



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Skills Committee Minutes

Meeting: Wednesday 10 November 2021

Venue: Multi-Function Room, New Shire Hall, Cambridgeshire County Council

Time: 10.00am – 11.58am

Present:

Cllr Lucy Nethsingha – Chair and Member for Cambridgeshire County Council

Cllr Chris Seaton - Member for Fenland District Council

Cllr Chris Seaton – 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

Part 1 - Governance Items

27. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest and Announcements

No apologies received.

Councillor Chris Seaton declared an interest as his wife worked at the College for West Anglia in the Apprenticeships Division.

28. Minutes of the Skills Committee meeting on 13th September 2021 and Actions

The minutes of the meeting on 13th September 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

The action log was noted.

29. Public Questions

No public questions were received.

30. Skills Committee Agenda Plan

It was resolved to note the agenda plan.

31. Combined Authority Forward Plan

It was resolved to note the Forward Plan.

Part 2 – Recommendations to the Combined Authority Board

32. Adult Education Budget - Commissioning Statement and Approach for 2022/23

The Committee received a report detailing the proposed Adult Education Budget - Commissioning Statement and Approach for 2022/23.

The Committee received a question from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to this report and the written response was read out and can be found at appendix 1 of the minutes.

Introducing the report officers drew Members attention to the broad principles for the refreshed commissioning strategy and the seven wider commissioning themes for all providers, outlined in section five of the report, as well as the procurement approach and timelines.

Discussing the report Members;

- Queried what conversations had been had regarding Community Learning in relation to Plan-led Funding for Grant Providers and what the offer might look like. Officers clarified that the plan was to have a better focus on community learning and clarifying the four categories outlined in the commissioning approach. This would ensure there was a clearer definition of the outcomes that are sought. The Combined Authority plans AEB based on an 80:20 funding ratio of Adult Skills to Community Learning to ensure we have a good mix of provision across the region.
- Queried the new commissioning approach in relation to schools no longer being part of the process and how this might work out. Officers committed to feeding back to Committee on this matter. **ACTION.** Officers stated that the detailed commissioning specifications were yet to be published and that as the detail unfolded officers would ensure that gaps in provision were addressed and providers would be able to flex their provision accordingly.

- Sought clarity on local village colleges and whether they would get funding year on year so that they could develop their programmes in advance. Officers stated the Combined Authority had a grant agreement with Cambridgeshire County Council and they in turn funded the Village Colleges. Officers explained, subject to approval, a move to a three-year funding cycle would help to address the funding uncertainty.
- Queried whether it had been difficult to source local providers. Officers explained the strategy was to widen and develop a marketplace of providers and build local provision to support the place-based approach. Officers stated there had been some success in commissioning local providers, in-year. Officers explained there would be a launch event with an opportunity to promote and engage with providers. Commissioning will be linked to business need, which was analysed through monthly labour market information. Officers explained that the Employment and Skills Board also acted in an advisory capacity to ensure that Business need was captured effectively.
- Highlighted that the focus was mainly in relation to in-work training and development and not in communities and volunteering and that the social impact was extremely important. Officers highlighted that there had been a number of research studies on the impacts of volunteering on skills and that this was referenced in the seventh Commissioning Theme of 'Placed Based Focus'. Officers highlighted that funding for community learning sat with the two local authority providers. The Combined Authority's funding settlement is expected in January from the Department for Education and that they hoped to update the Committee on this in the new year. Officers acknowledged that work was not the only outcome of adult education that was considered but that there was a big focus given the wider benefits. Officers stated that when the second-year evaluation was published in January this would give more data in relation to performance.
- A Member stated that Fenland was predominantly made up of Small to Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) and there were limited opportunities to expand workforces in these areas and queried how provision for SMEs would be developed in the future. Officers explained that they continued to identify gaps and needs and that work was underway to providing brokerage for SMEs. The Director of Business and Skills stated that there needed to be a place-based focus on capacity building for training with SMEs and examples of this included the Chatteris Apprenticeship Hub which was funded by Local Growth Funding. He explained that officers were working with Fenland District Council to encourage them to include an enhancement of Further Education in Wisbech College as part of their Levelling Up Fund submission.
- Highlighted that the approach covered the period up to 2021 and that there would no doubt be a number of changes in commissioning over this period, and queried whether there would be flexibility in the approach. Officers stated that there would be a further report to Committee to agree the funding allocations for the three-year window and more context would be provided in this report. Officers stated that contracts for Independent Training Providers

would be for a five-year period with a break cause every year, subject to performance.

It was resolved by unanimously to:

- a) Approval of the proposed commissioning approach for the devolved Adult Education Budget from 2022-23 academic year onwards, to procure Independent Training Providers under contracts for services for up to £3m per year, subject to Department for Education (DfE) awarding the funding.
- b) Approval of the implementation of three-year Plan-Led Funding, for the commissioning of Further Education Colleges and Local Authorities, operating under grant funding, from 2022-23 academic year onwards, subject to DfE funding awards.
- c) Delegation to the Director of Business and Skills in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer, to enter into multi-year grant funding agreements with providers on behalf of the Combined Authority, following approval of three-year Plan.
- d) Delegation to the Director of Business and Skills in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer, to enter into contracts for services with Independent Training Providers on behalf of the Combined Authority, following conclusion of the commissioning process outlined in this report.

Part 3 – Programme Delivery

33. Community Renewal Fund Update

The Director of Business and Skills gave a verbal update on the Community Renewal Fund. He highlighted the following points to the Committee:

- On 3 November the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announced the successful bids to the Community Renewal Fund in England which was £125.5 million of which the CPCA received £3.4 million.
- The two proposals that were successful were Start and Grow for £2.48 million and Turning Point for £847,000.
- The Start to Grow Bid was the largest of all 477 of the projects approved for funding.
- Project mobilisation commenced, and government had extended delivery of the projects to March 2023.
- The projects are focused on what can be done quickly now in the recovery phase of the Covid pandemic, so are designed to be short term, six-month projects, set to finish by June 2022.
- The Turning Point project focused on the transition points of peoples working lives and activities around these transition points, in particular people coming back from furlough.

- Start to Grow was a classic start up programme, stimulating people to start up their own businesses, developing entrepreneurs.
- Five projects were not supported.

Discussing the update Members:

- Requested that the information on both projects be circulated quickly to Members. The Director of Business and Skills stated that the briefing would be circulated to the Committee straight after the meeting.**ACTION**
- Sought clarity on how Members could support the projects in their Districts going forwards. The Director of Business and Skills explained the Skills Brokerage Contract would be extended through Growth Works to get these projects mobilised quickly. The Director of Business and Skills stated that the mobilisation plans for both projects would be circulated after the meeting.**ACTION**

34. Employment and Skills Strategy

The Committee received a report detailing the Employment and Skills Strategy.

The Committee received three questions from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation this report and the written response was read out and can be found at appendix 1 of the minutes.

Introducing the report officers updated the Committee on the progress of the drafting of the Employment and Skills Strategy since the last meeting. Officers explained that a further stakeholder engagement session was held on 11 October with representation from providers, employers, schools, employer representative bodies, district councils and district councillors. Officers stated that short and long-term objectives were shared and that participants were also asked to name their priorities for action. Officers explained that this feedback had been included in the drafting of the Employment and Skills Strategy. Officers explained that an action plan would be drafted to sit along side the Strategy and that this plan would be brought to Committee for review every six months. Officers stated that the action plan would be place based and that local based sponsors would be sought for each area to drive the plan forwards. Officers stated that the strategy would be fed into the wider Business and Skills Strategy which was due to go to Board for sign off in April 2022.

Discussing the report Members:

- Queried the use of the words 'we' and 'life-long' in the strategy. Officers agreed to review the use of these words.**ACTION**
- Highlighted that under figure 16 progress on 2019 Skills Strategy Action, under the action for the University of Peterborough it still stated that the case for success was not yet proven. A Member stated that they had queried this

at the last meeting but that the wording had not yet been changed. The Director of Business and Skills explained that the wording should have been changed and it was an inaccurate phrase. Officers explained that the wording would be changed to reflect that it was an action in process as the University was in development.

- Acknowledged that the strategy illustrated support in rural areas and sought further assurances that improvements would be made in these areas, particularly in Fenland. The Director of Business and Skills stated that the Combined Authority would be receiving resources from the Levelling Up Fund and the Community Renewal Funding would be crucial for implementing these improvements.
- Welcomed the developments and progress that had been made by officers on the strategy over the last six months.
- Queried whether there were other Sector Based Work Academies other than the Health and Social Care Academy. Officers stated that there were other sector academies and skills boot camps and that officers were continuing to look at different models.
- Highlighted that Figure 6 on page 51 of the agenda should be reviewed as it was too complex. **ACTION**
- Sought clarity on whether the progression rate data on pages 51-52 of the strategy were based on home postcodes or where students were based, as progression rates in South Cambridgeshire for under 18s showed the lowest figure. Officers explained that the data was in relation to where students studied and not where they lived. The Chair requested this to be clarified in the document. **ACTION**
- Discussed the lack of destination data on a residency level and the need for funding to promote collaboration rather than competition. The Chair asked the Director of Business and Skills to review how this could be communicated with government. **ACTION**

It was resolved by unanimously to:

- a) Note the Employment and Skills Strategy.

35. Adult Education Budget: English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Local Planning

The Committee received a report which was seeking approval to implement ESOL Local Planning Partnerships – one for the North (Peterborough and Fenland) and one for the South (South Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Cambridge City and East Cambridgeshire).

The Committee received a question from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to this report and the written response was read out and can be found at appendix 1 of the minutes.

Introducing the report officers highlighted a number of points in the report including:

- That Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority was the only Mayoral Combined Authority that fully funded ESOL and it was held as a national exemplar. Approximately £1 million of the Adult Education Budget was spent on ESOL courses.
- Updates on recent government initiatives for Afghan refugees and Hong Kong nationals and their eligibility for AEB. An update of the additional funding that the Combined Authority had registered to claim to reimburse providers and maximise the additional funding available. Previously under these national schemes, funding had not been fully utilised by local areas.
- It had been challenging to gather the data for Afghan and Hong Kong communities in the sub region, but work was ongoing to gather this data from the District Councils and through the Strategic Migration Partnership

Discussing the report Members:

- Queried the changes and new approach and what the cost to the CPCA would be. Officers explained that some of the current challenges in relation to the current system, which were that the current approach was not strategic and did not focus on demand or planning of provision. The current approach was not looking at the wider impacts around community cohesion and integration, health and wellbeing. The new approach would build on national best practise that was currently not being delivered. Officers stated that the new approach was not focused on the spend by provider but on providing the system leadership in order to ensure that the best possible system was established linking to the wider outcomes and driving quality. Officers explained that there was a need to work in co-design with all of the key stakeholders including the key provider Peterborough City College to drive the system change
- Highlighted the need for ESOL teacher training. Officers stated that ESOL Teacher Training had been identified as a gap and work was ongoing to look at how this gap was filled.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the new approach to ESOL Local Planning, which aims to improve the co-ordination, delivery, and impact of ESOL in local communities.
- b) To note the local approach taken with regards to recent Government schemes for different refugee communities, asylum seekers, and migrants.
- c) To note the learner participation data on ESOL courses in the region, following devolution of the Adult Education Budget in 2019/20 and the implementation of fully funded ESOL in 2020/21.

36. Budget & Performance Report

The Committee received a report detailing the Budget & Performance Report up until 31 August 2021.

Introducing the report officers highlighted the key points of the report which included:

- the Forecast Outturn as set out in the report showed a reduction in expected costs for the year of £3,209.6k compared to the budget.
- One of the areas that had contributed to this reduction in costs was the Health and Care Sector Work Academy which forecast a £1.8 million underspend. Officers stated that the re-profiling that had been sought on this budget had now been approved and a paper would be brought to the January Skills Committee and to move the profile across this financial year into the next financial year to end in March 2023, and this would reduce the future deficit.
- Another area that had contributed to the forecast underspend was the AEB devolution programme which showed an underspend of £800,000. Officers explained that a report had been previously brought to Committee by officers regarding the reprofiling of this underspend and establishing a Reserve Fund.

It was resolved by unanimously to:

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

Part 4 – Date of the next meeting

37. It was resolved to:

Note the date of the next meeting as 10th January 2022.