

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS PANEL
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2020 AT HELD AS A REMOTE
MEETING.**

Present:

Rashik Parmar MBE (Chair)	IBM
Mark Cowgill	Exa Networks
Orlagh Hunt	Yorkshire Building Society
Liz Needleman	BT
Claire Paxman	Paxman Coolers
Amanda Stainton	Portakabin
Councillor Darren Byford	Wakefield Council
Councillor Patrick Mulligan	North Yorkshire County Council
Sam Alexander (Advisory Representative)	Your Consortium Ltd
Colin Booth (Advisory Representative)	Leeds City College
Nav Chohan (Advisory Representative)	Leeds City Region Skills Network
Mike Curtis (Advisory Representative)	NHS Yorkshire & Humber
Alex Miles (Advisory Representative)	West Yorkshire Learning Providers
Dr Peter O'Brien (Advisory Representative)	Yorkshire Universities

In attendance:

Brian Archer	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Sophie Collins	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Catherine Lunn	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Sonya Midgley	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Alan Reiss	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Ian Smyth	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Mark Temple	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Janette Woodcock	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

50. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence received from Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe, Simon Barratt, Martin Booth, Claire Paxman and Glynn Robinson.

51. Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests

There were no items of disclosable pecuniary interests.

52. Exempt Information - Exclusion of the press and public

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

53. Minutes of the meeting of the Employment and Skills Panel held on 14 September 2020

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2020 be agreed and signed by the Chair.

54. Chair's update

The chair welcomed Mark Roberts to the meeting, who observed as the deputy LEP Board Chair

Green Skills Partnership

Rashik chaired the Green Skills Partnership meeting because of discussions at Employment and Skills Panel. There is a huge opportunity in bringing new skills to the region. It was agreed to build the structure and move forward. The Panel was asked should we appoint a champion/representative from ESP Panel. The Chair suggested Clare Paxman, who was also at the Green Skills Partnership meeting. It was noted there were no objections from Panel members.

A Green jobs taskforce is to be launched to be chaired by Kwasi Kwarteng. attended by Gillian Keegan, Minister for Apprenticeships and will be looking at 2 million skilled jobs to build back greener and achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. This will set the direction for new jobs and for the Green Skills Partnership to respond.

Labour Market Analysis

Peter O'Brien & Peter Glover have met to discuss data and have agreed to bring more universities together in West Yorkshire to bring more real time data and influence the data and stats delivered by Peter Glover. The question was asked how can universities continue to support the use of this data in the region? It was agreed to convene another meeting with proposals.

Institutes of Technology

A second wave of funding is now available, so should have the ability to build technical skills moving forward.

LEP Board Update

Following a discussion at LEP Board on unconscious bias training, this is now being explored and a trial, specific to developing policy rather than unconscious bias training per se, is being undertaken to look at how Panel Chairs can be involved.

55. Employment and Skills Programmes

The Panel considered a report to update on the progress of delivery of LEP-led employment and skills programmes in the Leeds City Region and how they have been adapted to support COVID-19. The Panel was asked to note and to comment on the progress of delivery.

The information in the report contained an update on Apprenticeships and Employment, Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Service, Schools Partnerships, Enterprise Advisor Network, Bradford Opportunity Area, Raising Aspirations, The Kirklees Careers Hub, The Special Educational Needs and Disability Careers Hub, Careers, Digital Bootcamp Pilot, Parental engagement resources, Delivery Agreement, Skills for Business / Skills for Growth Programmes

In addition to the report the Panel was provided with a verbal update:

Employment Hub which was repurposed when COVID-19 hit - there is a need to seek additional resource, as the service is working at full capacity. The service supports those further from the labour market struggling to move into alternative options and those seeking employment, changing careers and at risk of unemployment. Unemployment is expected to increase which will put additional pressure on the service which is reflected in the Economic Recovery Plan. A paper will be submitted to the Combined Authority to include a proposal build on the current programme to develop short non-accredited courses which will enable people to consider new employment sectors and utilise transferable skills.

Levy Transfer Service - in the next few weeks, an announcement on major commitments and pledges to the levy transfer service will be made. The recent Chancellor's announcement included an incentive for apprenticeships and traineeships which have been extended to February 2021. It is hoped that businesses may be considering offering apprenticeships/traineeships work for summer 2021 start, and the levy transfer, which will fund 100% of the apprenticeship training and will work alongside any national incentives.

School Partnerships are now settling into alternative virtual delivery of the main programme and Schools appreciate online tools and engaging with EC/EA. Schools feel that the creation of virtual work experience opportunities is a good way of teaching with a break from the usual methods of delivery in the current climate.

It is hoped that there will be announcements soon on award of applications to the Digital Bootcamp programme. Included in the Chancellor's statement was announcements of further bootcamps from Spring 2021. The Prime Ministers summer announcements looked at targeted sectors, so this next one may be construction.

Unemployment Support – There has been a lot of national announcements about support via DWP including more work coaches and a national Restart programme that will be commissioned in the new year. We are working with

DWP to ensure services are complimentary.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the comments of the Panel on progress of delivery of employment and skills programmes in the Leeds City Region be noted.
- (iii) That an update be provided to the February 2021 panel on progress of the proposal to the Combined Authority seeking funding to support skills and unemployment priorities within the economic Recovery Plan.
- (iv) That an update on discussions with Headteachers Group re support and activities around opportunities for developing softer/work ready skills activity be brought to the next Employment and Skills Panel meeting in February 2021.

56. Devolution - Adult Education Budget and Local Digital Skills Partnership

The Panel considered a report to update on activity of the Local Digital Skills Partnership (LSDP) and formation of Board and associated governance and was asked to provide feedback on how best to engage with them to ensure alignment of priorities.

The contents of the report also updated the Panel on progress with devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) preparation and the next steps.

In the Digital Strategy published in March 2017, the Government set out its commitment to improving the digital skills capabilities of individuals and organisations across England.

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority is the seventh area to secure funding for an LDSP through its ambitious devolution plans. The partnership will bring together the region's leading employers, SMEs. Digital entrepreneurs, representatives from the Combined Authority and LEP, DCMS, as well as universities, colleges, and other training providers.

The Panel was provided with a verbal update on the successful launch on 15 October with almost 100 in attendance with keynote introductions from Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe and Caroline Dinenage, Minister for Digital and Culture.

The LDSP Board has been formed and are Looking at SME digital inclusivity, social digital inclusivity, building workforce for future. The first meeting was held on 23 November 2020 and looked at the context and how digital skills supports the West Yorkshire Combined Authority agenda – economic recovery, Employment and Skills inclusive growth.

A number of potential partners have now reached out since the launch events and national programmes. Partnerships are essential to LDSP success. The

Panel was asked if they were aware of skills providers with an interest in supporting the LDSP and to contact Mark Temple directly, particularly key priorities for the region and how to deliver meaningful impact for disadvantaged communities and to keep up the profile of the LDSP.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That feedback from the Panel on how best to engage with the Digital Skills Partnership to ensure alignment of priorities was provided.
- (iii) Details on Lloyds and Hubbub schemes for laptops / smartphones in the region to be brought to the Employment and Skills Panel meeting in February 2021

57. Skills Commission

The Panel considered a report to update on the Skills Commission final report and its blueprint and recommendations.

As previously reported over the last 18 months the Skills Commission has been undertaking a review in order to create a blueprint for a future-ready post-16 skills system with a focus on devolution. The Commission is made up from leading thinkers from business, education, trade unions and thinks tanks and is Chaired by Councillor Hinchcliffe. The focus on devolution has distinguished this Commission's work from the other national commissions and reviews.

There are ongoing proactive discussions between officers at the Combined Authority and senior government officials. Mostly DfE & ESFA and discussions at M9 cx and mayors across country. There has been an opportunity to present as a solution to help government with thinking around the Further Education white paper and there are opportunities for mayors to talk with a single voice on skills.

The Combined Authority asked for officers to work up a proposal around one recommendation in particular – 5% skills funding from public infrastructure projects. Being looked at and developed – brought to panel when worked through.

The Panel discussed and provided feedback on the final Skills Commission blueprint and recommendations.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the comments of the Panel on the final skills Commission blueprint

and recommendations be noted.

58. Key Policy Reports

The Panel was provided with a report for information to highlight organisations, including leading think-tanks to keep Panel members informed about leading thinking on employment and skills issues, particularly the policy response to the Covid-19 crisis.

In addition to the report a verbal update was provided to focus on the national policy reforms which included DfE / MCA policy discussions and Institutes of Technology (IoTs)

It was noted that the colleges have been clear that the model and current circumstances mean they do not intend to apply and feel able to provide more appropriate response. They are, however, prepared to add to the discussion.

59. Employment and Skills Policy Update

The Panel considered a report to update on national policy changes in relation to Employment and Skills and was asked to comment on the implications for a local approach of the national policy changes including Wave 2 Institutes of Technology (IoT).

IoTs are a key government policy to address the gap in higher technical education in STEM providing £120 million for eight institutions only for cap funding and West Yorkshire are eligible, the deadline for the application is December.

The Panel was asked to agree the forward workplan for the Employment and Skills Plan and note the next steps for the local skills plan, a requirement of the Panel's Skills Advisory Panel duties.

In addition to the report a verbal update was provided to the Panel.

The panel agreed to pause the current timescales for the plan refresh in light of significant national policy changes including the Further Education reform white paper. A draft plan will be submitted in February 2021. The Business Innovation and Growth panel are currently developing a business productivity and resilience plan and innovation framework. There is a proposal to have a joint workshop with BIG and ESP in January ahead of finalising the plan coming to ESP for approval in February and an update on the Local Skills Plan and the requirement of being a skills advisory panel.

DfE have set out a standardised approach and the Local Skills Plan will report for the national skills and productivity board influencing future policy design.

Officers are more engaged with Government officials, other MCAs and LGA to discuss emerging policy and it has been useful to be at the table.

On 29 September 2020, the Prime Minister's Exeter College Speech made announcements about national skills policy that follow from the 2019 Conservative election manifesto. This was followed by a statement from the Secretary of State for Education on 1 October 2020 that headlined further national policy reforms, with a focus on technical skills and the creation of a £2.5 billion National Skills Fund.

The National Skills Fund replaces the National Retraining Fund. Lifetime skills guarantee aims to enable lifelong learning to fund first L3 for adults and some loan flexibility to undertake retraining at any point in career and use loans for higher and tech education, issues that were raised by FRSC. L3

Provision is also delivered through devolved AEB. Whilst DfE has made clear until this point that National Skills Fund will not be devolved, even though some overlap in funding, there is some opportunity in West Yorkshire to think about how we can enhance local provision. The Department for Education delayed publishing the list of quals available and funded, but there are concerns about gaps included by sector (quals funded are deemed to be economically viable) in being economically viable will there be a gender bias.

Peter O'Brien has met with Vice Chancellors and Chief Executives and Gillian Hillier Government Head of Place for Yorkshire and Humber in DfE.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the feedback and comments of the Panel on the implications for Leeds City Region of the national policy changes including IoTs be noted.
- (iii) That the progress and next steps of the Employment and Skills Plan and the Local Skills Plan be noted.
- (iv) That the Local Skills Plan be brought to the Employment and Skills Panel Meeting in February 2021.

60. Good Work

The Panel considered a report on possible options encouraging the creation of good work and the adoption of better employment behaviours and practices across all sectors of the regional economy and was provided with a verbal update.

Following a verbal update and overview of the Good Work Standard the Panel was asked to share views on the possible options for the creation of good work and the adoption of better employment behaviours and practices across all sectors of the regional economy covered in the presentation.

The Panel was asked if they had any preferences from the three options presented and any possible risks of implementing a charter / standard to

guard against a low take up or low.

The Panel was also asked:

- What are the critical factors for a successful charter, eg. resources, promotion/visibility, building a 'movement' etc and What are the critical factors for a successful charter, e.g. resources, promotion/visibility, building a 'movement' etc
- How 'portable' is the GM model – ie how well does it read across to a West Yorkshire context?
- To what extent does it reflect LCR Employment and Skills ambitions?

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the three options set out in option 2 be considered.
- (iii) That the Panel provide advice to the LEP Board,