the-lep.com/AGE.

Leeds City Region Employment Hub

- 2.22 The Combined Authority has received in-principle approval to manage this European Social Funded programme which will be operational until 31 December 2021. Delivering through Local Authority partners, C&K Careers and Leeds Beckett University, the Employment Hub will offer:
- Enhanced careers, information, advice and guidance.
 - Intensive support of young people in preparation for employment (including apprenticeships), further learning or self-employment.
 - With a budget of almost £8m across Local Authority partners, supporting 48 members of staff in the districts, local Hubs will be established in six Local Authority areas (Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, Wakefield and York. The Hubs will provide a business engagement and talent matching service, particularly in relation to creation of new apprenticeship opportunities (building on the success and learning of the original City Deal Apprenticeship Hub programme).
- 2.23 The project will support 15 to 24 year olds and businesses of any size with a particular focus on engaging with businesses who have never had apprentices before. The Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (above) will complement the support for businesses.
- 2.24 Businesses can engage with the Employment Hub via the LEP Growth Service <http://www.the-lep.com/for-business/> and the local Hubs will provide a contact point for individuals.

Skills Capital

- 2.25 An update on the Skills Capital programme was included in the papers for the December panel meeting. Since then:

- **Leeds College of Building** – Leeds College of Building took possession of the Ground Floor on the Hunslet Road Phase II site in December 2018 allowing teaching and learning to commence. The building will be fully occupied by spring 2019. North Street refurbishment works commenced in January 2019 which is part of the overall project.
- **Leeds City College** – construction continues on the Quarry Hill campus which is scheduled to open to students in September 2019. The College will then commence works refurbishment works on its Park Lane Campus as part of the overall project. The College held an ‘Unveiling the Vision for Quarry Hill Campus’ event on the 24 January 2019 which was well attended by local stakeholders.
- **Kirklees College** - The Dewsbury Leaning Quarter involves key buildings in the heart of Dewsbury. The newly built Springfield Centre opened to students on the 3 September 2018. It is an ultra-modern, purpose built facility that hosts courses that are aimed predominantly at 16-18 year olds. The second element is the refurbishment of iconic Pioneer House. Kirklees Council is undertaking landlord works, prior to Kirklees College undertaking fit-out works. The building is expected to open in 2020.

Enterprise in Education

- 2.26 The **Enterprise Adviser Network** and the Combined Authority’s Enterprise Coordinators are currently engaged with 175 (86%) secondary schools and colleges. The network has delivered over 134,000 employer encounters and 37,771 employer encounters for pupil premium learners, 9,238 of whom have had at least two employer encounters as part of the network.
- 2.27 A **Raising Aspirations Pilot** will soon be launched for schools and colleges with high numbers of disadvantaged pupils and / or with an intake of pupils from the most deprived wards of the Leeds City Region. The pilot aims to support an increase in activity to raise aspirations amongst disadvantaged pupils by strengthening engagement with employers, widening pupils’ experiences of jobs beyond their home communities and engagement with young role models working in priority sectors, including apprentices. All schools and colleges will be contacted and made aware of the opportunity to bid to deliver innovative activity.
- 2.28 The **#futuregoals** careers campaign and activity aims to raise awareness of careers opportunities in skills shortage and high growth sectors. The next phase of the campaign commenced at the end of February. Young people are the primary target audience for the marketing campaign, with parents/carers and teachers as the secondary audience, using the relevant social media channels for age profiles.
- 2.29 A creative industries careers toolkit for young people and parents has been

developed, supported by Burberry Foundation, as part of the national Creative Sector toolkit's Creative Careers Programme, led by Creative & Cultural Skills and Screen Skills. The launch of this work took place in early March at Burberry Business Services, Leeds.

- 2.30 The Enterprise Coordinators continue to connect the school - business landscape and are working with a number of different providers, including Tycoon in Schools, which offers an enterprise competition for secondary schools with seed funding for young entrepreneurs to grow their business ideas. The Tycoon in Schools team will be briefing the team of Enterprise Coordinators on 21 May ahead of their Autumn programme launch to promote entrepreneurial skills with young people.

Work Wellness Service

- 2.31 A pilot project in York has now completed. From an original target of 10, the programme has received 72 eligible referrals. 43 people have returned to work and a further 16 remain engaged in activity designed to enhance their chances of a positive outcome. The current rate of achievement shows 60% of those engaged have returned to work within a reasonable timescale. The remaining 16 will be tracked until the end of February when the final project figures will be produced.
- 2.32 The Work Wellness Service has launched this month in a deprived area of Halifax following the same principles as York, with a Work Wellness Service advisor based within a GP surgery. The pilot aims to explore the specific support and activities that can influence a successful return to work. A full evaluation of both pilot sites is planned and the findings will be shared with the Panel once completed.

Digital Skills

- 2.33 The **Discover Digital** campaign engages adults across the region, from graduates to career-changers, looking to retrain or upskill into a digital role and to improve their digital skills. The campaign provides a dedicated website to inspire career choices for individuals, where they can engage with businesses and training opportunities <https://discoverdigital.org.uk/>. Since its launch in August 2018, the website has reached over 100,000 people and has had 2,700 new visitors with over 15,000 individual page views across the site.
- 2.34 As previously reported, the Combined Authority submitted a full application to a competitive European funding call to develop a programme named **[re]boot** to individuals to re-train or upskill in order to access career opportunities in digital sectors, construction and engineering. The Funding Agreement has now been received from The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and delivery will commence in spring 2019.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

5. Staffing Implications

5.1 There are no implications associated with this paper.

6. External Consultees

6.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

7. Recommendations

7.1 That the report of the work of the Employment and Skills Panel be noted.

7.2 That the LEP Board delegates sign-off of Delivery Agreement review reports to the Chair of the Employment and Skills Panel.

7.3 That the LEP Board approves the recommendation that the Employment and Skills Panel takes on the functions of the Skills Advisory Panel and that its terms of reference are adapted accordingly.

8. Background Documents

None.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Membership of Future Ready Skills Commission