



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Skills Committee Minutes

Meeting: Wednesday 16 March 2022

Venue: Sand Martin House, Peterborough

Time: 10.00am – 11.40am

Present:

Cllr Lucy Nethsingha – Chair and Member for Cambridgeshire County Council

Cllr David Mason – Fenland District Council

Cllr Eileen Wilson - South Cambridgeshire District Council

Cllr Jon Neish - Huntingdonshire District Council

Cllr Lis Every - East Cambridgeshire District Council

Cllr Lynne Ayres - Peterborough City Council

Apologies: Councillors Niamh Sweeney and Chris Seaton (Councillor D Mason substituting)

Part 1 - Governance Items

52. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest and Announcements

Apologies were received from Councillor Niamh Sweeny and Councillor Chris Seaton (Councillor David Mason substituting).

Councillors Neish and Every declared a non-statutory interest with regard to agenda item 3, Adult Education Budget Funding Allocations and Proposed Policy Changes 2022-23 , as members of the Armed Forces Community Covenant Board.

Councillors Every and Ayres declared a non-statutory interest with regard to agenda item 7, Health and Care Sector Work Academy, as members of the Health and Social Care Academy Steering Group.

53. Minutes of the Skills Committee meeting on 17 January 2022 and Actions

The minutes of the meeting on 17 January 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

The action log was noted.

54. Public Questions

No public questions were received.

55. Adult Education Budget – Funding Allocations and Proposed Policy Changes for 2022/23

The Committee received a report which set out proposed spending of the £11,977,722 received from the Department of Education for the 2022/23 academic year for the Adult Education Budget and £994,964 for level 3 courses from the National Skills Fund. The budget for the 2022/23 year will be c.£15 million with the carry-forward of recycled funding from the previous three academic years.

In particular, the presenting officers highlighted that:

- The report focused on recurrent funding allocations to colleges and adult learning institutes only, that are commissioned through a grant funding agreement. A separate procurement process for Independent Training Providers, in the private and charitable sector is being launched via an open tender.
- One of the benefits of devolution is that unspent AEB is retained in the sub-region as recycled funds for the benefit of our citizens and businesses. This enables us implement funding flexibilities and policy changes which seek to increase and widen participation in adult learning and skills.
- Funding flexibilities and policy changes implemented in previous years will be retained and additional funding flexibilities are proposed: 1) implementing fully-funded second level 3 qualification flexibilities to allow for in-work - progression and access to higher education; 2) provision of fully-funded English for Speakers of Other Languages in the workplace; 3) Clearer defined community learning courses; 4) increasing the low wage scheme threshold from £20,000 to £21,000, before fees become payable; 5) increasing teacher training with fully-funded TESOL courses; 6) introduction of green awareness and carbon literacy training for all learners; 7) funding for bespoke employer programmes; 8) expanding support for care leavers and the armed force community to participate in education and access employment.
- Spending would tackle inequalities, support local residents to access local jobs, improve quality of life and increase available skilled workforce to fill local vacancies.

- An external impact evaluation will be commissioned spanning the three-year implementation of the Adult Education Budget since devolution, reporting on the impact and efficacy of funding flexibilities.

In discussing the report Members:

- Confirmed that level 3 access courses to university were funded through AEB subject to wage threshold eligibility criteria, and that advanced learner loans were also available;
- Asked how providers were increasing uptake in harder-to-reach groups and how the supply of courses were balanced with future need. The officer responded that this would be achieved through partnership work across the whole of the system, and utilising feedback from provider community/employer engagement;
- Sought an update on a letter written from the Combined Authority to the Government regarding their proposal to devolve choice of provider to employers through Local Skills Improvement Plans [LSIPs]. The officer responded that the bill was being passed through parliament and that several areas were involved in piloting. Combined Authorities would still be required to give due regard to the LSIP for the area. The Skills Advisory Panel funding ends end-March and an extension depended on the Department for Education;
- Requested the addition of a paper on green jobs on the agenda forward plan. The officer stated that green jobs would come to Committee as part of the report on the Skills Strategies' action and implementation plan. She elaborated that current work on the project included future need analysis, procurement, and curriculum and supply chain development;
- Queried why the two-million-pound underspend wasn't reallocated to providers. The officer responded that the underspend had been reported at every Skills Committee. It was the result of an accumulation of funds, as well as increased underspend during the pandemic. Devolution means that that unspent AEB across all providers could be retained locally for recycling for adult education, rather than returned to the treasury as under the national non-devolved system. The officer confirmed that for those providers who are delivering ahead of their profile, providers can make an in-year business case for growth. For example, in January 2022, circa £0.5 was reallocated to high-performing providers;
- Clarified that in-year performance monitoring is undertaken by the Combined Authority. Formal quarterly performance monitoring meetings are held with all providers; monthly data returns are received and this allows delivery of providers to be robustly monitored;
- The Combined Authority's objective is to increase the share of the skills funding that was received in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough providing evidence of impact and delivery;

- Established that the provision planning process would commence, once the funding allocations have been received by providers. The Combined Authority will then review the aggregate picture, coverage by grant funded providers and that gaps in provision would be commissioned through more specialist independent training providers;
- Noted that a bursary scheme had been launched for 19-22 year old care leavers from September 2021 and to date had supported over sixty individuals in the first year. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough was the only combined authority to provide this support;
- Clarified that officers are taking a whole-system approach by working in partnership with DWP, Ministry of Defence to identify the gaps armed covenant forces to fill gaps in provision for the armed forces.

It was resolved unanimously to recommend that the Combined Authority Board:

- a) Recommend the Combined Authority Board approve the funding allocations for the 2022/23 academic year, from the devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) to the grant-holders, set out in Table A to the report.
- b) Recommend the Combined Authority Board approve the funding allocations for the 2022/23 academic year, from the delegated National Skills Fund, for level 3 courses, to the grant-holders, set out in Table A to the report.
- c) Delegate authority to the Interim Associate Director of Skills in consultation with Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer, to enter into multi-year grant funding agreements, with the grant holders set out in Table A to the report, for a three-year period.
- d) Recommend the Combined Authority Board approve the funding policy changes and flexibilities for the 2022/23 academic year.

56. Skills and Labour Market Insights Report

The Committee considered a report which provided an overview of key labour market and skills data. Following feedback from members, officers were keen to develop a 'headline' report with key data and information that will strike the right balance between providing sufficient information for the Committee to make informed judgements and decisions, whilst not overwhelming the committee. An additional report that had been produced for the Business Board was also shared with the Committee.

Cambridgeshire Insights, who provide a data management and analysis function for the Combined Authority, will produce the headline reports bi-annually, to ensure key data, analysis, and insight for the sub-region were consistent.

Presenting the March 2022 report, officers highlighted:

- the numbers and percentages relying on government support schemes through the pandemic;
- early indications were that claimant numbers continued to decrease, but closer scrutiny was required in Peterborough and Fenland, where there had been increases;
- the impact on young people also required close scrutiny, as young people had been most impacted by the pandemic;
- there had been 12,100 employments furloughed at the end of September 2021, across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and a key question was what had happened to those individuals since furlough had ended.

In discussing the report:

- noting the data on vacancies, a Member asked if gaps in skills were being identified from the data and training provided accordingly. The officer responded that it was complex, and there was always a lag between jobs and training. A number of those claiming benefit had significant additional needs, and the options available for those with complex needs were outlined;
- in response to a question on Ukrainian refugees, it was confirmed that there was work taking place with the Strategic Migration Partnership, but at the time of the meeting, there was no specific government guidance on employment and training for Ukrainian refugees. It would be important to make the right offer, and to cover areas such as language skills;
- a number of Members praised the report and asked how it could be disseminated more widely. It was confirmed that it would be shared with all local authority economic development teams, and Cambridgeshire Insights already had their own website where data analysis reports are regularly shared. Additionally it would be regularly shared on the Combined Authority's [Labour Market Information website](#), which catered for both leaders and learners, including young people;
- a Member expressed concern regarding apprenticeships, which were still down by 30% compared to pre-pandemic levels. Officers explained how the Combined Authority was supporting both businesses and FE colleges, raising the profile of apprenticeships with employers.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note the skills and labour market headline report;
- b) provide feedback on which headline data and insights would be helpful to inform members, with a strategic over-view of skills and the economy.

57. Digital Skills Bootcamps Update

The Committee received a report which updated the committee on the delivery and performance of the Digital Skills Bootcamp Wave 2 and the application for Wave 3 funding.

In particular, the presenting officers highlighted:

- Wave Two: That the contract for delivering bootcamps had been delayed and therefore the delivery window was reduced. This had resulted in 531 enrolments on paper publication. It was noted that Cambridge Regional College had reduced their original allocation. These learner numbers had consequently been reallocated to another provider;
- The Government had accepted a request for flexibility which allowed learners to complete courses after March – the original contract end date;
- Wave Three: Since publication, £4.98 million had been awarded for 2022/23 Bootcamp Wave Three. This funding would be used to award funding to training providers through a competitive procurement process for courses in construction, digital, green, advanced manufacturing, and accelerated routes to apprenticeships.

In discussing the report, Members:

- Congratulated the Service on the funding award and suggested improving accessibility broadening training locations. The officer responded that Wave Three grant funding would enable improved accessibility by extending an offer of online blended face to face bootcamps, and by increasing the number of providers;
- Showed concern about uptake for Cambridge Regional College offer and asked whether regional college would be included in the third bootcamp wave. The officer explained that Regional College had suffered from the short timescales, delay in contract award and staff sickness which had affected their offer. Employer demand for their product had then been lower than expected due to its length;
- Argued that the number of tutors at Cambridge Regional College would need to be increased in Wave Three to meet demand. The officer stated that CRC were not currently recruiting tutors, but that additional providers – such as Purple Beard and the Skills Network had been commissioned and were delivering courses;
- Requested a copy of the Ofsted survey and whether it would show the challenges incurred by providers. The officer responded that the survey did not name individual colleges but included data on learner and employer responses/destinations/ outcomes. The Combined Authority would utilise lessons learned from the survey to inform Wave Three;

- Requested a breakdown of the ages of learners enrolled onto Skills Bootcamps. Action required.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the paper that provides an update on the contract for Skills Bootcamps, Wave Two and future intent of Wave Three.

58. Health and Care Sector Work Academy

Members considered an update on the performance of the Health and Care Sector Work Academy (HCSWA), which the Committee had requested at its previous meeting. The HCSWA was launched in March 2018 but as at March 2021, the employment pilot had been £3M underspent and an extension had been approved by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

In presenting the report, officers highlighted:

- The strong performance of the initiative pre-pandemic, especially in relation to “out of sector” participants;
- The significant interest in the scheme nationally;
- The challenges presented by the scheme being apprenticeship based, as 20% of time off job was a significant burden to small care homes. The delay in DWP signing off the scheme, followed closely by the start of the pandemic had also been a significant challenge, as care homes had been dealing with other issues;
- How recruitment of both learners and providers had progressed as pandemic measures had eased;
- How resources were being targeted to meet the work plan objectives over the next twelve months, to ensure that the programme met the needs of both employers and residents, and the importance of performance management in that process;
- The proposed process of reporting back to the Skills Committee, partners and more widely.

In discussing the report:

- Councillor Every commented that as a member of the Steering Group, she had been reassured by the progress reported to the recent Steering Group meeting. She stressed how vitally important it was for all partners to work together to support this scheme;

- In response to a query on “non registered care services”, it was noted that this referred to care providers who did not meet the thresholds for registration. They would be encouraged to become registered providers, and Members would be kept updated on progress with those employers;
- Members applauded the progress made to date and the importance of ensuring that the Academy succeeded.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the performance of the Health and Care Sector Work Academy to date.

59. Budget & Performance Report

The Committee received a report detailing the Budget and Performance Report within the Skills Committee remit.

In particular, the presenting officers highlighted:

- Revenue income: midlife MOT figures had been received and enterprise zone funding was imminent.
- Revenue expenditure: There was a reduction in expected costs for the year, but the underspend which has been reported at previous Skills Committees, in the AEB area would be reduced by an increase in in-year growth cases and a new provider being commissioned.
- Careers and Enterprise Company: The budget line would increase following invoice processing for careers hub delivery, start date: September 2022.
- Skills Advisory Panel Funding: The underspend was expected to roll into next academic year.
- Performance Reporting: The performance matrix was under review and would likely change.

In discussing the report, individual Members:

- Requested more details on the Workers Education Association. The officer responded that this was the largest charitable and national provider of adult education. They already had a footprint in the sub-region prior to devolution and continued to sub-contract through Cambridgeshire Skills. WEA had not been successful in the initial procurement exercise following devolution, not having had their legal status as a Designated Specialist Institution recognised. To build provider capacity, WEA would now be directly commissioned by the Combined Authority for predominantly provision of Level 2 and below courses;

- Expressed concern that there were delays in the Careers and Enterprise Company budget line. The officer reassured Members that there was not a delay in delivery, but in back-office management delay. This had meant funding was not being passed through to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Growth Company. Members were satisfied by the response but noted that this should be monitored;
- Expressed concern for the RAG rating of the University of Peterborough Phase 1,2,3. The officer explained that the RAG system formatting had recently changed, but officers were not concerned and the project was meeting timescales. The ratings were caused by: issues surrounding financial contingency in Phase 1, internal financial detailing in Phase 2, and required sign-offs for Phase 3 (this had now been completed).
- Hoped that in future there would be over-performance rather than an underspend and asked whether there was provision for this, should it occur. The officer responded that funding could be redistributed among projects within the Adult Education Budget funding lines, granting flexibility to these projects. Funding for other projects could change following approval from officers, the Committee and the Board.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the update and financial position relating to the revenue funding lines within the Skills Committee remit.

60. A Summary of the Employment and Skills Board Meeting 14th December 2021

The Committee received an update on the December meeting of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Employment & Skills Board (ESB), which included the role of the Combined Authority's Skills Advisory Panel (SAP). It was noted that there had been a further Board meeting since December. Most of the items discussed at those meetings had also been considered by the Skills Committee. Of particular interest was the findings of the [Apprenticeship Survey](#), for which there had been over 70 responses, and had generated useful information, especially on the use of the Apprenticeship Levy.

It was noted that there had been some turnover of membership on the Employment and Skills Board, mainly due to retirement or members changing jobs. The majority of members were employers, providers, or partners from representative groups. Any suggestions for potential new members from the Skills Committee were welcomed

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the paper which provides an overview of the recent Employment and Skills Board held on 14th December 2021.

61. Skills Committee Agenda Plan – March 2022

It was resolved to note the agenda plan.