

MCA - EDUCATION, SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:

TUESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2021 AT 10.00 AM

VIRTUAL MEETING



Present:

Councillor Sir Steve Houghton CBE (Co-Chair)	Barnsley MBC
Nigel Brewster (Co-Chair)	Private Sector
Councillor Lani-Mae Ball	Doncaster MBC
Councillor Tim Cheetham	Barnsley MBC
Kate Josephs	Sheffield CC
Councillor Paul Turpin	Sheffield CC
Helen Kemp	MCA Executive Team
Angela Foulkes	Chair of Skills Advisory Network

In attendance:

Sue Sykes	MCA Executive Team
Andy Gates	MCA Executive Team
Rob Harvey	MCA Executive Team
Helen George	MCA Executive Team

Apologies:

Professor Chris Husbands	Sheffield Hallam University
Councillor Denise Lelliott	Rotherham MBC
Gareth Sutton	MCA Executive Team

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

It was pointed out that there was a typo at item 10 and that 'secretary' should be changed to 'secondary'.

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 31st August 2021 be agreed as a true record.

6 Global Education Leaders' Partnership (GELP) (verbal)

A Gates informed the Board that he was working with DMBC and the Global Education Leaders' Partnership (GELP).

It was noted that GELP was a partnership which included national and regional governments, the OECD, think tanks and organisations that were involved in education on the national and internal stages. DMBC was a member of GELP.

DMBC would be hosting a physical and virtual conference from 8th – 13th November 2021. The conference would provide the opportunity for academics and practitioners to discuss global education.

There would be a Doncaster/South Yorkshire session which would talk about the Doncaster Talent Innovation Ecosystem work which aimed to connect people with opportunities in the Borough.

On the Saturday there would be a national policy conference which would bring together enterprise, national government, senior officials from within DfE and UK-based think tanks etc. This would be supported by the MCA and the Northern Powerhouse Partnership.

The conference should be useful to assist DMBC to shape their skills programme and for government to understand the regional barriers to the local skills ecosystem.

A good draft line-up had been arranged for the policy conference including a session hosted by N Brewster and Prof. Husbands.

A Gates encouraged colleagues to try and attend.

The Chair thanked A Gates for the update.

7 Proposal for a Lessons Learned Review of Adult Education Budget Commissioning

R Harvey presented a report which contained a proposal for a Lessons Learned Review of Adult Education Budget commissioning.

It was noted that the proposed evaluation would allow stakeholders to feedback

on some of the underpinning decisions that had shaped how the Authority had engaged with providers. It was important that the Lessons Learned process drew out feedback for change that the Authority should consider ahead of any future commissioning of the AEB.

The report set out three key issues:

- There was a small amount (£400,000) of unallocated funding from the AEB budget.
- Performance of providers contracted to deliver AEB funded provision will be kept under review giving the Authority an opportunity to relocate funding should there be underperformance against delivery plans.
- The demand for adult skills from employers could change.

All of the above factors meant that there was a possibility that the Authority could choose to commission further AEB provision during the current academic year.

The report contained details of the cohorts identified and the key elements of focus for the evaluation.

Three options had been considered.

Option 1. Conducted and directed internally by Authority officers.

Option 2. Conducted internally by Authority staff but supported by an advisory panel.

Option 3. Conducted externally.

Option 3 was the recommended option.

The Board discussed the consequences of the commissioning process for some previous existing providers and thought this should be acknowledged but agreed that the evaluation should be framed around encouraging recommendations for future AEB commissioning. The aim was to make adult education provision better for the clients and not individual organisations.

RESOLVED – That the Board approve Option 3 – to conduct the evaluation externally as detailed in section 3.8 of the report.

Skills Strategy (verbal)

Helen George provided an update on the development of the Skills Strategy which included:

- The timeline for the Strategy and the intention, with the Board's approval, to make the Skills Strategy the focus of the January or February meeting of the Board.
- Alignment with AEB planning for 2022/23 and the timeline for discussions with grant funded providers.
- Information on the Local Skills Improvement Plan and the Strategic

- Development Fund.
- A request for approval to invite representatives involved in the Local Skills Improvement Plan and the South Yorkshire Colleges Group (representing the Strategic Development Fund) to either the December or January meeting of the Board.

The Board discussed the importance of the Green agenda and positioning the Skills Strategy around the four LAs strategies whilst aligning with the SEP and the RAP.

RESOLVED – That the Board:

- i) Note the update.
- ii) Agree to the suggestion that either the December or January meeting of the Board should focus on the Skills Strategy and that representatives involved with the Local Skills Improvement Plan and the Strategic Development Fund be invited to that meeting.

9 **Skills Advisory Network (SAN) (verbal)**

A Foulkes gave an update on the work of the Skills Advisory Network (SAN).

Members were reminded that the SAN had accessed £75k of funding from the DfE for 2020/21 which had to be spent within 6 months with approval from DfE of the workplan.

The main output for 2021 was the Local Skills Report which had been published in March this year.

SAN had commissioned the development of an Intelligence Hub. This is still in development and not yet widely available. The SAN was interested in progressing this urgently so that the data would be useful for everyone.

A deep dive into the manufacturing skills base had been commissioned. A Foulkes, (on behalf of the SAN) requested that the Board supported the unlocking of the commitment to the procurement process for this as a matter of urgency.

A Foulkes explained that for 2021/22 the SAN was proposing to draw down the same amount of money from the DfE against a workplan set out in a new Memorandum of Understanding for the Board's approval.

The proposals for 2021/22 were:

- Update the Local Skills Report including a link to the work on the Skills Strategy.
- Commission a piece of work on NEETS and the impact of Covid-19 on young people.
- Provide support to the Local Skills Improvement Trailblazer (as required by DfE) to develop understanding of SME skills demand.
- Ongoing analytical support on Labour Market Information from EMSI.

The SAN were asking the Board for support for these proposals and also to unlock any barriers that were preventing progress.

Members were reminded that the SAN had volunteers from the skills, education and employer base to look at the SEP and RAP outcomes and in future to support the Skills Strategy and LSIP.

The aim was to bring suggestions and recommendations to the Board that the SAN thought would add value to the SEP and RAP or in general to the skills agenda.

Current work included:

- Proposals for apprenticeships which had been brought to the Board previously and appeared to have stalled. SAN would like the opportunity to bring the proposals back to the Board for further consideration.
- Work continued on careers IAG workstreams. SAN had recommended a regional approach to a careers event for a wide age range. Again, this work is still in progress.
- Work had begun on the offer for NEETS. Proposals would be brought to the Board at a later stage.

A Foulkes questioned whether the Board were content with the direction of travel of the SAN and how they could better engage with the Board so that proposals got better traction. There was a waning of appetite within the SAN as it was felt that their work was not leading anywhere.

H George commented that it was important that the Board found a way of commissioning the SAN to work on projects that the Board thought was important and that a demand relationship was created with the SAN. The Board needed specialist advice in developing the Skills Strategy and a strong relationship with the SAN would be needed going forward.

The Chair suggested further discussion on how the SAN fitted in and how they could gain more recognition.

The Chair thanked A Foulkes for the update.

10

Improving Skills Provision for residents with specific needs

A report was considered that sought the Board's approval for the development of an additional support and skills development programme for residents with specific needs.

As the MCA moved beyond the initial AEB commissioning the MCA wanted to maximise opportunities in relation to groups of residents who needed additional support to engage with learning, develop skills and progress into employment.

The MCA Executive Team wanted to draw on previous work in developing what may now be required to provide additional targeted support for learners who had been unintentionally displaced from existing learning programmes through

the devolved AEB commissioning process.

It was noted that significant time and effort had already been spent developing evidenced and robust business cases for proposals. The MCA Executive Team would now like to review those proposals.

The two key proposals were the Disadvantaged Learners Pilot and the Early Integrated Employment Support for Claimants at Risk of Long-Term Unemployment. Full details of both proposals were detailed within the report.

N Brewster commented that he felt there was a sense of urgency to these proposals and suggested progressing matters outside of the meeting cycle.

The Board agreed and suggested the proposals were circulated for consideration as soon as available to speed up the process.

A Foulkes commented that this was a demand that would work with the SAN who could add value to the proposals as both employers and stakeholders. This was agreed.

RESOLVED – That the Board approve development of an additional support and skills development programme as detailed within the report and that proposals be circulated outside of the meeting cycle.

11 Skills Response to Redundancy (verbal)

The Board was reminded that this was a piece of work that they had requested in preparation for an anticipated rise in redundancies following the end of furlough payments.

A previous paper considered by the Board had pointed to analysis that suggested that the number of redundancies had not risen to the degree expected, that there was a larger number of vacancies than expected and it was unlikely that there would be large amount of redundancies at this stage.

The focus of the work then shifted on how to secure a more joined up approach between the Authority, DWP and Local Authorities in this area recognising that there was already a lot of work going on.

K Josephs informed the Board that the paper was then submitted to the Chief Executives group who looked at the work that had been done so far and the wider context of the work the Skills Team were being asked to do such as the Skills Strategy.

The Group thought that the Local Authorities had built strong relationships with DWP and were working closely on work to support and manage redundancies where they occurred. The Chief Executives offer to the MCA was that, rather than use the MCA's Team whose time could be used more effectively elsewhere, the LAs would do this work themselves, working together where appropriate.

It was noted that MCA resources had been allocated for this work. How to use

these resources would be discussed at a later date.

RESOLVED – That the Board accepted the Chief Executives offer as detailed above.

12 **Programme Approval**

A report was submitted that sought progression to full approval of the Transitional Support project and award £0.21m to the Workers Educational Association.

Members were reminded that SYMCA took control of the Adult Education Budget in August 2021.

A dual approach to commissioning had been developed which had led to a reduction in the overall number of providers delivering AEB across the region. This had been considered a positive step towards achieving the outcomes detailed in the report.

The impact of this reduction in providers had led to some disruption for learners. SYMCA recognised that more support was needed to help learners transition to new learning opportunities.

It was noted that in the case of learners who had previously been on programmes with the Workers Educational Association there was an additional requirement for support due to several factors which were detailed in the report.

The Project would provide an approach in which previous learners' Information, Advice and Guidance requirements were assessed allowing the access to tailored support - details of which were listed in the paper.

Councillor Turpin sought assurance that the grant to WEA would not cause additional competition in the market to deliver AEB funded learning across South Yorkshire.

J George explained that the purpose of the grant was to support the transition of learners only based on the scale of the task for WEA.

It was noted that the expectation was that the need for intensive support for learners would be fully met within six months.

RESOLVED – That the Board:

- i) Approve progression of Transitional Support Project to full approval and award £0.21m to the Workers Educational Association.
- ii) Approve delegated authority be given to the Head of Paid Service in consultation with the Section 73 and Monitoring Officer to enter into legal agreement for the above scheme.

13 **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