

MCA - EDUCATION, SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:

TUESDAY, 8 MARCH 2022 AT 10.00 AM

VIRTUAL MEETING



Present:

Councillor Sir Steve Houghton CBE (Co-Chair)	Barnsley MBC
Dan Fell (Co-Chair)	South Yorkshire LEP
Councillor Tim Cheetham	Barnsley MBC
Councillor Denise Lelliott	Rotherham MBC
Kevin Kerrigan	Sheffield Hallam University
Councillor Paul Turpin	Sheffield City Council
Jim Dillon	SYMCA Executive Team
Angela Foulkes (Observer)	Chair of Skills Advisory Network

In Attendance:

Helen George	Assistant Director - Skills & Employment	SYMCA Executive Team
Sue Sykes	Assistant Director - Programme and Performance Unit	SYMCA Executive Team

Apologies:

Councillor Lani-Mae Ball	Doncaster MBC
Kate Josephs	Sheffield City Council
Gareth Sutton	SYMCA Executive Team
Professor Chris Husbands	Sheffield Hallam University

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 held on 31 January 2022**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2022 be agreed as a true record.

6 **Terms of Reference**

7 **Education and Skills Strategy development - next steps**

A paper was submitted to provide Members with an update on proposed next steps for each of the key areas for the South Yorkshire Skills Strategy and the overall timetable for activity.

At its meeting held on 31 January 2022, the Board had considered and approved a number of recommendations for the key themes for the South Yorkshire Skills Strategy.

The key themes included a number of transformational measures with the potential to deliver the scale of change needed in South Yorkshire to overcome long-term barriers to growth and increased productivity.

The paper outlined that the SYMCA now needed to move to the next phase of developing the Skills Strategy. The Board noted that the first phase involved drawing together all of the overall narrative alongside a set of measures of success to support the SEP aims and ambitions and against a costed resource plan and timeline for delivery.

The second phase of the work entailed developing each individual strand proposed and to commence work to unpick the detail of what could be achieved, who should be involved, and how it could be delivered.

A table at Annex 1 of the paper provided information against each strand of activity showing where activity is already underway and could be built upon and where activity is new.

The table also provided a very early RAG rating for each activity based on a very basic assessment of the levers for delivery. It also proposed a way forward for each strand of activity in order to develop a sense of what could be achieved, what funding might be needed and when impact might be felt.

The aim was for each strand to be able to articulate a level of detail in order to feed into the overall strategic narrative.

The Board noted that the SYMCA would be commissioning some professional support to help develop the narrative and to test and consult on the proposals in development. With the Board's support, the SYMCA would begin the process of identifying someone to undertake the work prior to the Mayoral election.

It was anticipated that the draft Strategy would be completed by Summer 2022, but this was against a challenging timetable.

Councillor Houghton said that it would be beneficial for a Delivery Plan containing clear outcomes to be developed which could sit behind the Skills Strategy to monitor progress. In addition, he also said that it would be important to align existing funding streams towards the delivery of the Skills Strategy.

In response to a query from K Kerrigan, H George confirmed that reference to working with the South Yorkshire Institute of Technology would be made in later iterations of the Skills Strategy.

A Foulkes said that it was important to set out what the Skills Strategy was trying to achieve and its intended outcomes.

D Fell commented that the appointed consultant also needed to act as a critical friend. He suggested that the number of priorities being set could be cut down by half.

J Dillion acknowledged the Board's comments. He added that the Skills Strategy would reflect the priorities which could be delivered across South Yorkshire.

RESOLVED – That the Board:

i) Noted the proposed next steps as set out in Annex 1 to the paper; and

Approved the recommended actions for the Strategy overall as at paragraph 2.3 of the paper.

8 **Adult Education Budget Programme Performance Report**

A paper was presented to provide the Board with the latest performance information on the Adult Education Budget (AEB) programme being delivered on behalf of the MCA highlighting management actions being taken to mitigate risk.

The Board noted that, in February 2021 the SYMCA had been awarded £39.29m devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) for the academic year 2021/2022 and an additional £2.79m for Level 3 Adult Offer.

The Board noted that AEB funding was split into 3 categories:

- Grant Funded Provision (Colleges and Local Authorities) - £27.85m
- Level 3 Provision (4 Colleges have an allocation)- £2.79m
- Procured Provision - £10.2m.

S Sykes informed the Board that there was currently a concern around the pace of expenditure, with only 42% of profiled expenditure currently achieved. Expenditure was notably below expectation on Lot 2 (9.7% expenditure achieved) and Lot 3 (6.5% expenditure achieved). Level 3 provision expenditure was also considerably below profile (12.3% achieved).

A table at paragraph 2.3 of the paper highlighted underspends across the funded strands of activity, cumulatively totalling £10.66m. Further details by provider and category were included in Appendices A and B to the paper.

The Board noted that Appendix A did not contain any details with regards to community learning. It was noted that the local authorities were currently obtaining this information.

S Sykes confirmed that the MCA currently had no corners with regards to grant funded provision.

A table presented at paragraph 2.5 of the paper highlighted the current spend in each local authority district and the number of learners enrolled.

The Board noted that reviews to-date, were highlighting several issues as detailed below:

- Competition between the MCA's Lot 3 provision and the DWP's Restart programme, with DWP funded work-coaches electing to refer individuals to the Restart programme ahead of MCA provision.
- Labour market pressures impacting upon provider ability to recruit staff to deliver activity.
- Ineligibility of individuals for the Lot 2 programme due to existing qualifications, impacting take-up.
- Disconnect in provision available and demand with a large volume of change requests being received to refocus provision to latest demand.

The Board noted that the performance issues had been presented to the MCA Executive Management Board and senior officer who were currently considering options. Close monitoring and performance review meetings were on-going with providers, and this would reaffirm delivery status and inform remedial actions required to address risk.

On completion of the reviews an options paper would be presented to the Board.

Councillor Lelliott raised concerns around the delivery of Lot 2 and Lot 3 programmes. She queried if the delivery models of the programme providers could be amended to allow individuals to attend courses at different times during the day/evening.

In response, S Sykes confirmed that the SYMCA were currently in discussion with programme providers around their delivery models. There were concerns around some of the providers not having any local networks.

Councillor Turpin raised concerns that the paper was inaccurate and fundamentally flawed due to the wrong matrix being used. He felt that the paper did not demonstrate an accurate picture of grant providers, nor did it consider the usual approaches, which the sector would be subject to.

In addition, Councillor Turpin said that expenditure was sighted as the profile for achievement. However, services had not been subject to any expenditure

monitoring. He added that, the ILR would only detail those learners on regulated learner programmes, (which was less than one third of the SCC grant). Councillor Turpin felt that it would be beneficial to add further information in the paper around achievement data payments.

H George replied that the MCA had made a commitment to publish the ILR. As previously highlighted, this paper did not include data from community learning providers. This data was currently being obtained and did not apply to procured providers.

Councillor Lelliott requested that it be placed on record that, she did not support Councillor Turpin's comment around the paper being inaccurate and fundamentally flawed.

D Fell asked how many individuals £10.66m equated to in terms of learners. He also asked if there were any lessons to be learnt for future years with regards to the AEB. In addition, he asked if a recommendation could be included in a future report setting out how the SYMCA might be able to get back on-track in relation to the pace of expenditure.

A Foulkes said that, on behalf of the collective colleges point of view, the SYMCA was not working closely together enough to support and articulate how the AEB is working. She considered that it would also be beneficial to undertake a mid-year lessons learnt review of the AEB and requested that there be a discussion at a future Board meeting around the re-allocation of funding.

H George replied that the AEB was a new process, and it would take some time to get the systems and processes correct as they embed. The re-allocation of funding was currently a live issue and would be discussed later on today's agenda.

Councillor Houghton requested that an update paper be presented at a future Board meeting. H George acknowledged the request.

RESOLVED – That the Board considered the performance information provided.

NB: AT THIS POINT, A FOULKES LEFT THE MEETING AND TOOK NO FURTHER PART IN THE DISCUSSION OR VOTING THEREON.

9 **Adult Education Budget Procurement for 22/23 academic year - Verbal**

H George provided the Board with a commercial in confidence presentation on the Adult Education Budget (AEB) procurement for the 2022/23 academic year.

The presentation requested the Board to:

- Consider retaining a small amount of the AEB funding to allow for additional subcontracting to cover low level gaps in provision for South Yorkshire residents.

- Consider inviting business cases for growth in relation to AY 2022/23 for grant funded providers, linked to 2021/22 performance and the South Yorkshire Skills Strategy.
- Consider a different approach with regards to Level 3 Free Courses for Jobs as set out in the presentation.
- Consider 3 options with regards to the reallocation of AEB funding from the 2021/22 procured provision.

In response to a query from Councillor Turpin regarding land-based courses, H George said that she would be happy to discuss this element further with Councillor Turpin outside of today's meeting. **ACTION: H George & R Wilde.**

Councillor Lelliott commented that it was important to procure courses which individuals are interested in, accessible and run in the correct areas of South Yorkshire.

The Board felt that it was important to build a formal approach to Government with regards to the AEB being determined on a local level.

H George replied that the SYMCA continued to lobby Government on this issue.

RESOLVED – that the Board:

- i) Noted the presentation.
- ii) Considered and approved retaining a small amount of the AEB funding to allow for additional subcontracting to cover low level gaps in provision.
- iii) Agreed to the SYMCA inviting business cases for growth in relation to AY 2022/23 for grant funded providers, linked to 2021/22 performance and the South Yorkshire Skills Strategy.
- iv) Considered and agreed that the SYMCA takes a different approach with regards to the Level 3 Free Courses for Jobs as set out in the presentation.
- v) Considered and agreed that Option 3 be progressed with regards to the reallocation of AEB funding from the 2021/22 procured provision.

NB: AT THIS POINT, A FOULKES RE-JOINED THE MEETING.

10

Skills Bootcamp – progress update – Verbal

H George informed the Board that the Government had recently undertaken a national procurement for Skills Bootcamps, which offer, flexible level 3, 4 and 5 short courses for up to 16 weeks, to enable adults to apply for sector specific jobs.

It was anticipated that the SYMCA may receive additional funding for Skills Bootcamps. If successful, the SYMCA would be focused on providing a space

in the digital option linking to the Skills Accelerator Model and procuring provision in construction.

The Board were requested to consider and agree to the SYMCA continuing discussions with the DfE in relation to Skills Bootcamps.

RESOLVED – That the Board considered and agreed to the SYMCA continuing discussions with the DfE in relation to Skills Bootcamps.

11 **Programme Approvals**

A paper was submitted seeking the Board's approval for an extension and variation of an existing agreement with Calderdale College for the continuation of delivery of the current Skills Bank Programme until the new programme is fully operational. The paper also requested approval for delegated authority to be granted to the Head of Paid service in consultation with the Section 73 Officer and the Monitoring Officer to enter into legal agreement for the schemes.

The Board noted that the current contract between the MCA and Calderdale College had been extended to June 2022 with all training to have commenced by March 2022. However, due to completion of the current Skills Bank procurement exercise this report was seeking approval to extend the programme for a further 3 months which would require a further investment of £188k. This would enable the programme to continue the offer to businesses without a break in provision.

The Board noted that the current Skills Bank programme was currently performing well against its contracted outputs. Further details were presented in the paper and noted by the Board.

Following discussion, the Board considered and agreed to support option 2, which was to progress with an extension and variation to the existing agreement with Calderdale College for the continuation of Skills Bank Extension of "Skills Bank Interim programme".

RESOLVED – That the Board consider and approves:

- i) Progression of an extension and variation to the existing agreement with Calderdale College for the continuation of Skills Bank Extension of "Skills Bank Interim programme".

Delegated authority be given to the Head of Paid Service in consultation with the Section 73 and Monitoring Officer to enter into a legal agreement for the scheme above.

12 **Skills Advisory Network Update - Verbal**

A Foulkes provided the Board with a verbal update on the work of the Skills Advisory Network (SAN).

The Board was informed that the SAN had met in January and were continuing work on its assigned six workstreams.

At the January SAN meeting, the Network had received a presentation from the University of Sheffield on the impact of COVID-19, which had confirmed and enabled the Board to have a robust discussion to assess if its workstreams were still appropriate.

The SAN had welcomed a guest speaker from the Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust who had talked about developing a more robust approach to the green economy and engaging young people in wildlife and forestry careers and the opportunities for this.

A discussion had also taken place on the outstanding work contained in the Memorandum of Understanding for 2021/22, which would require escalating, notwithstanding capacity issues within the Team.

The Team had been commissioned to work on an update to the Local Skills Report. Due to capacity issues in the Team, it was unlikely that this work would be finalised by 31 March 2022.

H George referred to Appendix A of the South Yorkshire Skills Strategy paper. She reported that several key strands of activity had been flagged where the SAN could play a lead role in helping to consider and make recommendations.

ACTION: A Foulkes to identify the key strands of activity and discuss further at the next SAN meeting.

The Chair thanked A Foulkes for the update.

RESOLVED – That the Board noted the update provided.

13 **Any Other Business**

None received.

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