

GLOUCESTERSHIRE EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS BOARD

MINUTES of the meeting of the Gloucestershire Employment and Skills Board held at The Growth Hub, Oxstalls Campus, Gloucester held on Wednesday 4 October 2017

Present:

Michael Burgess	Russell Marchant
Pete Carr (until 1530)	Anne Stokes
Michael Carter	Councillor Lynden Stowe
Catherine Coughlan	Linsey Temple
Jason Dunsford	Kathryn Wagstaff
Julia Falaki	Sara-Jane Watkins
Pauline Hartree (Clerk)	
Councillor Steve Lydon (Acting Chair)	

Apologies: Rebekka Bishop, Shaun Clee and Andrew Kirk

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Acting Chair, Councillor Steve Lydon, welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Gloucestershire Employment and Skills Board. He said he was looking forward to the Board members working collaboratively and cooperatively to deliver the aims of the Board.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

It was noted that some Board members may be involved in Institutes of Technology bids and if appropriate, would leave the meeting when this was discussed under item 4.

3. CONFIRMATION OF PRIORITIES AND WORK PLAN

Pete Carr introduced the Priorities Discussion Paper which was circulated to Board Members with the agenda. The discussion paper is intended to reflect back to Board members the priorities that they and other stakeholders have identified for the Board so that members can review and confirm them, clarify what needs to be done and agree the work plan for the Board.

The Board was split in to small groups to discuss and feedback on the priorities, particularly to agree whether these are the right priorities, whether members have information and knowledge to add and what further research needs to be done.

Key points raised by each group as follows:

Apprenticeships and STEM (Steve Lydon, Linsey Temple, Julia Falaki)

- Need for more data to be sure whether this is a priority, particularly in light of the recent and significant changes to the apprenticeships system
- There are existing Government guidelines regarding the number of apprentices – does Gloucestershire meet the target?
- How are employers spending their levy? – more information needed
- How many levy paying employers are fully utilising their levy whilst others are disengaging from the process because of the bureaucracy involved ?
- We need to identify/promote good practice/good stories from a local levy paying employer
- Rules have changed from apprenticeships for young people to include people in work/ageing workforce Once we know what that target is, can target appropriately
- Apprenticeships need re-branding/re-launch to focus on the benefits for older workers/those upskilling as apprentices have the image of being young/new in to the workforce
- Unclear funding puts off employers
- Some apprenticeships don't result in qualifications
- Can also mean training/upskilling an existing employee
- A priority is to identify the range and level of skills we will need and to then stimulate demand from young people for that training/apprenticeships
- There is a need to support basic skills activity, particularly for the retail, care, hospitality and security sectors alongside apprenticeship delivery
- STEM – Further research and benchmarking required to help the Board understand the nature of the challenge in Gloucestershire.

Ageing workforce and dealing with replacement demand (Russell Marchant and Catherine Coughlan)

- Agreed that this is a very a high priority, particularly because of the 9:1 replacement demand in the County
- Emphasis on workforce development, upskilling and productivity
- Focus on those with health and disability needs to support them back in to the workplace, particularly against backdrop of rexit
- Increase attractiveness of Gloucestershire
- Encourage inward migration
- Better, targeted Labour Market Information (LMI)

Stronger links between schools and businesses (Anne Stokes, Jason Dunsford and Sara-Jane Watkins)

- Agreed that this is a high priority
- Careers guidance not seen as a priority within schools as there is no incentive – checked by Ofsted but not a priority area of inspection

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

- No impact on school performance tables so no incentive to provide careers guidance. Careers forum/networking for careers coordinators in schools and colleges is limited due to lack of funding. More could be done to supply this group with information and to support this group.
- Lack of data on provision of careers guidance/what schools provide ie. work experience/job fairs etc. so this would be an important area of research for the Board.
- Relevant local LMI information and sector-based LMI needed and to be made available more widely
- Careers advisors don't have the time to find out what is available

Specific support for certain geographical areas/development areas within the county and for inward investment/companies needing help with employment and skills demands (Matthew Burgess, Michael Carter, Lynden Stowe)

- The group was not convinced that this is a priority area - would need long term investment to make a difference. This Board could influence that but it would be a longer-term goal.
- Could be opportunity to grow a particular sector ie. health and social care where we know there is a high vacancy rate in Gloucestershire
- Rural/cyber sectors could be actively grown to make Gloucestershire distinctive
- How do we stimulate demand for key sectors; encourage people into care/construction?
- Lack of adult careers guidance; information should be made available to make choices about career changes
- Instead of support for inward investing businesses, support should be available for all businesses

ACTION: Pete, Kathryn and Pauline to update priority list and data/research requirement and circulate to Board members; Board members to confirm to Pauline which data/data sources they have available to them in their area/sector/networks that could be used to inform further research or analysis of the Board priorities.

Industrial Strategy

Pete Carr reminded members that a key deliverable of the Board is to develop the skills section of the Gloucestershire Industrial Strategy which will be developed by GFirst LEP in Spring and Summer 2018 once further guidance is issued by Government. developed. It was suggested that the LEP representative responsible for developing the Industrial Strategy be invited to the next meeting of this Board.

ACTION: Pete to invite GFirst LEP lead for the Industrial Strategy to attend the next appropriate Board meeting to explain the approach to be taken.

Brexit

There was discussion regarding the lack of clarity on the implications of Brexit, although there is an expectation of the Board that it will be undertaking planning to prepare for and deal with the employment and skills impacts of Brexit. Steve Lydon considered that the bigger picture is how the post-Brexit economy will affect local sectors/employers. It was agreed that Brexit should be discussed at each meeting to pick up on latest information, thinking and key messages.

***ACTION:* Pete and Kathryn to include Brexit-related questions in to the Business Survey scheduled for Winter 2017 and Spring 2018. Pauline to include latest position on Brexit in the agenda for each meeting.**

Lobbying

Matthew Burgess raised the question of the Board's role in terms of political lobbying. Anne Stokes suggested that local MPs be invited to attend a specific meeting with the Board.

***ACTION:* Pete to invite Gloucestershire MPs to meet with the Board once priorities and work plan are further developed and the Board is clear about its key messages to MPs.**

Pete Carr suggested that items 2.6 – 2.8 in the discussion paper are 'what ifs' at the moment but this group will need to retain a watching brief on these and, in particular, monitor and be aware of the implementation of devolved adult education and skills budgets in devolution areas.

***ACTION:* Sara-Jane to ensure the Board is updated on progress on skills budget devolution in West of England. Pete to keep Board updated on devolution of skills budget in other devolution areas via the LEP Skills Leads meetings and network.**

Institutes of Technology

It was noted that some members of the Board may be involved in possible bids. Peter Carr reported that the LEP Board has an expectation that the GESB has a sub group to look at bid proposals and put forward recommendations on those they support and why. The initial challenge for this is the timescale, with expressions of interest due to be submitted before the end of October 2017. Following discussion, some members indicated they would not be happy to endorse a particular bid without more knowledge regarding criteria and the decision making process.

***ACTION:* Pete Carr will report back to LEP Board that some members of the GESB expressed reluctance to make recommendations to support specific bids without more guidance from Government and from the LEP Board. He will find out more detail on the decision making process/criteria.**

4. DISCUSS AND AGREE TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was agreed that the focus of the Board will be the needs of our young people, those seeking jobs and the skills of the current and future workforce with particular emphasis on helping those who are currently economically inactive for whatever reason to develop their employability skills and find employment. This will be reflected in the updated Terms of Reference.

There was a concern that scope is unachievable and that it should be more focussed, based on agreed priorities. Russell Marchant proposed that influence and input in to the Industrial Strategy is key for this Board, with genuine employer engagement. Michael Carter expressed concern that the Board may be trying to do too much and Sara-Jane Watkins suggested that the Board should pick a single topic to focus on.

ACTION: Board members will feed back any suggested amendments to the Terms of Reference individually to Pauline, who will circulate an updated version prior to the next meeting

5. SUB GROUPS/TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

It was agreed by members that there is no need for a Post-16 area review sub group as this is concluded as the Federation of Gloucestershire Group have taken this on.

Given the discussion regarding Institutes of Technology, members agreed there is currently no requirement for a sub group.

6. TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting will focus on the following:

- Discussion regarding the Employment and Skills section of the Gloucestershire Industrial Strategy

ACTION: Kathryn to circulate a summary of the National Industrial Strategy

- Review of the Careers Strategy

ACTION: Pete Carr to circulate (link to) existing Careers Strategy and confirm what is required of the Board. Arrange for relevant person to talk to the Board about the Careers Strategy

ACTION: Anne Stokes will get teachers' perspective and feedback to the next meeting

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Lynden Stowe suggested that a dashboard with basic baseline/benchmarking data would be very useful and helpful such as how many children of school age are there in the county, how many go on to do A-levels, what are employment rates.

ACTION: Kathryn to pull together data and give the Board an idea of what can be monitored i.e. what real time data is available. Catherine Coughlan to provide DWP data/information as appropriate

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

17 January 2018 at 10am
11 April 2018 at 10am
11 July 2018 at 10am
10 October 2018 at 10am