

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 6 JULY 2022 IN MEETING ROOM 1,
WELLINGTON HOUSE, WELLINGTON STREET, LEEDS LS1 2DE**

Present:

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| Councillor James Lewis (Chair) | Leeds City Council |
| Prof Shirley Congdon (Deputy Chair) | University of Bradford |
| Councillor Darren Byford | Wakefield Council |
| Councillor Silvia Dacre | Calderdale Council |
| Councillor Jessica Lennox | Leeds City Council |
| Councillor Graham Turner | Kirklees Council |
| Councillor Andrew Waller | City of York Council |
| Milton Brown | Private Sector Representative |
| Michelle Chappell Dixon | Private Sector Representative |
| Mark Cowgill | Private Sector Representative |
| Tim Craven | Private Sector Representative |
| Phill Lautman | Private Sector Representative |
| Richard Mason | Private Sector Representative |
| Sharon Riding (Advisory Representative) | Department of Work and Pensions; Rep |
| Tim Thornton (Advisory Representative) | West Yorkshire Skills Partnership Deputy Chair |

In attendance:

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| Brian Archer | West Yorkshire Combined Authority |
| Michelle Burton | West Yorkshire Combined Authority |
| Peter Glover | West Yorkshire Combined Authority |
| Marianne Hewitt | West Yorkshire Combined Authority |
| Sonya Midgley | West Yorkshire Combined Authority |
| Philip Witcherley | West Yorkshire Combined Authority |
| Janette Woodcock | West Yorkshire Combined Authority |

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Cllr Imran Khan, Bill Adams, Colin Booth, Martin Booth, Nav Chohan, Orlagh Hunt, Liz Needleman and Claire Paxman.

2. Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Members of Local Authorities and Colleagues declared an interest in item 10 Adult Education Budget.

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

Resolved: That in accordance with paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Appendix 1 of Agenda item 10 on the grounds that they are likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information and for the reasons set out in the report that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

4. Notes of the informal consultative meeting held on 24 January 2022

Resolved: That the notes of the informal consultative meeting held on 24 January 2022 be noted.

5. Chair's update

The Chair welcomed to the Committee the following new members approved at the Annual Meeting on 23 June 2022.

Shirley Congdon, University of Bradford – Deputy Chair
Cllr Graham Turner – Local Authority member, Kirklees
Cllr Jessica Lennox – Local Authority member, Leeds
Cllr Darren Byford – Local Authority member, Wakefield
Cllr Andrew Waller – Local Authority member, York
Milton Brown – Private Sector Representative
Michelle Chappell Dixon – Private Sector Representative
Tim Craven – Private Sector Representative
Phil Lautman Care2Care
Sharon Riding – Advisory Representative Department of Work and Pensions (Temporarily replacing Sue Soroczan)

The Chair updated the Committee on the following: -

Multiply

- Multiply is an adult numeracy programme that was announced by Government and will be funded through UK Shared Prosperity Fund for two years. While MCAs will be accountable for Multiply in devolved areas, activity is prescribed by a menu of options. The deadline for investment plans was 30 June and officers worked closely with LA colleagues to develop an investment plan that addresses local priorities and aligns with existing provision, particularly the Adult Education Budget. The Combined Authority was comfortable with the direction of travel and delegated approval of the investment plan to the MD. It was circulated to Employment and Skills Committee members for information post publication and the Committee will be kept updated as work progresses. It is anticipated that it will form part of the governance around Multiply, mirroring the AEB scheme of delegations.

SPF Investment Plan

The SPF Investment Plan is currently being developed, and includes activity across three areas, with pillar 3 people and skills funding beginning in 2024-25. Members from every Committee have been invited to join the Local Partnership Group as part of the governance arrangements for SPF and to meet government requirements that governance includes a broad range of partners.

For Employment and Skills, the representative are Colin Booth, Bill Adams, Alex Miles and Sharon Riding for Sue Soroczan.

The three pillars are:

- Pillar 1 - Community and Place
- Pillar 2 - Supporting Local Business
- Pillar 3 - People and Skills (includes Multiply).

6. Governance Arrangements

The Committee considered a report to advise on the Governance arrangements approved by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority at the Annual Meeting on 23 June 2022 in respect of the Employment and Skills Committee and was asked to note.

As the Chair of the West Yorkshire Skills Partnership was unable to be present at the meeting, he is to be asked to ensure that the providers the Skills Partnership put forward for membership of the Committee will be representative and diverse.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Governance Arrangements for the Employment and Skills Committee be noted.
- (ii) That the Chair of the WY Skills Partnership be asked to set out at the next meeting how the WY Skills Partnership will ensure that the providers they put forward for membership on the Committee will be representative and diverse

7. Digital Skills Plan

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

Following on from the October meeting where the Committee endorsed the high-level priorities for the Digital Skills Plan, members were provided with a presentation giving an overview of the proposed final plan and was asked to consider which of the actions are considered priorities? what, if anything would they add to the Action Plan and to review and comment on the plan's next steps.

Members discussed and was asked to agree to the Digital Skills Plan and delegate any further changes to the Managing Director in consultation with the Chair of the Employment and Skills Committee.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the Digital Skills Plan be endorsed.
- (iii) That any further changes to the plan be delegated to the MD in consultation with the Chair be agreed.

8. Investment Pipeline including Employment Hub

The Committee considered a report and presentation on the Skills Investment Pipeline. The Committee has oversight for development of the Employment and Skills Pipeline of programmes and interventions and there have been ongoing positive conversations with Local Authorities about the development of the pipeline.

Since the last meeting the four thematic workstreams of the LDSP have continued to develop the four agree priorities with an action plan.

- Social digital inclusion – The growth/provision of digital skills and supporting the resolution of data poverty and the ongoing challenge of accessibility and connectivity.
- Workforce for the future – to grow digital skills – ensuring greater alignment between business and education to support growth in skills and promoting career ambitions.
- SME and Third Sector Growth – The Growth of Essential Digital Skills and increasing resilience and sustainability of organisation and supporting the growth of skills to support the digital sector.
- Simplifying the Digital Offer – understanding current provision and current and future needs in addition to ensuring provision is easy to access for all residents

Members discussed the contents of the report and proposed pipeline along with the priorities in the pipeline and was asked to approve the development of a full business case.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the Employment West Yorkshire outline business case for development be endorsed
- (iii) That the overall approach for developing the investment plan for skills and employment be endorsed

9. Skills Advisory Panel and Local Skills Improvement Plan

The Committee considered a report on Skills Advisory Panel Funding and an update on Local Skills Improvement Plans and was asked to approve the forward plan for the Skills Advisory Panel, note the update on the Local Skills Improvement Plan and recommend to the Combined Authority that an advisory role and invitation for a LSIP representative join the Committee.

Members discussed how the roll out of LSIPs will align with the governance role of strategic skills provision for the Employment and Skills Committee, including whether it would like to recommend that an advisory role on this Committee is offered to a senior representative of the Chambers of Commerce with a recommendation by the Committee to be taken to the Combined Authority for approval.

As a result of the difficult economic environment, a request has been received from Nav Chohan, Chair of the West Yorkshire Skills Partnership for a rise in the funding rate allocated. The Director of Economic Services asked members if they would be supportive for an increase in the funding rate and for a paper to be drafted for approval.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the update on the Local Skills Improvement Plan be noted.
- (iii) That the forward plan for the Skills Advisory Panel be approved.
- (iv) That an Advisory role and invitation for a LSIP representative to join the Committee be recommended.
- (v) That a paper be drafted for approval for an increase in the funding rate to the Local Skills Partnership be recommended.

10. Adult Education Budget

The Committee considered a report to update on progress with the devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) and on plans to further improve the responsiveness of AEB delivery in Year 2 and was asked to recommend four of the planned flexibilities for approval which are in line with the published West Yorkshire AEB Strategy.

The Committee was asked to recommend for approval the four proposed flexibilities below: -

Expanding the age of entitlement for a 'first full level 2'

Expanding the Digital Entitlement.

Test Pilot – Bridging programmes that support progression to Level 3.

Test Pilot – Increasing the number of courses 19 – 23s are entitled to.

The following recommendations were welcomed and approved by the

Combined Authority as they represented a change to the strategy:

- Waiving the '3 Year UK Residency' status for full funding
- Providing full funding for eligible asylum seekers

It was highlighted about the reduction in funding for adult learning nationally, and that the unit rate for delivery of AEB has not changed for many years. The Committee felt that this issue should be addressed nationally rather than effectively reducing the number of people that can be supported in West Yorkshire using devolved funding.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the proposed planned flexibilities in line with the published West Yorkshire AEB strategy be approved.
- (iii) That officers be asked to look into the level of AEB funding and report to the next meeting.

11. Update on Current Programmes

The Committee considered a report and verbal update on the progress of delivery of Combined Authority led employment and Skills Programmes in the Leeds City Region which included performance for 2021/22 and 2022/23 performance to date, Apprenticeship and Employment, School Partnerships Careers, Adult Training and Skills for business.

Resolved: That the contents of the report be noted.