



Skills & Employment Committee – Draft Minutes

Monday 4 September 2023

Venue:	Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, Huntingdon PE29 3TN	
Time:	11.00 to 13.00	
Present:	Councillor Lucy Nethsingha Mayor Dr Nik Johnson Councillor James Lay Councillor Lynne Ayres Councillor Eileen Wilson Councillor Ben Pitts Councillor Ian Benney Councillor Sam Carling Mr Vic Annells Mr Nitin Patel	Chair and Member for Cambridgeshire County Council CPCA Mayor East Cambridgeshire District Council Peterborough City Council South Cambridgeshire District Council Huntingdonshire District Council (Substitute Member) Fenland District Council Cambridge City Council Business Board Representative Business Board Representative
Apologies	Councillor Sam Wakeford	Huntingdonshire District Council

Minutes:

1	Announcements, Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest
1.1	Apologies were received from Cllr Sam Wakeford who was substituted by Cllr Ben Pitts.
1.2	No declarations of interest were made.
2	Minutes of the Skills Committee meeting on 3 July 2023 and Action Log
2.1	The minutes of the meeting on 3 July 2023 were approved as an accurate record subject to the following amendment: <ul style="list-style-type: none">On page four Councillor Sam Carling and Cllr James Lay are noted as members of Cambridge City County Council. This should be Cambridge City Council.
2.2	Updates to the outstanding actions on the action log were given and noted by the Committee. The log would be amended to reflect the updates
3	Public Questions
3.1	A public question had been received and was read out by the Governance Officer. The Chair requested that officers prepare a response to be sent to the questioner and then be published on the website. The question can be found on the website here: (CMIS > Meetings) under additional meeting documents.

<p>4</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p>	<p>Combined Authority Forward Plan</p> <p>Fliss Miller, Assistant Director - Skills, informed the Committee that since publication of the agenda a number of updates had been made to the Forward Plan.</p> <p>There were no comments from the Committee</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>1. That the Combined Authority Forward Plan be noted.</p>
<p>5</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p>	<p>Adult Education Budget (AEB) Impact Evaluation</p> <p>Fliss Miller, Assistant Director - Skills, introduced the report which provided members of the Committee with an update on the Impact Evaluation of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) which had been commissioned by the Combined Authority.</p> <p>The following points were raised in discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Richard Kenny, Executive Director for Economy and Growth, cited Greater Manchester Combined Authority who had, as part of their trailblazer devolution deal, been able to demonstrate to Government and the Department for Education (DfE) how successful devolution had been. The evaluation would give the CPCA a similar opportunity to show the impact of devolution on post 16 education in the area and provide a strong argument for further devolution. b. The Committee gave positive feedback on the session that had been run prior to the meeting which had allowed them to reflect on past activity and focus on what could be done to continue the strong leadership and innovative work being done on the AEB. The Mayor requested a further one-to-one consultation session so that he could give additional feedback and also asked that his appreciation for the team's work and successes with the AEB and, as a consequence the CPCA's highly regarded status in this area, be put on record. c. As a 'client' of the AEB it was important that the views of the Business Board be taken into account as part of the Evaluation. d. The accessibility of any Adult Education training should be a priority when discussing the AEB. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Skills and Employment Committee unanimously resolved to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the progress made in completing an Impact Evaluation of the Adult Education Budget since devolution. 2. Participate in the Focus Group for members on 4 September 2023. <p><u>ACTION:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Officers to arrange further consultation sessions with the Mayor and the Business Board
<p>6</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p>	<p>Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Careers Hub Delivery Focus 2023-24</p> <p>Laura Guymer, Strategic Career Hubs Lead, introduced the report which updated the members on the delivery focus of the Careers hub for the 2023/24 academic year.</p> <p>During discussion the following comments were made:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Feedback from a recent contract review meeting recognised the amount of progress and impact that the Career Hub had had after operating as a full hub for the past year. b) To increase parental involvement officers would look at holding more school-based activities to help those who may not have access to the Internet.

- c) Members would welcome an opportunity for constituent councillors to be directly involved in the Careers Hubs and officers agreed to explore how this could be achieved.
- d) CPCA officers would work with constituent councils' officers to share information and would include them in invitations to any future events.
- e) Officers advised that they worked with a number of Special Education and Disabilities (SEND) schools and had taken on four more this academic year.
- f) There had been some issues with recruitment of Enterprise Advisors mainly because of churn and people moving on. There would be two events held in the next year to try and recruit more advisors. Retention would also be looked at to see how the role could be made more attractive; this could mean flexibility to do one thing well and work across a number of schools, or to take a more strategic role with one school, or to offer more remote working.
- g) Officers were looking to work with local Chambers and the Federation of Small Businesses to amplify the recruitment drive for Enterprise Advisors.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Skills and Employment Committee receive and note the update regarding the delivery focus of the Careers Hub for 2023/24

ACTION:

1. Officers to provide members with a list of the SEND schools that the Careers Hub worked with.

7 Further Education Cold-Spots Projects Update

7.1 Parminder Singh-Garcha, Senior Responsible Officer, introduced the report which provided Members with an update of the Further Education Cold-Spots projects in East Cambridgeshire and St Neots.

7.2 The following points were raised in discussion:

- a) The Chair expressed disappointment with the progress on this issue as it appeared that no significant work had been done over the last six months even though the Committee had made clear that this work was a priority.
- b) Officers assured Members that as part of the feasibility study the demand would be properly evidenced and the wider stake-holder views collected to help inform the approach.
- c) The Citizens Hubs were not a substitute for the Further Education (FE) cold-spots programme being discussed but were there to supplement any potential provision. The Hubs did however provide access to wider employment and skills opportunities in the meantime, as the FE Coldspots projects, if viable, would need a much longer time-line to be developed.
- d) There were now wider data sources available since the development of the initial project documentation, including the census data. The evidence base, and the methodology to capture it, would show both a quantitative and qualitative approach to take into account issues raised by members such as consideration of career aspirations.
- e) The Chair welcomed the Mayor's support in pressing for this issue to become a top priority for the CA.
- f) Regarding the site for an adult learning centre in Ely, the Combined Authority was working with East Cambridgeshire District Council to help source another location and would report back to the Committee on its progress.

RESOLVED:

The Skills and Employment Committee unanimously resolved to:

1. Receive an update on the FE ColdSpots projects in East Cambridgeshire and St Neots.
2. To note the revised milestones for the FE Cold-Spots projects.
3. To note the collaborative work with partners to establish new adult learning and skills provision in St Neots, Soham and Ely.

ACTIONS:

1. Officers to share the tender documents with Members.
2. A written update on the procurement of a location for a Career Hub in Ely to be provided to Members after the meeting
3. A further report on the FE Coldspots Project to be included on the agenda of the next meeting of the Committee.

8 Skills Bootcamps 2024-25 FY

8.1 Melissa Gresswell, Project Manager – Skills Bootcamps and Special Projects, introduced the report which sought a recommendation from the Committee to the Combined Authority Board to approve the submission of a grant proposal to DfE by the 30 September 2023 to secure Skills Bootcamps funding for the 2024-25 Financial Year (FY)

8.2 During discussion the following points were raised:

- a) The percentage of actual starters shown in the table at 3.6 of the report would increase in the second round of data from the DfE because the number of target starts had been varied to 845 for that financial year.
- b) The dropout rate of 14%, although higher than many other areas, was still below the KPI of 20%. There were various reasons that contributed to this dropout rate including people being successful in getting a job before they had completed the course.
- c) The DfE would issue performance figures until January 2024 and as there was a time lag on the data the Committee would see an improvement in completions over this period
- d) Members felt it would be interesting to see where the numbers were coming from in geographical terms as it could highlight where more 'groundwork' needed to be done. There had been a past paper to the Committee which had broken down the figures by region and these would be circulated to Members. The Chair added that a number of the courses were done online so whilst it would be interesting to note the geography of where people undertaking the course were living it would not necessarily show how they had learnt about the course and where they had accessed it.
- e) The 21 grant areas shown in the table included Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) as well as Combined Authorities. The CPCA only received their own data and the rest was anonymised.
- f) The Chair expressed some reservation about underbidding in the grant proposal especially as knowledge of the scheme was gradually increasing. Officers assured Members that the DfE had stated they would be receptive to discussions on further funding should the CPCA find that it had more engagement than anticipated.
- g) The CPCA undertook a competitive procurement exercise to ensure best value for money for course costs but the percentage contributions paid by each party were set nationally. Whether the costs were a blocker to engagement was unknown and needed to be further examined.

RESOLVED:

That the Skills and Employment Committee:

1. Recommend that the CA Board approves the submission of a grant proposal to DfE by the 30 September 2023 to secure Skills Bootcamps funding for the 2024-25 Financial Year (FY)
2. Subject to confirmation of grant funding approval from the Department for education (DfE) recommends that the combined Authority Board delegates authority to the Executive Director for Economy and Growth to procure, enter into, award and extend contracts.

ACTIONS:

1. Officers to provide Members with a breakdown of engagement and uptake of places by geographical region.

	<p>2. Officers to investigate whether the percentage course costs for employers as shown in 3.4 of the report were a blocker to engagement, and to report back to the Committee.</p>
<p>9.</p> <p>9.1</p> <p>9.2</p>	<p>Budget and Performance Report – July 2023</p> <p>Bruna Menegatti, Finance Manager, introduced the report which provided an update of the financial position for 2023/24 and analysis against the 2023/24 budgets up to the period ending July 2023.</p> <p>During discussion, the following points were noted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) September marked the start of the financial planning and budgeting to develop the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). Officers were working with Leaders and Members to shape the development of the budget and asked for a steer on any opportunities, investments or savings before reporting back to the Committee in November b) The Multiply project had a very short turn around and delivery window which had led to an initially slow engagement. Although this had increased and the scheme had become more popular, the money not spent due to the slow start had been taken off the CA’s allocation and could not be used for the second year’s funding. c) The Local Schools Improvement Fund (LSIF) did not appear in the report as it was not channelled through the Combined Authority but went directly to the colleges (Cambridge Regional College being the lead college) for them to distribute. The Combined Authority and the Chamber of Commerce had, however, supported the colleges during the bidding process for this funding. d) There was a variance of circa £1m from the Wave 3 Bootcamps programme but this was ringfenced specifically for this programme and could not be used elsewhere. e) Officers had been asked to be ambitious in their bidding for Wave 3 so although it had been successful not all the monies had been used and drawn down and therefore would be returned to the DfE. f) All the Combined Authorities had sent a very strong message to the DfE that there needed to be much longer lead-in times for new schemes so that predictions and bidding could be more accurate. <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>That the Skills & Employment Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the financial position of the Skills Division for the financial year 23/24 to July 2023. 2. Review and comment on the current Skills and Employment budgets within the Combined Authority’s Medium-Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme.
<p>10.</p> <p>10.1</p>	<p>Skills and Employment Committee Agenda Plan</p> <p>There were no comments from the Committee.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Skills and Employment Committee Agenda Plan be noted.
<p>11.</p>	<p>Exclusion of Press and Public</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Skills and Employment Committee remain in public session.

<p>12.</p> <p>12.1</p> <p>12.2</p>	<p>UK SPF – Skills Projects Mobilisation and Succession Planning for Skills Brokerage Services</p> <p>Fliss Miller, Associate Director Skills, introduced the report which provided members with detailed proposals for the mobilisation of the three Combined Authority wide UK SPF funded people and skills projects as defined within the Combined Authority’s UKSPF Investment and Implementation Plans. The report also provided an overview of how the UKSPF projects will align with CEC funded careers hub activities to form a future Skills brokerage offering, and successor to the current Growth Works with Skills programme which was ending on 31 December 2023.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were noted:</p> <p>a) Members queried whether the employer and business communities had confidence in the Growth Works with Skills branding. CPCA officers and those of the constituent councils working on the proposals felt that although Growth Works was not as widely known as it perhaps should be, it was not perceived as having any negative associations and therefore the brand could be built up, as starting again from scratch would not be helpful.</p> <p>b) The Chair highlighted a small change to recommendation B with the delegated authority being changed to the Executive Director – Economy and Growth rather than the Assistant Director- Skills</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>1. To recommend that the Combined Authority Board delegates authority to the Executive Director – Economy and Growth to proceed to implement plans to mobilise UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) People and Skills funded projects as outlined within this proposal.</p> <p>2. To recommend that the Combined Authority Board approves the proposal outlined within this paper to bring together the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) funded Careers Hub delivery and the UKSPF funded People and Skills projects to provide a successive service to the Growth Works with Skills Programme, and to delegate authority to the Assistant Director – Skills <i>Executive Director – Economy and Skills</i> to proceed to engage in financial, legal and procurement activities as necessary to enact mobilisation plans.</p> <p>3. To recommend that the Combined Authority Board approve the virements across the revenue budgets within the Medium-Term Finance Plan to create the appropriate delivery budgets set out in Appendix 1.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">---o0o---</p> <p>Before closing the meeting, the Chair announced that Fliss Miller, Assistant Director – Skills would be leaving the organisation and so this would be her last meeting as lead officer for the Skills and Employment Committee. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, expressed her heartfelt thanks for all of Fliss’s hard work and support over the past two and half years and wished her well in her new endeavours.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">---o0o---</p>
<p>13</p> <p>13.1</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Monday 6 November 2023</p>

Meeting Ended: 12.41pm