**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 5 APRIL 2017**

A list of those who attended the meeting and apologies received are at Annex A.

The meeting was an opportunity to review the emerging skills strategy, to review actions from the last meeting, to receive feed-back on the skills strategy from the LEP Board and to agree next steps.

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Clare Hayward welcomed members of the Board to the meeting and invited everyone to introduce themselves. Clare noted the apologies received.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Dame Pat Bacon asked the Board to note that her husband is Chair of the Crewe Pledge.

Jenny Clucas asked the Board to note that Cogent Skills are sub-contractors to Calderdale College and partners with the Career Enterprise Company.

**3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND FOLLOW UP ACTIONS**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed and Clare Hayward noted that all the actions from the previous meeting were included in the agenda.

**4. STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN 2017 REFRESH**

Pat Jackson tabled copies of slides used at a recent consultation of the refresh of the Strategic Economic Plan. Pat drew particular attention to the slide number which shows Cheshire and Warrington’s key economic sectors. A copy of the slides is available on request.

In the subsequent discussion Members asked why health, retail, tourism and hospitality were not identified on the slide. They also queried the extent of the consultation on the refresh of the Economic Plan. Clare Hayward noted the comments and highlighted the importance of focusing actions to achieve maximum impact.

**5. SKILLS AND EDUCATION STRATEGY AND FEED-BACK FROM THE LEP BOARD**

Pat Jackson ran through the slides of the skills and education strategy that had been presented to the LEP Board on 22 March. Pat noted that over the 30 days since she had joined the LEP she had met and consulted over 100 businesses and key stakeholders including the colleges, University and local authorities about the emerging skills strategy. A copy of the slides is available on request.

Clare Hayward reported that the LEP Board meeting on 22 March had been very supportive of the strategy and were keen for the Skills and Education Board to start implementing the strategy as soon as possible. The LEP Board welcomed the focus on the one clear priority of putting employers at the heart of inspiring, informing and communicating regularly with young people about new technologies, career opportunities and progression pathways. The LEP Board agreed that if this issue was tackled successfully then the other key priorities around graduate retention and attraction, stronger uptake of STEM subjects and helping individuals find jobs would also be addressed.

The Employers Skills Board members asked that the importance of employers engaging with parents and teachers as well as young people should be reflected more strongly in the slides. They also asked for the completion rates of apprenticeships to be checked and the reasons for poor completions to be explored further. **ACTION PAT JACKSON**

In response to queries Pat Jackson advised the Board that the skills and employment strategy would be put on to the LEP website for information and comment. **ACTION PAT JACKSON**

**6. SIZE OF BUSINESS BASE AND PROPOSAL TO TARGET KEY GROUPS OF EMPLOYERS**

Pat Jackson noted the recommendations in the paper that had been circulated prior to the meeting – that, given the relatively low take up of Science Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) and digital related skills in Cheshire and Warrington, these should be the initial focus of the Board’s actions.

Pat also noted that the key economic sectors identified in the Strategic Economic Plan refresh all relied on a strong foundation of STEM and digital skills.

Board members agreed the need to prioritise and focus actions but noted the need to focus on engaging employers who need STEM and digital skills as well as encouraging young people to take up these skills.

**7. PROPOSED ACTIONS TO PUT EMPLOYERS AT THE HEART OF INSPIRING, INFORMING AND COMMUNICATING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, THEIR PARENTS AND TEACHERS ABOUT NEW TECHNOLOGIES, CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AND PROGRESSION PATHWAYS.**

Trevor Langston presented a set of slides on behalf of Paul Colman.

During the presentation and in the subsequent discussion the following points were made:

* Important for young people to understand the competitive environment in which they are seeking apprenticeships, work experience or jobs.
* Important to manage expectations – e.g. graduate apprenticeships are not yet available but there is a growing interest from young people.
* Should recognise the role of self-employment.
* Given that a young persons’ professional network is now being launched as part of the Skills Pledge it would be important to reflect the need for continuous professional development.
* Ideally a number of Pledges should be developed across Cheshire and Warrington. It should present a coherent offer to employers and engage strategically with careers advice and guidance organisations locally e.g. STEM ambassadors, to present a coherent message to young people, their parents and teachers.
* The Careers and Enterprise Company already attend Pledge Events and if would be important to ensure effective co-ordination between the Pledge and national programmes of careers advice and guidance.
* The Crewe and Macclesfield Pledges are also working closely with ‘Changing Education’ an organisation offering work experience. Changing Education has an extensive data base to support their work.
* The Crewe and Macclesfield Skills Pledges are or have previously been supported financial by a range of organisations including European Social Funds via New Leaf project and British Chambers of Commerce, Warrington Collegiate, Cheshire East Council, South Cheshire College, Crewe Town Council and HEFCE.
* The current cost of the Pledges is approximately £100K per annum.

In the subsequent discussion Board Members agreed that the Pledge model could form the foundation on which to put employers at the heart of inspiring, informing and communicating to young people and their parents and teachers about new technologies, career opportunities and progression pathways.

It was agreed that the LEP would work with the Chamber to explore how the Pledges might be funded using European Social Funds or Growth Funds but it would be important to develop a sustainable business model that involved a diverse source of income/funding. **ACTION PAUL COLMAN/TREVOR LANGSTON AND PAT JACKSON**

Clare Hayward also asked the Chamber for information about the Pledges’ impacts to date and invited the Chamber to set out how they would measure impact and outcomes in the future. **ACTION PAUL COLMAN/TREVOR LANGSTON**

Members were not convinced about the value of the proposed skills shops and asked the Chamber to consider the role of a web-based hub as an alternative. **ACTION PAUL COLMAN/TREVOR LANGSTON**

All Board members confirmed that they support the proposal to focus on one key priority – to put employers at the heart of inspiring, informing and communicating with young people, their parents and teachers about new technologies, career opportunities and progression pathways.

Clare Hayward asked that over the next few weeks Members should reflect on the proposals presented by the Chamber as the basis for action on the key priority and to consider next steps. **ACTION ALL MEMBERS**

Clare would also discuss next steps with Pat Jackson on 14 April and then contact Board members after Easter to collect their views. **ACTION CLARE HAYWARD AND PAT JACKSON**

**8. UPDATE ON REVIEW OF ESF, LOCAL GROWTH FUND AND OTHER KEY SKILLS PROJECTS**

Pat Jackson reported that she had contacted all current recipients of ESF funding for skills and education projects and asked them to provide short reports on the purpose of their projects, key deliverable and expected impacts and outcomes and progress to date towards achieving the project objectives.

The reports should be available for the next meeting of the Board on 3 May. **ACTION PAT JACKSON**

**9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Board members congratulated Dame Pat Bacon on the recent merger of South and West Cheshire Colleges.

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Employers Skills and Education Board is at 08.30 hrs on 3 May in the Board Room at South Cheshire College.

ANNEX A

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 5 APRIL 2017**

Attended by:-

* Clare Hayward (Chair)
* Dame Pat Bacon (Health Sector)
* Paul Taylor (Taylor Business Park)
* Jenny Clucas (Cogent Skills)
* Emma Garbutt (representing Jane Ingram Halifax/Lloyds Banking Group)
* Trevor Langston (representing Paul Colman South Cheshire Chamber)
* Pat Jackson

**Apologies**

* Jim Carroll (Mobica)
* Paul Colman (South Cheshire College)
* Karen McKean (Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub)
* Neil Warren (Jungheinrich)
* Meredydd David (Reaseheath College)
* Jo Tipa (Nuclear Skills Academy)
* Jane Ingram (Halifax/Lloyds Banking Group)
* Mark Roach (Grosvenor)
* James Richards (Network Rail)
* Mark Livesey (LEP)
* Eilis Rattigan (Waters)
* Christine Lowery (Q Hotels)