



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
& PETERBOROUGH**  
COMBINED AUTHORITY

## Skills Committee

Meeting: Monday 5 September 2022

Venue: Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon

Time: 10.00 am - 12.08 pm

Present:

Cllr Lucy Nethsingha - Chair and Member for Cambridgeshire County Council

Cllr Lis Every - East Cambridgeshire District Council

Cllr Lynne Ayres - Peterborough City Council

Cllr Sam Carling - Cambridge City Council

Cllr Peter McDonald - South Cambridgeshire District Council

Apologies:

Cllr Chris Seaton - Fenland District Council

Cllr Sam Wakeford - Huntingdonshire District Council

### Part 1 - Governance Items

#### 76. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest and Announcements

Apologies received from Councillors Chris Seaton and Sam Wakeford. No declarations of interest were made.

The Chair gave an update to the Committee in relation to item 2.3 on the agenda "Multiply – the approach to programme delivery". She explained that following the report to the Combined Authority Board on 8 June 2022 about the new Multiply programme, the Combined Authority (CA) had expected to receive a grant funding letter on the week commencing 29 August 2022. At the time of writing the report to Skills Committee the grant funding letter from the Department for Education (DfE) had not been received. Given the timelines for delivery within this financial year, it was critical to obtain the necessary approvals and delegations to proceed with awarding grants and contracts to providers, to maximise delivery of learning within the financial year and prevent the risk of under-performance. The Combined Authority had subsequently been notified that to ensure payment could be processed

in September 2022, the grant funding agreement had to be signed and returned by Friday 2 September 2022 if payment was to be received in September 2022. The Special Urgency procedures set out in the Combined Authority Constitution were therefore enacted to meet these deadlines and the report was taken directly to Board on 31 August 2022 for approval. She explained therefore that this report was now for noting only.

## 77. Minutes of the Skills Committee meeting on 4 July 2022 and Actions

The minutes of the meeting on 4 July 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

A Member queried why the Deep Dive report outlined in action 50 had taken so long to come back to Committee. The Interim Associate Skills Director explained that it had been an iterative process and since the departure of the previous Director there had been a different focus on the process. She explained that the draft report would be circulated to the Committee prior to the Committee meeting in November.

### ACTION

The action log was noted.

## 78. Public Questions

Questions from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were taken at the relevant items on the agenda.

## Part 2 – Recommendations to the Combined Authority Board

## 79. Adult Education Budget: Contract Awards to Independent Training Providers and proposals for further commissioning

The Committee received a report that provided an update following the conclusion of a successful open and competitive, procurement exercise for new Independent Training Providers (ITPs).

The Committee received two questions from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on this report. The written responses were read out and can be found at appendix 1 of the minutes. The geographical targeted mapping work of provision would be shared with the Committee when available. **ACTION**

In particular, the presenting officers highlighted:

- The report sought authority and delegations to the Interim Associate Skills Director to enter and sign contracts for services with the ITPs set out in Table B of the report.

- The proposed allocation of approximately £4.5m from the Adult Education Budget (AEB) and National Skills Fund, to contract provision with ITPs for the academic year 2022-23. Funding for future years would be subject to performance.
- The positive outcome of the procurement process for Lots 1-3, in building additional delivery capacity to meet local skills needs and enabling and developing a mixed and diverse provider marketplace in the sub-region.
- The approach to commissioning for Lots 4 and 5, where the market did not respond sufficiently.
- The different approach for commissioning smaller third sector (charities and voluntary and community sector providers) within the mayoralty.
- The implications for staffing capacity in the Combined Authority's Skills Service, as the provider-base grew as a positive result of the procurement. This was being addressed as part of recruitment.

#### Discussing the report Members:

- Expressed concern that the third sector was not sufficiently represented and that this was key to ensuring providers were able to successfully promote and get take up of courses in particular in cold spots and how the Committee could work with officers to increase engagement. Officers stated that this would be part of the contract management arrangements in terms of a more targeted provision and how providers were directed to work with the communities, geographies and sectors of interest. Officers welcomed greater co-production with the constituent councils including local insight into communities and any local partnerships that could be utilised. Officers reiterated that it was very much the beginning of the process with the providers and being able to direct the providers to work with the communities of interest was key. Officers explained that a report outlining how the Combined Authority would work with the third sector providers would be brought to the next meeting.
- Questioned how the Combined Authority would be ensuring the quality of provision as the contracts had been commissioned for a five-year period with an annual break clause. Officers explained that there was detailed contract management and performance procedures and that he would circulate the document to the Committee. **ACTION** The Interim Associate Skills Director stated that grant providers were paid on profile and contracted providers were paid monthly in arrears, relation to their performance. The Chair stated that the five-year contract period had been beneficial in giving providers longer term proposals and that it was crucial that break clauses were used to ensure that performance against contract was adhered to.
- Highlighted that various local voluntary organisations sub-contracted with AEB Providers. If they had direct contracts rather than sub-contracted, through a grant

provider, then they would be subject to OFSTED inspections. Officers explained that this was a challenge if voluntary organisations had their own contracts and that they also faced challenges in relation to their capacity to fulfil the procurement process and meet data and contract management requirements, hence why many went through sub-contracting arrangements. Officers reiterated that a paper would be brought to the next meeting setting out the proposals for working with third sector organisations.

- Queried if the Learning Support Fund was always used up by AEB Providers. Officers explained that the fund was not ringfenced and that it was down to providers to determine themselves what the spend would be. Officers stated that there was historic data setting out what had been spent and this information could be provided to the committee. **ACTION**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Recommend that the Combined Authority Board approve the contract awards to Independent Training Providers for the 2022/23 academic year, from the devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) and National Skills Fund as set out in Table B to the report and increase the commission from £3.8m, to up to £4.5m
- b) Recommend the Combined Authority Board delegates authority to the Interim Associate Director of Skills in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer, to enter into and sign contracts for services with the Independent Training Providers set out in the paper
- c) Note the significant progress made through this procurement process to broaden the training provider market and widen choice and learning opportunities for our citizens and businesses

## 80. Addressing Further Education 'Cold Spots' in East Cambridgeshire and St Neots

The Committee considered a report which sought approval for the creation of a new budget line in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the Further Education (FE) Cold Spots programme, allocating £225,000 for 2022/23, as per the allocated budget profile, shown in Table A of the report. The report also sought approval to delegate authority to the Interim Associate Skills Director, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer to procure, enter into and sign contracts with suitable consultants to produce business cases for the two projects.

The Committee received two questions from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on this report. The written responses were read out and can be found at appendix 1 of the minutes. An action arose from the response to the second question in relation to data on Further Education enrolments who either studied or lived in the Combined Authority area. Further detailed information to be provided in a paper that would be circulated outside of the meeting. **ACTION**

In particular, the presenting officers highlighted:

- At the July Skills Committee Members received the Project Initiation Document for Further Education cold spots in East Cambridge and St Neots.
- The proposal was to create two new Further Education provisions subject to feasibility and business cases.
- The report sought formal approval to go forward with stage one of the project which was to create a new budget line in the MTFP for the Further Education Cold Spots Programme £225,000 for 2022/23.
- Two local advisory groups would be set up to provide insight and advice to steer the project. Officers were working with Huntingdonshire District Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council to look at membership of these groups. The groups would first meet in October 2022.
- Consultants would be contracted to produce the feasibility study and business cases.
- The County Council input into the 16-18 and 19-25 SEND aspects of the new provisions. This was key in ensuring suitable places in education and training with a focus on technical training.
- For the Adult Education component, a high-level summary of the cold spots data for 2020-21 was included in the report by parish.
- The feasibility study and business cases are scheduled to be presented at the March 2023 Committee.

Discussing the report Members:

- Expressed their support of the programme and the data provided and acknowledged that the feasibility study would be crucial in understanding where learners are and the provision they require, and the barriers to learners including cost and transport. The Chair congratulated the officers on their progress in relation to the programme to get it to this stage.
- Queried whether if there had been concerns with provision in St Neots historically why nothing had been done previously to tackle this as Huntingdonshire Regional College and Cambridge Regional College had worked in the area and had there been a need for an outlier position then this should have already been picked up. Members noted the increased housing and development in the area and acknowledged that this would be picked up in the Business Case. The Interim Associate Skills Director stated that unless there was a clear-cut sustainable demand highlighted in the feasibility study and business case then the provision would not go ahead. She stated that the terms of reference would be critical for the feasibility study before any

investment was agreed to ensure the study was accurate and reflects the questions that needed to be answered.

In bringing the debate to a close the Chair thanked the officers for bringing the work forward quickly. She explained that there had been a demand on Cambridgeshire County Council's Capital Programme to build a large number of schools across the County and that there had been particular growth in the St Neots area and Ely and that there was predicted growth in Soham. She explained in parallel the Combined Authority had responsibility for post 16 education in these areas. She stated that members needed to remain open minded about how the provision should be delivered. She looked forward to the report coming back to Committee in November.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Recommend to the Combined Authority Board, approval for the creation of a new budget line in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the FE Cold Spots programme, allocating £225,000 for 2022/23, as per the allocated budget profile, shown in Table A in this report.
- b) Recommend the Combined Authority Board, to delegate authority to the Interim Associate Director of Skills in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer to procure, enter into and sign contracts with suitable consultants to produce business cases for the two projects.
- c) Note the timelines and delivery milestones for the two projects.

## 81. Multiply - the approach to programme delivery

The Committee received a report about the new Multiply programme, and the proposed creation of a new budget line in the Medium -Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to manage and administer the three-year grant funding allocation of £3,999,186 from the Department for Education (DfE). The report also outlined the necessary delegations for entering in to and signing grant and contracts for services with suitable providers.

The Interim Associate Skills Director updated the Committee on the requirement to take the report straight to Board for approval following the publication of the report as there was a need to submit the agreement by Friday 2 September.

The Committee received a question from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on this report. The written responses were read out and can be found at appendix 1 of the minutes.

In particular, the presenting officers highlighted:

- Mayoral Combined Authorities and upper-tier local authorities in England were expected to submit an Investment Plan for their allocation of funding for the new Multiply - adult numeracy programme. The Investment Plan was shared with the Skills Committee on 4 July 2022, having firstly been approved by the Combined Authority Board on 27 June 2022. The DfE had subsequently approved the Investment Plan.
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough had been allocated £3,999,186 over three financial years
- The over-view of proposed delivery 'On-Menu' Interventions could be found at 2.4 of the report, and additional 'Off-Menu Activities' at 2.5
- The proposed funding allocation could be found at 2.8 of the report.
- The DfE had allowed ten per cent of the total allocation to be claimed for programme management by the accountable body. This equated to £399,920 over the three-year period.
- Cambridgeshire Insights had undertaken a detailed analysis which would help the Combined Authority to direct the delivery of the provision.

#### Discussing the report Members:

- Highlighted that the key to the success of the programme would be how it was delivered as a different style of learning would need to be adopted to support learners coming on to the programme. The Interim Associate Skills Director stated that family learning was key and that the programme would be going into schools and the workplace, taking learning to the learners, targeting provision in a very different way.
- Requested that prisoners, those that had left care and the armed forces were included in the programme. Officers explained that as they mobilised delivery partners, delivery plans would be developed and a high-level summary of interventions would be produced and reported to the Committee. **ACTION**
- A Member commented that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Region of Learning was not included in the list of Strategic Partnerships and this had been mentioned at the Combined Authority Board meeting. He commented that in particular their Digital Badging provided a method for employers to look at how individuals had undertook learning. He requested that the Region of Learning be invited to one of the informal Committee sessions. **ACTION**
- Questioned whether the full Management fee identified in the paper would be required and requested a breakdown of the costs required. Officers explained that the figure was an estimate made before the approval of the funding and that officers would now produce a breakdown of the required costs across the three years. **ACTION**

- Sought clarification on why half of the potential delivery time had lapsed. Officers stated that this was due to how the DfE had administered the fund and when funding was received by the authority.
- Highlighted that the data in the report showed low attainment in some schools and requested further information, in particular in the area of Peterborough, about what was being done to tackle this at school level. Officers stated that this was not on the remit of the Skills Committee as this sat with the education responsibilities of the City and County Councils. Officers acknowledged that there was a need to create a joined-up system. Officers explained that there was a proposal in the Employment and Skills Strategy delivery plan to establish an Education Committee which had been identified as part of the devolution deal.
- A Member queried why grant funded colleges received less than the ITPs and why more money was not going to the Peterborough area, where it was needed. Officers reiterated that ITP funding was based on performance. Officers explained that the initial funding allocations were based on past delivery of numeracy in order to make the initial award. Officers stated that with the contracts management process in place the money could be moved around based on actual delivery and that further information could be provided once the operational plans were in place. **ACTION**

It was resolved to note the report.

### Part 3 - Delivery

#### 82. Department for Education (DfE) Funding and Accountability Consultation

The Committee received a report that gave an update on the latest funding and accountability consultation being undertaken by the Department for Education (DfE) and the potential risks and opportunities for the Combined Authority's devolved skills programme. The consultation closes on 21 September 2022 and Members were invited to provide input into the Combined Authority's response in writing, to the Skills Team following discussion at Committee.

In particular, the presenting officers highlighted:

- A summary of the key reforms included: Simplifying the funding system process and rules including multi-year funding allocations. Funding is currently allocated on an annual basis; a Fairer funding system – moving towards a needs-based funding system supporting levelling up, looking at deprivation and mortality and outcomes for learners and employers and value for money for tax payers, by reforming the funding rates.

Discussing the report Members:



- Queried whether a requirement for a Needs Based Analysis would be included as part of the submission. Officers stated that in the first consultation response, they had strongly lobbied for a needs-based formula and the inclusion of deprivation and rurality to be taken into account and for modelling of data to be done across the country to feed into how the money would be distributed. The Interim Associate Skills Director commented that the DfE had not gone far enough in creating a single-pot and thereby simplifying the funding system. Feedback on this would be included in the Combined Authority's response.
- Requested an item on the Local Skills Improvement Plans at an informal Skills Committee session. **ACTION**
- Queried whether there were any alternative, more holistic methods of inspection available other than OFSTED to look at how well providers were doing to meet skills need. Officers explained that there were other data sources that could be used including the new FE Dashboard that will be published by the DfE. Officers stated that as well as this there is a diagnostic process that the FE Commissioner undertakes and under the proposals there would be an increase in preventative diagnostic work with colleges, and potentially local authority Adult Education providers being able to access this support from the FE Commissioner.
- The Chair encouraged the Combined Authority not to be restrained in its response.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the Department for Education's second Funding and Accountability Consultation and the implications for the Combined Authority.
- b) Delegate sign off, of a formal response to the consultation, to the Interim Associate Director of Skills in consultation with Chair of the Committee.

### 83. Skills Bootcamps

The Committee received a report that gave an update on the contracts awarded to Training Providers for the delivery of the Wave Three Skills Bootcamp programme, following a competitive procurement exercise, since grant funding was secured for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area funded by the Department for Education (DfE) through the National Skills Fund. This paper outlined how the Skills Bootcamps would be delivered.

The Committee received a question from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on this report. The written responses were read out and can be found at appendix 1 of the minutes.

Discussing the report Members:

- Questioned if there were any outcome statistics available and if this could be reviewed by area. The Interim Associate Skills Director stated that the providers did not get funding if they were not able to demonstrate the outcomes. She explained that some of the current AEB providers were not wanting to enter in to this area due to the tough requirements. Members queried whether this would have a major impact on the future delivery of bootcamps. The Interim Associate Skills Director stated that in time providers would be more prepared to enter into these arrangements particularly if longer- term funding cycles were agreed.
- A Member queried if the 'Region of Learning' could be involved on the Bootcamps programme. The Associate Skills Director explained that they already worked with Growth Works for Skills and therefore they could publicise the bootcamps on their platform.

It was resolved to:

Note the update of contracts awarded to Training Providers following a competitive Procurement exercise.

#### 84. Employment and Skills Strategy Implementation Plan - Final Draft

The Committee received a report that provided an update on the development of the Employment and Skills Strategy Implementation Plan. The plan would be taken into consideration as the Implementation plan for the Economic Growth Strategy Implementation Plan which would be developed in the Autumn.

In particular, the Interim Associate Skills Director highlighted:

- How the governance for the strategy could be taken forward . The CA were undertaking a full governance review and any of the recommendations would be considered as part of the overall review. An Education Committee had been included as part of the review; this was in the devolution deal but had not yet been enacted. This is where the triangulation would happen in terms with the work with schools. The Associate Skills Director explained that the terms of reference for the Education Committee were in development which would come back to Committee for discussion and would need to be approved by CA Board. She explained that she would circulate the relevant paragraph from the Devolution Agreement to the Committee. **ACTION**
- Long term outcomes and system change projects were highlighted in the action plan. Working with partners in different ways, working alongside the LSIP and it had been announced that the Cambridgeshire Chamber of Commerce were now the Employer Representative Body (ERB) for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough region and officers were working closely with them to ensure that the LSIP is a success. A member of staff would be seconded to the Cambridgeshire Chamber of Commerce on a part time basis.

Discussing the report Members:

- Queried if there would be any modelling done in relation to the proposed congestion charging in Cambridge and what impact that might have for employment and access to skills. The Associate Skills Director stated that they would be able to commission some work to look at this. There was also a proposal for a joint Transport and Skills Group to look further at these issues, recognising that one of the biggest barriers into accessing skills provision was connectivity.
- Queried if this was the final implementation plan and if further input could be made. The Associate Skills Director confirmed that the implementation was an iterative document and changes would be made to it as and when required.
- A Member questioned what Districts would be doing in terms of their own plans and if Peterborough had a plan. The Associate Skills Director stated that a number of districts had developed their own plans aligned to the strategy. She explained that Peterborough currently didn't have a plan developed but that they would work with colleagues on this.
- Highlighted that SMEs were mentioned in the plan but needed to include more specifically. The Associate Skills Director noted this.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Approve the draft Employment and Skills Strategy implementation Plan.

## 85. A Summary of the Employment and Skills Board Meeting 12 July 2022

The Committee considered a report that summarised the meeting of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority Employment and Skills Board (ESB), which includes the role of The Combined Authority's Skills Advisory Panel (SAP), which took place on 12 July 2022.

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the paper which provides an overview of the recent Employment and Skills Board held on 12 July 2022.

## 86. Budget and Performance Report

The Committee received a report that gave an update on the outturn position for 2021/22 and to provide a first analysis of the 2022/23 budgets. The report also provides a performance update on Skills projects and a trajectory of expected performance against devolution deal objectives.

The Committee received a question from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on this report. The written responses were read out and can be found at appendix 1 of the minutes.

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the updated 2021/22 forecast outturn position for Skills related budgets.
- b) Note the 2022/23 Skills related budgets.

## 87. Skills Committee Agenda Plan – September 2022

Members requested that the Growth Works Update Report was added to the agenda plan. **ACTION**

It was resolved to note the agenda plan.