

**SKILLS & EMPLOYMENT THEMATIC BOARD**

**6 August 2019**

**Establishment of an Advisory Group for Skills & Employment**

**Purpose of Report**

To present a suggested framework to engage specialists in the work of the Skills and Employment Executive Board. The report presents a proposed network, suggests some organisations to involve and a proposed framework of operation.

**Thematic Priority**

Develop the SCR skills base, labour mobility and education performance.

**Freedom of Information**

This paper is not exempt from FOI requests and will be published in line with the Combined Authority Publication Scheme.

**Recommendations**

That members:

- consider the appointment of a Specialist Advisory Network (that would sit outside the board)
- review the proposed meeting structure of the Specialist Advisory Network
- review the draft Terms of Reference and suggested membership of the Specialist Advisory Network
- charge the SCR Executive to recruit to their agreed approach and establish the network for September 2019

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1** The Terms of Reference (ToRs) for Thematic boards as agreed at the MCA Meeting (17<sup>th</sup> December 2018) and at the LEP Board meeting (14 January 2019) enables Thematic board Members to identify advisory members to support the work of the Board, the form to be agreed by each Board could be via attendance of other Stakeholders at the Board (in an advisory capacity only) or through the establishment of 'task and finish' groups which consist of key stakeholders and advisors, for example. The Terms of Reference for the Thematic Board are included in the accompanying paper (Agenda Item 5 in this meeting).

- 1.2 The involvement of advisory members in the work programme of the Board provides the opportunity to tap into the experience and opinions of knowledgeable professionals on a regular basis. Specifically, this may enhance the Board through:
- Provision of a frame of reference and access to high-quality advice and knowledge,
  - Provision of a fresh perspective on strategy, economic trends and specific geographic issues,
  - “wise counsel” on issues raised by stakeholders,
  - alerting the board to issues which may not be on their radar,
  - provision of informed challenge to research and intelligence work,
  - provision of guidance and/or direction on big picture issues the Board wish to explore,
  - provision of unbiased insights and ideas from a third-party point-of-view,
  - supporting and encouraging the exploration of new ideas,
  - provision of access to and engagement with key stakeholders,
  - provision of challenge to the Board to drive improvements.
- 1.3 Good practice identifies the following principles to be applied in the establishment of an advisory body<sup>1</sup>:
- **Clarity of purpose:** Their objectives and terms of reference, as well as the expected time commitment, should be established from the start.
  - **Added value:** Advisory members selected based on their distinctive knowledge of areas of interest for the Board, generally these are selected to complement the existing board members.
  - **Efficient and effective:** An appropriate shape and structure of the network reflecting the unique purpose required by the Board, for example, as they have no governance authority or statutory responsibilities, an advisory body could meet less frequently, be consulted on an ad hoc basis as required, or focus on a narrower set of issues than the full board.
- 1.4 In December 2018, Government set out a requirement for all LEP’s to establish a Skills Advisory Panel (SAP). The aim of this panel is to bring together local employers and key local stakeholders to pool knowledge on skills and labour market needs, and to work together to understand and address key local challenges. The requirements of the SAP reflect emerging discussions around a stakeholder/advisory group to support the Skills and Employment Thematic Board.

## 2. Proposal and justification

- 2.1 Acknowledging that there are a number of alternative options that could be progressed, given the requirement to develop an ambitious work programme to secure future Shared Prosperity Funding, for example, a suggested option is that

**The Board establishes a professional advisory network for the Skills and Employment Thematic Board which sits outside the formal board structure.** Core members will be identified based on key areas of work with additional members selected to work as the need arises aligned to the Board’s Forward Plan and in response to specific points of enquiry from the Board.

Suggested Terms of Reference for the network are presented at Appendix 1 for the Board’s consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.odgersberndtson.com/media/2267/the\\_role\\_of\\_advisory\\_boards\\_-\\_who\\_what\\_why\\_how.pdf](https://www.odgersberndtson.com/media/2267/the_role_of_advisory_boards_-_who_what_why_how.pdf)  
<https://www.tindallperry.co.uk/blog/view/20/creating-an-advisory-non-executive-board.aspx>  
<https://heidrick.com/Knowledge-Center/Publication/create-an-advisory-board>

- 2.2 The Board consider the suggested membership, and example of the types of organisations who could be engaged is presented in Appendix 2.** The suggestion aims to ensure that the Advisory Network contains a balance of knowledge, talent and abilities necessary to deliver the Board's objectives and enabling the collective skillset and dynamics to change when needed. This list is presented as core membership following discussion with representative LEP Board members. Additional members may also be required as and when required for specific areas of input/expertise.
- 2.3 That, if approved, the board considers the meeting structure of the network.** The fluid nature of a network of this type is a strength in its ability to come together to respond to challenges and develop models for delivery. However, the level of senior membership that has been suggested for this group requires a level of structure to allow members to understand the time requirement and format of their involvement. A quarterly meeting to review the forward plan and identify where their involvement will have most impact will allow members to plan and understand where and how their input can be maximised but more ad hoc meetings will be put in place.

### **3. Consideration of alternative approaches**

- 3.1** Section 2.1-2.3 outline one model that the Board may wish to pursue, however there are several alternative approaches that board may wish to consider as an addition to or an alternative to the proposal;
- 3.2 Do Nothing** – There is an option that the Board may wish not to engage Advisory Members or wait until there is an agreed forward plan. This is not recommended as engagement with key stakeholders in this agenda into the work of the LEP and MCA is crucial especially as the revised Economic Plan and Local Industrial Strategy develop and are finalised.
- 3.3 Include named private sector advisory members at Skills and Employment Thematic Board meetings-** this approach could be challenged by non-private sector advisory members as advisory members would be managed in different ways. It could also become confusing in terms of decision making at the Board as these members would have no decision-making authority.
- 3.4 Include all named advisory members in all Skills and Employment Thematic board meetings** - this approach may result in a loss of objectivity in the advisory members being too close to the discussions and views of the Board and stifle discussions. It adds additional complexity in the management of the Board meetings. It also puts additional time requirements on advisory members.
- 3.5 Create a series of thematic advisory sub-boards** – the potential disadvantages of this approach are that it could be inflexible in its ability to respond to specific requests from the Board, it puts a greater demand on members time attending frequent, a fresh perspective may be lost as the groups galvanise around their agreed views and potential for mission creep
- 3.6 Create an 'action group' of members** – although advisory members will be expected to be quite hands on and develop propositions to challenges faced by the region, there is still an expectation that members will need to be senior within the organisation they represent, i.e. CEO. The terminology of an 'action group' may not be attractive to this level of individual or represent the level of involvement/influence this group has.
- 3.7 Identify and work through existing representative forums** – the strength of this approach is that it would require no additional resource commitment from advisory members. It would pose administrative challenges in the alignment of forums to meetings and the Board's Forward Plan. It may also be too narrow in scope and unable to flex.

## 4. Implications

### 4.1 Financial

There are no financial implications for this paper.

### 4.2 Legal

There are no financial implications for this paper.

### 4.3 Risk Management

Key risks are advisory members do not commit to attendance and contribution to the group and that they do not have the mechanism to cascade information from and to the group through established networks. The draft ToRs would need to address this and would be a requirement for all members to adhere to these.

### 4.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion

The work of the Skills and Employment Thematic Board will be to ensure that all residents in SCR get parity of access to opportunities available within the region. The suggested membership of the advisory group ensures all key stakeholders and employers are represented to gain a balanced view on key issues.

## 5. Communications

- 5.1 Key messages in relation to skills and employment activity will form part of an organisational communication/marketing plan.

## 6. Appendices/Annexes

- 6.1 Appendix 1- Draft Terms of Reference for the Specialist Advisory Network  
Appendix 2 –Draft suggested membership of the Specialist Advisory Network

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Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at: 11 Broad Street West, Sheffield S1 2BQ

Other sources and references:

- [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/762629/Skills\\_Advisory\\_Panels-Guidance\\_on\\_the\\_Role\\_and\\_Governance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/762629/Skills_Advisory_Panels-Guidance_on_the_Role_and_Governance.pdf)
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