

SCR - EDUCATION, SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:

TUESDAY, 5 JANUARY 2021 AT 1.00 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING



Present:

Councillor Sir Steve Houghton CBE (Co-Chair)	Barnsley MBC
Nigel Brewster (Co-Chair)	Private Sector
Councillor Nuala Fennelly	Doncaster MBC
Councillor Abtisam Mohamed	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Denise Lelliott	Rotherham MBC
Councillor Tim Cheetham	Barnsley MBC
Professor Chris Husbands	Vice-Chancellor Sheffield Hallam University
Dr Dave Smith	MCA Executive Team
John Macilwraith	Sheffield City Council

In Attendance:

Helen Kemp	Director of Business & Skills	MCA Executive Team
Helen George	Assistant Director - Skills & Employment	MCA Executive Team
Rob Harvey	Senior Programme Manager	MCA Executive Team
Felix Kumi-Ampofo	Assistant Director Policy and Assurance	MCA Executive Team
Sue Sykes	Assistant Director - Programme and Performance Unit	MCA Executive Team
Annie Buckley	Press and Communications Officer	MCA Executive Team
Dr Ruth Adams	Deputy Chief Executive	MCA Executive Team
Daniel Wright	Head of Communications & Marketing	MCA Executive Team
Claire James	Senior Governance & Compliance Manager	MCA Executive Team
Jacquie Chambers		Consultant
Angela Foulkes		Chair of Skills Advisory Network
Gillian Richards (Minute Taker)		

Apologies:

None

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted as above.

2 **Declarations of Interest by individual Members in relation to any item of business on the agenda**

None.

3 **Urgent items / Announcements**

None.

4 **Public Questions of Key Decisions**

None.

5 **Minutes from Last Meeting**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 30th October 2020 be agreed as a true record.

RESOLVED – The Written Proceedure of the Board on 13th November 2020 be agreed as a true record.

6 **Matters Arising**

None.

7 **Skills Bank Next Steps**

A report was considered which set out proposals for next steps for the Skills Bank.

The Board was reminded that, when developed in 2014, the Skills Bank formed an integral part of the Growth Deal negotiated between the LEP and national government and the LEP were in receipt of 6 years of investment totalling £21.6m. In the 6 years of operation the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), rather than the MCA, had managed the programme.

The funding model agreed had enabled the creation of an Innovation and Capacity Pot to sustain the Skills Bank after the initial investment. The model was based on a defined set of principles and was aimed at stimulating private sector growth.

The Board discussed the validity of the original founding principles for the and agreed that they were still valid and well-focused and should continue to form the basis for the next stage of Skills Bank development.

Members felt in translating the principles into programme outcomes the area of social value and alignment to “good” employer behaviour was essential as a focus. As was the alignment with and compatibility to other LEP / MCA strategies. Officers were requested to ‘firm up’ the desired outcomes for the Skills Bank and bring back a paper to the next meeting of the Board. When the Principles and outcomes were agreed the Board could then consider the

Operating Model.

The Board was informed that the ESFA had agreed to a temporary extension, until June, of the Skills Bank with the current provider.

RESOLVED - That following discussions at today's meeting a paper on the desired outcomes to be delivered from the Skills Bank would be brought back to the next meeting of the Board.

8

Skills Strategy Development – principles and approach

A report was submitted which set out proposals for the development of a Skills and Employability Strategy. It sought agreement for a set of core principles and an overall approach that would inform the next phase of development.

The Board was reminded that residents and businesses across South Yorkshire faced education, skills and employability challenges which were the result of both long term trends and the short term impact of the pandemic.

Members had commissioned development of a strategy for skills that would allow the setting of short and long term priorities to address these issues in the context of the wider ambitions for economic growth as set out in the Strategic Economic Plan and the commitment to a stronger, greener and fairer future.

The Board discussed the Core Principles at length.

It was agreed that it was important that the strategy should be a South Yorkshire Strategy and not a South Yorkshire version of a national strategy.

Priorities should include schools, residents, business, wider partners and the voluntary sector and there should be consultation with these partners.

The Board agreed that although the strategy should acknowledge the needs of all age groups it should concentrate on the over 16s and adults. It was also acknowledged that low attainment in schools impacted on future achievements. Although the Board had no lever to address pre-16s it could work with DfE, local authorities and schools to address problems and discuss solutions.

It was agreed that it was important that the strategy was achievable and was aligned to other relevant strategies and policies.

It was noted that the timeline was important and that, although there was some urgency, it was vital that time was taken to ensure the policy was fit for purpose.

It was agreed that Skills Strategy development would be a standing item on the Board's agenda and that a proposed timeline would be presented at the next meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED – That the Board agree:

- i) The core principles for developing the Skills and Employability Strategy.

- ii) The priority themes for inclusion in the strategy.

9 **Renewal Action Plan (RAP): Update on the People Theme - Apprenticeship Training Agency**

A report was considered which sought Members' direction on proposals for taking forward the proposal for an enhanced Apprenticeship Hub or Apprentice Training Agency (ATA) for South Yorkshire.

Members were reminded that apprenticeship opportunities and completions had fallen across South Yorkshire in comparison with 2019 and at the October meeting of the Board Members had been supportive of the proposal to use Gainshare funding to develop a Hub or ATA to reverse the decline in apprenticeship take up and drive improved quality and completion rates.

The report detailed the options available:

- Hub – that could carry out promotional and support functions and could co-ordinate the use of levy transfer funding.
- Hub plus – with MCA investment in a matching service and offered a focus point for vacancy filling/recruitment.
- An ATA – with employers contributing to the cost of wages, but de-risked with the MCA as direct employer. The MCA would need to understand and accept the risks in employing apprentices and the resources/time needed to develop the business model.
- An ATA ILM – designed to get young people into apprenticeships as quickly as possible, but which was sustainable only as long as the MCA was prepared to fund wages and noting that this did carry a level of risk for both apprentices and employers.

The Board discussed the options at length including the barriers to employers taking on apprentices, public sector involvement, subsidised wage incentives for adults wishing to upskill, mixed models, risks, costs, capacity and the benefits of each model.

Members felt that there was not one fixed solution and that a flexible model was needed and requested officers to work on this and bring a report back to the next meeting.

RESOLVED – That officers work on a flexible model solution and bring a report back to the next meeting of the Board.

10 **AEB Update**

The Board was informed that the Adult Education Budget was now expected to be around £38.5m, an increase of £2.5m as a consequence of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee.

Progress had been made with the 3-year delivery plan and discussions were ongoing as to coping with the effects of Covid-19.

Procurement had gone live on 18th December 2020 and potential providers had to submit bids by 2nd February 2021. Evaluation of the bids would follow.

Members noted that, at present, the process was on track to commence delivery on 1st August 2021.

The Board discussed the importance of consultation between the MCA and local authorities to ensure that strategies in this area were aligned.

The Board also discussed the position of only allocating grants to South Yorkshire based providers and the use of sub-contractors. It was noted that sub-contracting arrangements could be supported in certain cases but the process would be carefully managed to ensure that it was effective.

The Chair thanked H George and R Harvey for the update.

11 **Working Win**

Members were reminded that at the October meeting of the Board it had been agreed to take up the opportunity of submitting a business case to secure additional funding from the Work and Health Unit (DWP/Dept. of Health) for the Working Win Programme.

Following the submission of an outline business case the WHU had advised of their intention to award the MCA c£3m.

The report detailed:

- The Programme Focus.
- The Service.
- Engagement with Health Services.
- Benefits and Outcomes.
- The Operating Model.

RESOLVED – That the Board endorse:

- i) Progression to the MCA Board the request to accept the Work and Health Unit c£3m grant funding for the Working Win Programme subject to due diligence on any conditions of award.
- ii) Entering into a Partnership Agreement with Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group in order for the Working Win programme to be procured as an NHS contract, as stipulated by the Work and Health Unit on terms to be agreed by the Head of Paid Service.

12 **Any Other Business**

R Adams informed the Board that she had learned during the meeting that the ESFA would extend the contract with the current provider of the Skills Bank for

three months to the end of June 2021.

In accordance with Combined Authority's Constitution/Terms of Reference for the Board, Board decisions need to be ratified by the Head of Paid Services (or their nominee) in consultation with the Chair of the Board. Accordingly, the undersigned has consulted with the Chair and hereby ratifies the decisions set out in the above minutes.

Signed

Name

Position

Date