

MCA - EDUCATION, SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:

MONDAY, 31 JANUARY 2022 AT 2.00 PM

VIRTUALLY



Present:

Councillor Sir Steve Houghton CBE (Co-Chair)	Barnsley MBC
Dan Fell (Co-Chair)	South Yorkshire LEP
Councillor Lani-Mae Ball	Doncaster MBC
Councillor Tim Cheetham	Barnsley MBC
Councillor Denise Lelliott	Rotherham MBC
Councillor Paul Turpin	Sheffield City Council
Andrew Jones	Sheffield City Council

In Attendance:

Angela Foulkes	Principal and Chief Executive and SAN Chair	Sheffield College
Jim Dillon	Interim Director of Business and Skills	MCA Executive Team
Helen Kemp	Director of Business & Skills	MCA Executive Team
Helen George	Assistant Director - Skills & Employment	MCA Executive Team
Sue Sykes	Assistant Director - Programme and Performance Unit	MCA Executive Team
Charli Taylor	Head of Controls	MCA Executive Team
Roger Wilde	Senior Development Manager (Education & Skills)	MCA Executive Team
Jonathan Guest	Senior Economic Policy Manager	SYMCA Executive Team
Gillian Richards	Minute Taker	South Yorkshire Joint Authorities

Apologies:

Professor Chris Husbands	Sheffield Hallam University
Kate Josephs	Sheffield City Council

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 held on 14th December 2021 be agreed as a true record.

6 **SYMCA Strategic Skills Priorities**

A report was submitted which set out the proposed approach to developing the MCA's Education, Skills and Employability Strategy.

The Board was reminded that discussions at its meeting in June 2021 had highlighted the need to consider transformative measures with the potential for significant impact over the longer term and a set of other measures with the potential to target more specific problems and skills shortages over a shorter timeframe.

The Board had also acknowledged in December that development of the strategy must take account of developments in the wider education, skills and employability landscape such as the Skills Accelerator Trailblazer being led by the Chambers of Commerce. It was also acknowledged that it was imperative that the strategy complemented and added value to the economic and skills priorities identified in each local authority's strategy and would need the engagement and support of partners across the region as a pre-requisite for successful implementation.

A presentation was delivered which began by highlighting skills issues identified in the Strategic Economic Plan 2021-2024 which set the scene for discussion on education, skills and employability issues as part of the future strategy.

The proposed areas for the strategy were:

- School readiness
- Educational enrichment
- Apprenticeships and technical education
- Adult basic English, maths and ESOL
- Digital skills
- Adult Education Budget commissioning
- Meeting business need for skills

- Adult enrichment
- Skills for a green economy
- 16-24 NEETs
- All-age career provision

The Board discussed each proposed area at length.

With regard to school readiness it was thought that lessons could be learned from the South Yorkshire Futures and DMBC including the Opportunity Area whilst ensuring that any enhanced provision did not cut across the work of the local authorities.

A Foulkes commented that in all areas it would be appropriate to look at good practice and schemes that were working in other comparable regions.

With regard to educational enrichment areas to be considered included family learning and working with schools to provide additional support and contracted provision.

The South Yorkshire Colleges Group had developed a proposal for an Apprenticeship Hub, which the Board had already had sight of. There were also proposals to develop flexi-apprenticeships and a strategy to help businesses understand how to share their unwanted levy funds.

Cllr Houghton commented that apprenticeships had a good name, but the issue was how to scale up both in the private sector.

The Board felt there is a need to be bold, look for new and radical ideas and aim to have the biggest apprenticeship scheme. They also felt that it was important that any unspent levy was utilised and that apprenticeships should be able to be accessed at different levels.

It had been the first year of AEB commissioning and it had been a challenging transition year. There was now an opportunity to think how AEB was funded and move away from the methodology of the first year which was broadly to maintain historic allocations. There was also an opportunity to be more ambitious in linking to outcomes, think about skills gaps and look at niche provision.

The Board felt that the skills for a green economy was an important area. If the MCA's net zero target by 2041 was to be met there was a lot of work to be done.

It would be important to work with education and businesses to understand and develop the new skills that would be required. A Green Skills Academy and employment programme was being considered along with upskilling existing employees.

Cllr Turpin commented that the areas of agriculture and transport needed to be investigated.

D Fell commented that the MCA team available to implement all the proposals was small and it may be time to think about boosting capacity.

The Board agreed that it was important to prioritise what would make the biggest difference and stressed the importance of collaboration, ambition and innovation.

A Foulkes commented that the Skill Advisory Network would be an ideal vehicle to commission to pick up and investigate some of the threads and to return to the Board with advice. It would be helpful for the SAN and would feed well into the Board.

Cllr Cheetham commented that it was vital to involve businesses and communities to learn what their priorities were.

It was agreed that the framework should be shared with businesses, communities and other stakeholders with the aim of receiving feedback.

It was also agreed that the MCA should be asked to consider officer capacity.

RESOLVED – That the Board:

- (i) Agree that the overall approach as proposed in the report should be the basis for development of the strategy and the fit with developments in the wider education and skills landscape.
- (ii) Agree that the overall approach be shared with businesses, communities and other stakeholders with the aim of receiving feedback.
- (iii) Note the timeline for development and the need for further consideration of resources needed for implementation.

7

Programme Performance Report

A report was submitted which provided the Board with the latest performance information on Education, Skill and Employability programmes being delivered on behalf of the MCA.

The Board was reminded that the MCA currently had 44 projects which fell under the remit of the ESE Board. The schemes were funded from various funding streams with a total value of £65, of which £6.77 was capital and £58.23m revenue.

The report gave an overview on the performance of the programmes and the projects within them, highlighting management actions being taken to mitigate risks.

Members were informed that the expenditure baseline for 2021/22 was initially set at £41.66m with the latest forecasts suggesting outturn expenditure of £36.37m. That level of expenditure would generate a material underspend of £5.29m. The underspend related to Gainshare funded activity that could be reprofiled without recourse to government.

Tables within the report presented the current position by funding stream and highlighted the AEB forecast against current claims.

It was noted that the principal drivers for Gainshare delays were revised forecasts for Renewal Action Plan activity within the year, leading to a £6.3m reduction. Enhanced Apprenticeship activity was now expected to commence late in quarter 4, whilst the Kickstart South Yorkshire scheme was now expected to fall into the new financial year. Any unused Gainshare funding would be retained within or transferred to earmarked reserves for future use.

A graphic within the report exemplified the milestones status of projects by value. The graphic highlighted that, of the 44 projects in the portfolio, 89% were in delivery with a value of £52.03m.

Close monitoring was ongoing, and action would be taken to mitigate any issues and risks that may arise. A full reconciliation of AEB provision would be undertaken in February and the data published at the end of the month.

S Smith gave details of the four lots of procured provision which all had different issues and there was a risk of a large underspend in this area if mitigation actions were not put in place.

H Kemp commented that some propositions for spending the money differently, especially in the area of procurement provision, would be brought to the Board. There was also a need to look at some procedures, such as clawback from providers and also the length of time contracts were procured for, originally this was for three years – if this was not working it would need further thought.

RESOLVED – That the Board be noted.

8 Matters Arising

None.

9 Any Other Business

None.

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 _____