

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS COMMITTEE
HELD ON FRIDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2021 AT PRINTWORKS CAMPUS,
LEEDS CITY COLLEGE, HUNSLET ROAD, LEEDS LS10 1JY**

Present:

Councillor James Lewis (Chair)	Leeds City Council
Rashik Parmar MBE (Deputy Chair)	IBM
Councillor Kayleigh Brooks	Leeds City Council
Councillor Ian Cuthbertson	City of York Council
Councillor Silvia Dacre	Calderdale Council
Councillor Imran Khan	Bradford Council
Liz Needleman	BT
Amanda Stainton	Portakabin
Bill Adams (Advisory Representative)	TUC
Sam Alexander (Advisory Representative)	Voluntary and Community Sector Representative
Colin Booth (Advisory Representative)	Further Education Representative
Nav Chohan (Advisory Representative)	West Yorkshire Skills Partnership; Chair
David Cooper (Advisory Representative)	Leeds City Region Headteachers Network Representative
Alex Miles (Advisory Representative)	West Yorkshire Skills Partnership; Deputy Chair
Tim Thornton (Advisory Representative)	West Yorkshire Skills Partnership Deputy Chair

In attendance:

Chris Joyce	DWP
Brian Archer	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Michelle Burton	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Sophie Collins	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Lindsey Daniels	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Peter Glover	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Sonya Midgley	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Janette Woodcock	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Peter McBride, Cllr Richard Foster, Sam Alexander, Martin Booth, David Cooper, Mike Curtis, Orlagh Hunt, Richard

Mason, Peter O'Brien, Claire Paxman, Glynn Robinson, and Sue Soroczan

2. Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no items of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

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

There were no items exempt to the press and public

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 February 2021

Resolved : That the minutes of the Employment and Skills Panel held on 23 February 2021 be approved.

5. Chair's introduction and Update

Councillor Lewis welcomed members and new members from Local Authorities to the first Employment and Skills Committee and said it was a new Committee but builds on the great work of the former Employment and Skills Panel led by Rashik.

As the new Chair, with Rashik continuing his input to the Committee as deputy, he is looking forward to working with members to shape this Committee and agenda and whilst there is a regular schedule of meetings, is keen to allow engagement and input in between meetings and with members of other Committees.

As deputy mayor for Tracy Brabin, Councillor Lewis said he is committed and supportive of employment and skills to unlock the potential we have in the Region and believes it is a true enabler to inclusive growth, so is looking forward to working with members on this agenda. This Committee will only work if all commit to attending and contributing where we can and that to this end, he is keen that wherever possible, we prioritise attendance in support of this agenda.

The Chair said that as part of the update he wanted to share with members a few key areas as follows: -

Budget and Comprehensive Review

Many of the announcements on skills had already been made prior to the speech, and the detail on how much will be spent in the different packages is not entirely clear.

There was a lot missing from the budget including employment support, and some important details are yet to emerge – particularly around UK SPF as the successor fund to ESF

The main skills announcements were:

- a new £560m 'Multiply' programme through UK SPF for adults with low numeracy skills
- £1.6bn to expand and increase the T Level offer
- £554m for short courses and skills bootcamps (a commitment from the manifesto)
- £1.5bn for capital investments linked to high value courses
- £500m from the new health and social care levy will be for skills
- AI scholarship programme

Further announcements of interest around education include funding for a new 'Start for Life' early years programme, funding for more 16-19 places, recovery programme, extension of school holiday activities and food programme

There are also further investments in Work Coaches

Union Learning Fund

The Union Learning Fund (ULF) was originally set up in 1998 to support trade unions to widen access to learning and training in workplaces.

The fund supported workplace projects across England and was coordinated by the TUC. Each year around 200,000 workers were supported into learning or training with union support through the ULF and the TUC. The government withdrew funding for the TUC Union Learning Funding from March 2021 (annually circa £11m), in order to refocus use of the funds to support FE colleges as part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee announced by the Prime Minister in autumn 2020.

Union learning reaches people that other DfE programmes do not reach. For example, take up of English and maths qualifications (up to level 2) by adults declined by around 30 per cent from 2010–11 to 2017–18 despite a fully funded government entitlement. In contrast, ULF-supported projects continually exceed their annual targets for these learners.

The TUC have submitted a request for £170k over two years to fund a post in The region to coordinate and raise of awareness in the workplace of the benefits of training and development for employees and employers.

Bill Adams, TUC representative, gave a verbal update and the Committee was invited to consider the proposal and funding opportunities to support the request.

In noting the Committee discussed the update and said this was a critical resource with everyone working together and members supported the proposal.

The Chair thanked members for their feedback.

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6. Employment and Skills Committee Governance Arrangements

The Committee considered a report and overview from the Director of Economic Services to advise of the governance arrangements approved by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (the Combined Authority) at the Annual Meeting on 24 June 2021 in respect of the Employment and Skills Committee and the terms of reference for the Committee attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

It was advised that the Employment and Skills Committee is a decision-making Committee, and the **quorum** is 3 voting members to include 2 Combined Authority members or Local Authority co-optees.

The Combined Authority also appointed Councillor James Lewis as Chair of the Committee and Rashik Parmar as Deputy.

Resolved: That the Employment and Skills Committee governance arrangements approved by the Combined Authority at the Annual Meeting on 24 June be noted.

7. Data Monitoring & Evidence Base for Committee

The Committee considered a report and overview by the Economic Evidence Manager on the latest evidence and intelligence which included a presentation of key messages from employment and skills analysis to inform discussion and information on the Skills Advisory Panel and to propose a list of topics outlined in the report for a forward workplan discussion and agreement.

The presentation included a summary of the latest position against the Combined Authority's Strategic Economic Framework headline indicators, focusing on those that are directly relevant to the employment and skills agenda and an overview of current trends in the labour market based on the most-timely data available for West Yorkshire.

In addition to annual reporting against the SEF indicators and more in-depth review of the findings of the annual labour market analysis it is proposed to provide timely, regular reporting to each Committee meeting based around a standard set of indicators. The analysis of current trends appended to the report focussed on the following elements / indicators. It is proposed to report against these elements as a standard item for future Employment and Skills Committee meetings.

- Key developments in the national labour market
- Employment trends in West Yorkshire (based on HMRC real-time

- information for pay-rolled employees)
- Vacancy trends (based on online job postings)
- Claimant count (count of people on out of work benefits)
- In-year provisional figures for take-up of further education and skills programmes in West Yorkshire (including apprenticeships)

The Committee was invited to review the proposal and provided suggestions for any additional coverage or indicators.

The Economic Evidence Manager was thanked for his comprehensive report and in noting members said they understood the skills shortage is a complex issue and a diverse recruitment policy has never been so important. They would support everything that can be done to encourage people back to work.

The Committee was also asked to consider the following list and identify their preferences for future meetings.

- The Green Jobs Taskforce, and its proposed work programme
- The verbal update on the West Yorkshire Digital Festival

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 Strategic Economic Framework Indicators be noted.
- (iii) That comments and feedback by members be noted.
- (iv) That the activities that are planned under the Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Education and the proposed schedule for the production and publication of forthcoming labour market analysis reports be noted.

8. Mayoral Pledge

The Committee considered a report with an update on Mayoral pledge activity in relation to the Committee and alignment to broader Strategic Economic and Employment and Skills Framework. The Committee was asked for their recommendations on the next steps for pledge development.

The Chair said this is a really exciting opportunity for this Committee to shape how we see the two pledges of '1000 well-paid, skilled green jobs for Young People' and 'Prioritise skills and training to ensure everyone in West Yorkshire has the skills they need to secure work.'

With the impacts of COVID and skills shortages impacted by Brexit, it is important that we make sure there is the right support in place to support more people into and within good work.

The Committee was asked to

- Provide feedback on The Green Jobs Taskforce, and its proposed work programme
- Provide feedback on the proposed West Yorkshire Digital Festival
- Give Initial thoughts on proposals for pipeline development linked to the manifesto and Employment and Skills Framework
- Discuss how the Committee sees its role in promoting Inclusive Growth through the pledges?
- Provide feedback on how the Committee would like to engage with the Mayoral pledges as part of its forward work plan, including those that will be led on by other Committees of the Combined Authority.

In noting the Committee discussed and agreed that these were good pledges and supported. Members were conscious that a lot is already happening throughout the Local Authorities and there is a need to push for continuity in the long term.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That members discussed the Mayoral Pledges and in particular the approach and feedback and comments be noted.

9. Forward Plan

The Committee considered a report with a verbal update to propose a list of topics for a forward workplan for the Committee to July 2022.

The Framework outlines five priorities for West Yorkshire, to deliver skilled people, good jobs, and strong businesses:

- Quality technical education
- Great education connected to business
- Accessing and progressing in good work
- Creating a culture of investment in workforce skills
- Driving innovation and productivity through high level skills.

In his introduction to the Forward Plan item the Chair said we need to drive investment in skills by individuals and employers, based on locally rooted careers information and guidance, we need to tackle areas with specific skills gaps including digital and green skills as well as manufacturing * engineering, digital and health and social care sectors whilst ensuring they are accessible to everyone and are inclusive.

We must create the conditions for good work both by supporting development and implementation of the Fair Work Charter but also by supporting business to have good working practices and that are engaged with the skills system.

Through this agenda we must also work to develop stronger links to the place based, skills and net zero agendas and the committees driving work on those issues. Ultimately, we want to support people to get good jobs and have successful careers that support them to fulfil their personal ambitions, we want strong business that provide good jobs for the residents of West Yorkshire. We will therefore need to regularly review progress on the Employment and Skills Framework, AEB strategy as well as the Digital Skills Plan that we will discuss later so that we can ensure as many people as possible can access education, work and take part on everyday activities that increasingly rely on having these skills.

The Committee was asked to discuss and agree the role of the Committee, the priorities for the Committee to both the Mayoral pledges and the broader regional strategic framework

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the feedback and comments be noted.
- (iii) That the role of the Committee and priorities for the Mayoral pledges and the broader strategic framework be agreed.

10. FE Reforms

The Committee considered a report to provide an update to the Committee on the latest FE Reforms and the subsequent Skills and Post 16 Education Bill.

The Committee was thanked for its input to the two consultations that took place over the summer on the National Skills Fund and Funding and Accountability. This was a good example of working together outside of the formal meetings to help shape the response together from West Yorkshire. The White Paper on FE Reforms covered 35 different reforms and the Committee was advised there will be more to come, and that Officers will be seeking support to shape a response.

On noting the Committee provided views and comments on the reforms and the proposed legislation to be completed

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the comments and views of the Committee on the proposed legislation to be completed be noted.

11. AEB Programme

The Committee considered a report and a verbal update by the AEB Manager

on progress with the devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) now the fund is devolved and under delivery.

Devolution of the Adult Education Budget offers us an opportunity to align this £65m fund with the needs of the regional economy and to deliver better outcomes for learners. It is important that we recognise the strategic as well as the delivery role of Local Authorities and officers are working hard to ensure that they balance these dual roles. A strategic skills group of LAs and the Combined Authority will be meeting on 12 November to discuss joint working in the context of skills devolution, including a draft paper which has been led by colleagues from Bradford Council.

The Committee was asked to note the progress to date and agree the following next steps:

A proposal for how the Combined Authority will utilise the remaining funding and any identified underspend for AY2021/22 will be worked up with the Local Authorities and brought to the next Employment and Skills Committee as outlined in 2.7 of the report.

Remedial action should be taken on all providers who underperform against profile in line with the Performance Management Framework, ensuring funds can be reallocated in-year to maximise AEB impact.

For the Level 3 Allocation, the identified underspend will be distributed amongst existing provider, assuming performance is demonstrated in the November return. Additional procurement will be considered if the existing provider base is unable to utilise the contract values.

In noting members provided feedback and comments and said that they were looking forward to the report containing up to date data to be brought to the next meeting to be held on 24 January 2022 and was happy with the recommendations. It was also noted that ITP's should be consulted.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted
- (ii) That feedback and comments from members be noted.
- (iii) That the progress and next steps be noted and agreed.

12. West Yorkshire Digital Skills Partnership

The Committee considered a report and verbal update on the West Yorkshire Digital Skills Partnership including the Digital Skills Plan and the next steps towards its publication.

Digital skills are vital to accessing everyday activities as well as work. The most recent Lloyds Digital Index shows that whilst the number of people

without essential digital skills for life – that’s being able to turn on a device, navigate the internet and communicate with others, has fallen it still remains at around 21%. It’s not just individuals but small business too that needs support. The Local Digital Skills Partnership has brought together a number of leaders from across sectors over the past year and has already coordinated a number of support programmes that have supported around 7000 individuals in the region. This plan sets out the key priorities and what needs to be done next to close the digital skills divide.

The Committee was asked to comment on the work to date on a Digital Skills Plan for West Yorkshire and endorse on the vision statement, high level priorities of the West Yorkshire Digital Skills Plan

In noting members said this was an excellent report.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That members comments on the work to date on a Digital Skills Plan for West Yorkshire be noted.
- (iii) That the vision statement, high level priorities of the West Yorkshire Digital Skills Plan be endorsed.

13. Employment and Skills Programme Delivery

The Committee considered a report and a verbal update by the Head of Employment and Skills on the progress of delivery of LEP and Combined Authority-led employment and skills programmes in the Leeds City Region and how they have been adapted to support COVID-19.

The paper provided a summary of the broad range of activity that the Combined Authority is delivering, working closely with partners, on the Employment and Skills agenda. This includes activity funded from different sources including European Social Fund and new programmes being delivered utilising the gainshare funding secured as part of the WY devolution deal.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted
- (ii) That member’s feedback and comments be noted.
- (iii) That the progress of delivery of employment and skills programmes in the Leeds City Region be noted and agreed.