

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS PANEL
HELD ON THURSDAY, 28 FEBRUARY 2019 AT COMMITTEE ROOM A,
WELLINGTON HOUSE, 40-50 WELLINGTON STREET, LEEDS**

Present:

Rashik Parmar MBE (Chair)	IBM
Peter Duffy	Peter Duffy Limited
Tom Keeney	TKHR Associates
Karen Milner	Paths and Progress
Amanda Stainton	Portakabin
Councillor Darren Byford	Wakefield Council
Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe	Bradford Council
Councillor Naheed Mather	Kirklees Council
Councillor Carol Runciman	City of York Council
Councillor Keith Wakefield OBE	Leeds City Council

In attendance:

Nav Chohan	Leeds City Region Skills Network
Professor Margaret House	Leeds City Region Skills Network
Diana Towler	Department of Work and Pensions
Ian Smyth	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Sue Cooke	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Michelle Burton	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Peter Glover	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Catherine Lunn	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Megan Hemingway	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

31. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Imran Khan, Councillor Dan Sutherland, Mark Roberts, Nick Bowen, Sue Soroczan, Mike Curtis, Merran McRae, Glynn Robinson and Simon Barratt.

32. Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests

There were no pecuniary interests declared by members at the meeting.

33. Exempt Information - Exclusion of the press and public

There were no items on the agenda requiring exclusion of the press and

public.

34. Minutes of the meeting of the Employment and Skills Panel held on 29 November 2018

Resolved: That the minutes of the Employment and Skills Panel held on 29 November 2018 be approved and signed by the Chair.

35. Chair's update

The Chair gave an update as to the progress of two key topics.

The LEP Merger

The Chair confirmed that activity was underway to work towards a merger with the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP by April 2020, with a view to eliminating overlapping areas and securing investment for the region.

Members welcomed the planned merger but were keen that the following should be considered:

- The different sector strengths of the two LEP areas
- That current advisory panels, including the Employment and Skills Panel, continue to have influence in the new LEP

Overall the Panel welcomed the opportunities this LEP merger would bring.

Personas

The Chair was keen to continue progress on the work taking place on the 6 personas. A meeting had taken place a couple of months ago with a group of stakeholders, which developed the 6 "personas" based on cohorts in the Leeds City Region population.

A follow-up meeting of stakeholders has been scheduled to take place later in March to explore next steps in joining up services effectively via this tool. Feedback on the use of personas had been positive and they were felt to be a useful tool to highlight inclusivity, which is key to the success of the skills agenda.

There will be a follow up report on this work back to Panel.

Vote of Thanks

The Chair noted that it was Councillor Wakefield's last meeting as he stands down in May after 31 years of public service. Warm thanks were extended to him for his contribution to the Panel and indeed the Combined Authority and the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (the LEP).

The Chair also gave a vote of thanks from the Panel to Sue Cooke, who is leaving the Combined Authority at the end of April 2019. It was acknowledged that much had been achieved in the Skills agenda with Sue's significant

contribution and leadership.

36. Policy Insights

(a) Skills Advisory Panels

The Panel was given background as to the role of the Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs), namely; *'to help Local Enterprise Partnerships (the LEP) and Combined Authorities to fulfil their local leadership role in the skills system by developing a better understanding of local skills needs, as a basis for setting out skills priorities and working with skills providers to address these priorities.'*

The Panel was informed of the proposed approach set out in the report to implement the remit of Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) within the existing structure of the Employment and Skills Panel (ESP). It was noted that the proposal also included the Panel taking on the additional functions of:

- Analytical Capability
- Ensuring the range of T levels reflects local labour market needs
- Dissemination of information and data

It was noted that a further report on findings and recommendations would be made available to Panel in October 2019.

Members noted the report and supported the proposals.

The Panel discussion highlighted a number of key points:

- The existing Panel was effective but needed a voluntary sector member in order to comply with SAP guidance
- Some support would be available to SAPs to build capacity on this agenda
- The Panel questioned the value of "re-badging" activity
- Any additional analysis must add value, including by influencing investment, provision and the decisions of businesses and individuals

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the Panel's comments and suggestions on the implementation of Skills Advisory Panels (SAP) be considered and incorporated in to the proposed timetable of work.
- (iii) That the Panel approve the proposed approach and the timetable for the initial programme of work in the City Region to take forward the SAP agenda, subject to the Leeds City Region Enterprise (the LEP) Board agreement.

(b) T Levels

The Panel was updated on the development and implementation of the Government's T Levels programme and their views sought.

A presentation was given to the panel, which defined the key goals of the T Levels. It was highlighted that the Skills Advisory Panels could serve a function of developing the policy position around T Levels.

This provided the basis for a panel discussion around the implementation of the T levels programme. These new 2 year courses will start roll out from September 2020, with further courses available in 2021 and 2022.

The Panel noted that:

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

Some members expressed surprise that College's approach to T Levels had been reported as tentative. Three regional institutions had made successful bids to pilot T Level: York College, Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College and Shipley College. It was also felt that many large employers were primarily focussed on apprenticeships as they tried to re-coup their levy monies.

The Panel agreed that the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (the LEP) and the Combined Authority needed to maximise the value of T Levels. Members commented that work experience was key, especially for disadvantaged young people. Members noted that employers and parents need to understand this new qualification, which the Chair suggested may enable a pathway to progressing into 'New Collar' employment opportunities, rather than 'white' or 'blue collar jobs', in emerging, less traditional areas such as care and digital services.

It was suggested an "Agile Squad" should be formed to explore employer engagement with education, whether as part of offering work experience opportunities, apprenticeships, T Levels, internships, etc.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report and presentation be noted.

- (ii) That the Panel's comments and guidance be noted in relation to the roll-out and raising awareness of T Levels.
- (iii) That the Panel agree the focus of workplace encounters to be key in apprenticeships, T levels and other qualifications as well as work experience.
- (iv) That the Panel note the role of Skills Advisory Panels and the Employment and Skills Panel in the shaping of T Levels.
- (v) That an "Agile Squad" be held –date to be confirmed.

(c) Apprenticeships Across the Leeds City Region

The Panel was provided with an update on the Apprenticeship position across the Leeds City Region.

The Panel commented that some Colleges had seen growth in this period and they were keen to ensure that the sector was able to learn from those that had been successful. In general, those colleges with strong and well-established relationships with businesses had seen apprenticeship growth against a national decline.

The Panel's discussion raised the following points:

- There are challenges regarding the diversity of take-up of apprenticeships, including socioeconomic, ethnic and gender factors
- The Maths and English requirement can present a challenge for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- There are recent examples of apprenticeships being chosen by high-level learners as an alternative route to University
- To attract more diverse apprentices, they and their families need to understand what apprenticeships offer
- Course provision needs to match job opportunities and growth sectors

Resolved: That the Panel noted the update report.

(d) Education Inspection Framework

The Panel was provided with information on Ofsted's consultation on a new education inspection framework, which will be implemented from September 2019.

It was noted that the key change of interest to members is that the proposed framework includes an increased focus on personal development, individual outcomes and the destination of young people. All of which are consistent with the position of the Combined Authority and the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership.

Members noted that the new framework will also:

- Discourage 'teaching to the test'
- Encourage the studying of arts, languages and humanities subjects
- Maintain the current inspection grading scale
- Include the proposed new judgements of: Quality of education; Behaviours and attitudes; Personal development and Leadership and management

The Panel welcomed the greater weight that would be given to young people's awareness of career opportunities as a result of this change as well as a move away from a focus on results to the practice that is observed.

Resolved: That the Panel noted the report.

37. Skills Commission

The Panel was provided with an update on the launch of the Commission for a Future-Ready Skills System in a Devolved UK.

Councillor Hinchcliffe informed the Panel, in her capacity of Skills Commission Chair, that the first meeting had taken place in January.

A list of Commission Membership was circulated in **Appendix 1** and its diversity was commended by the Panel. Members encompassed a broad set of skills and insight, some whom were already known to the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership and others who were not.

Panellists suggested that a workshop should be held with Universities to ensure that they can feed into the Commission.

A Call for Evidence will be issued shortly in order to gather views from a broad range of stakeholders. The Commission will report back to the Employment and Skills Panel on its findings throughout, and is intended to culminate in a high profile conference.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Panel noted the Skills Commission update.
- (ii) That a meeting will be held for regional Universities to contribute to the Commission.

38. Delivery Agreements

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

It was noted that a report recording the outcomes and findings from the first

formal review of the Delivery Agreements is planned to be published in spring 2019.

The following themes were highlighted:

- Apprenticeships in key sectors have not performed as well as hoped.
- Changes are taking place in curriculum provision to reflect skills and sector needs
- Colleges are experiencing issues in relation to frequently changing funding rules and opportunities
- It is difficult for colleges to attract and retain tutors in skills shortage occupations

The Panel commended this important and unique work and were keen to explore how colleges can be supported to address some of the challenges identified. Suggested approaches included introducing incentive rates for delivering economically valuable courses, and a co-ordinated approach to sharing industry expertise across institutions.

It was felt specifically that the findings of the review should be used to influence future provision, particularly in skills shortage areas.

Councillor Hinchcliffe will invite colleges to attend a meeting to discuss next steps, once the Delivery Agreements have been published.

Resolved:

- (i) That the update on Delivery Agreements be noted.
- (ii) That Panel recommend that the final sign off of the report of the Delivery Agreement Reviews be delegated to the Chair of the Employment and Skills Panel, subject to Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (the LEP) Board agreement.
- (iii) That colleges will be invited to attend a 'next steps' meeting upon the publication of Delivery Agreements.

39. Employment and Skills Programmes

The Panel was provided with a report on the progress of delivery of Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership(LEP)-led employment and skills programmes in the Leeds City Region. Key points were noted:

Apprenticeships

Members noted that the proposed changes suggested at the November 2018 Employment and Skills Panel had been endorsed by the LEP Board on 23 January 2019.

The revised grant criteria had been launched in mid-February and will be reviewed after three months to assess the impact on take up and employer

participation.

Leeds City Region Employment Hub

It was reported that the Combined Authority had received approval to manage the European Social Funded Employment Hub. This will be operational until 31 December 2021 and delivered through Local Authority partners, C&K Careers and Leeds Beckett University. It will focus on supporting 15-24 year olds and on businesses who have never had apprentices before.

Enterprise in Education

The Panel was informed that the Careers and Enterprise company had announced a bidding round for a new wave of Careers Hubs. The Combined Authority had submitted an application for a pan-regional hub to support young people with special educational needs and disabilities to gain meaningful encounters with employers. A decision is anticipated in April 2019.

Social Prescribing Pilot

Members noted that the York Work Wellness Service project has now completed- this. The Work Wellness Service has now launched this month in Halifax following the same principles with an advisor based within a GP Surgery.

The Panel was keen to share any learning with Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs).

Sector Skills

It was reported that work was underway to enable education, the public sector and businesses to address skills needs resulting from the Channel 4 decision to locate its national headquarters in Leeds.

Resolved: That the report on the progress of delivery of employment and skills programmes by the Leeds City Enterprise Partnership (the LEP) be noted.

40. Future Meetings

At the close of the meeting the Chair invited members to provide ideas for discussion at future meetings. Comments have been grouped into a number of themes:

1. A clearer offer to businesses

- Explore what more can be done to engage more businesses with education
- Focus on work experience and how the Panel can facilitate this with regional employers. The offer is often dis-jointed, dependent upon the institution
- Need to ensure that activity is effectively joined up from the

perspective of business and individuals

- Private sector panel members can provide valuable advice on how to strengthen the current skills offer to businesses

2. An inclusive skills system

- Consideration needs to be given to how people currently in receipt of benefits can be supported to access apprenticeships and T Levels
- A significant number of people are employed on zero hours contracts and in insecure employment, and should be supported to access better employment opportunities
- Need to consider how to engage minority communities in apprenticeships

3. Reviewing performance

- Review of Skills Advisory Panels- are they functioning as intended?- review their actions and successes
- The Panel should continue to review and update each element of its Employment and Skills Plan
- The Panel should review whether activity continues to respond to the needs of the economy, including in the context of Brexit and its potential impact on the region's economy and its workforce
- The private training provider offer needs to be a greater area of focus for the Panel
- The quality of apprenticeships, and outcome for apprentices, need to be an area of focus as well as apprenticeship starts

41. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 30 May 2019 at 2 pm in Committee Room A, Wellington House, Leeds