



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Skills Committee

Meeting: Monday 9 January 2023

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

Time: 10.00 am - 12.00 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 Natalie Warren-Green - South Cambridgeshire District Council

Cllr Chris Seaton - Fenland District Council

Cllr Sam Wakeford - Huntingdonshire District Council

Part 1 - Governance Items

102. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest and Announcements

No apologies received and no declarations of interest were made.

103. Minutes of the Skills Committee meeting on 7 November 2022 and Action Log

The minutes of the meeting on 7 November 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

The Interim Associate Skills Director gave an update on the following actions:

- Action 66a Multiply Local Investment Plan - a letter had been drafted but had paused on sending the letter but that it would be send soon.
- Action 91 Careers Hub Operational Plan – Information on the Steering Group was ready and would be sent following the meeting. The first meeting of the Steering Group was due to take place on 6 March 2023.

A member stated that there had not been any recent updates on the Inward Investment Programme, the last being in November 2022, and sought regular updates on progress in this area. **ACTION REQUIRED**

The action log was noted.

104. Public Questions

No public questions were received.

Part 2 – Recommendations to Combined Authority Board

105. The University of Peterborough Phase 3 Living Lab, Full Business Case

The committee received a report that outlined the Full Business Case for Phase 3 Living Lab, of the University of Peterborough project. The Outline Business Case was first presented and reviewed by the Skills Committee on 17 January 2022. The Full Business Case updated the Outline Business Case for Phase 3 to account for the progress made on clarifying the scope of Phase 3 throughout 2022.

In particular, the presenting officer highlighted:

- The main changes moving from an outline to a full business case were;
 - the addition of the proposed location for the second teaching building adjacent to University House;
 - the strategic objectives of the living lab facility;
 - an update on the national economic impacts and an adjusted economic model on student numbers and further sensitivity testing.
 - Extended the period of analysis of the benefits to 15 years
- The Benefit Cost Ratio still remained high and the commercial and financial assessment demonstrated that the second teaching building, alongside the existing teaching building, remained affordable and deliverable.
- Further work had been done around the assessment of further progress measures and they had been tied into the broader strategic objectives for the delivery of the university and the Combined Authority region. This was outlined in section five of the Full Business Case. Further work was required on the appropriate approach for an ongoing review of governance and monitoring arrangements and discussions between partners had highlighted that the governance process would be carried out through the University's Governing Board, providing progress updates to Skills Committee, Business Board and the Combined Authority Board.
- Work on future investment through the university partners was ongoing and a report would be presented to the Skills Committee in the summer.

- The planning application for phase 3 of the university was approved in December 2022 and phase three of the university still remained deliverable and on target.

Discussing the report members:

- Congratulated officers on the current progress with the university and the numbers that had started courses.
- Queried what was meant by a salary uplift for undergraduates and post-graduates in the economics section on page 26 of the papers, as most students were not salaried. Officers explained that salary uplift was taken into consideration as part of the economic modelling and was what individuals would expect to earn post-graduation. Officers stated that a reduction to the figures had been made due to the current economic climate.
- Requested information on how the university would be marketed through schools over the next 12 months. Officers explained that they would liaise with ARU Peterborough colleagues and feedback to members. **ACTION REQUIRED.**
- Queried what work had been carried out in relation to tackling public transport issues and how students would be transported to the university from rural areas in particular. Officers explained that a considerable amount of work had taken place between the university and local transport companies to look at improved ways of transporting students from outlying areas across Cambridgeshire. As part of the Programme Business Case an outline planning application would require the need to co-ordinate infrastructure proposals with the wider transport policies within Peterborough. Officers stated that they would ask ARU Peterborough Colleagues to provide a summary of the work that they had done to date. **ACTION REQUIRED.** Officers explained that a report would be brought back to committee in the summer as part of the overall Programme Business Case. The Interim Associate Skills Director explained that wider discussions were taking place as part of the Local Connectivity and Transport Plan and the Bus Strategy to ensure that skills requirements were fed into the plans.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- 1) Recommend that the Combined Authority Board approve the University of Peterborough Phase 3 Living Lab, Full Business Case.
- 2) Recommend that the Combined Authority Board note the following next steps for the development of a University Programme Business Case:
 - a) In consultation with the University partners and shareholders of PropCo1 and PropCo2, review governance arrangements with a view to developing a programme related governance structure.

- b) Preparation of the Campus Outline Planning Application for the potential future ambition.
- c) Further progress update against progress measures agreed with partners including outline for the University of Peterborough Programme Business Case.

106. Wave Four Skills Bootcamps

The committee received a report that outlined the proposal submitted to the Department for Education in November 2022 for the delivery of the Wave Four Skills Bootcamps in the Combined Authority area. The report outlined the key considerations for taking this work forward.

In particular, the presenting officers highlighted:

- That since the report had been published the Combined Authority had received notification that the bid had been successful and would receive the full amount of £2,878,150.00.
- The Combined Authority had bid for a lesser amount in wave four in comparison to previous waves, due to a slower than anticipated take up by providers and employers.
- Funding for this wave could be used in a range of sectors including digital, construction, technical and logistics and the authority could also use up to 30% on other categories, not outlined in the specification, based on analysis and employer feedback, focused on courses suitable for the local area.
- Officers had engaged with Growth Works with Skills to look at the Employer Needs Analysis and had been reviewing job vacancy data and working closely with Job Centre Plus on referrals for this type of provision.
- Officers were working with procurement and legal colleagues to look at where the authority may wish to extend existing contracts based on job vacancy and employer needs and existing contract performance. Officers were also looking at the further procurement activity required to attract new providers for delivery to start in April 2023.

Discussing the report members:

- Queried whether this wave would be any more successful than the previous waves due to the difficulties with take up. Members questioned whether there was information from business on what the uptake had been so far. Officers clarified that the uptake on courses came largely from individuals rather than through employers. Officers stated that the eligibility criteria was flexible and officers had a breakdown of the figures in relation to employment status. Officers stated that it was mainly larger employers that were taking on the programme. Officers clarified that they were boosting marketing of the

programme and meeting regularly with providers to join up on marketing and promotion.

- Questioned whether officers were happy that the right providers were now in place to deliver the bootcamps and that they could on board new providers. The Interim Associate Skills Director stated that there were still challenges and a number of actions were being undertaken to mitigate some of these issues. She explained that officers were looking at bringing in a Dynamic Purchasing System, which there was an update report on, later on in the agenda, which would bring a flexible approach to contracting. She commented that the authority was also launching a new provider network and changing how the skills team operated, so that every provider would have one contract manager. She explained that as the contracts from the Department for Education were on a twelve-month basis there was still very limited uptake from the college network and none of the local universities had signed up. She stated that she had met the Associate Director of the Department of Education that lead on the programme to outline all of these concerns.
- The Chair sought further information on what was preventing providers from signing up to boot camps. She queried if it was due to the lack of learners or the short-term nature of the contract being awarded. The Interim Associate Skills Director stated that it was still new provision and colleges were very under resourced and budget was tight therefore the scope for innovation was reduced. The short-term nature and the shortage of tutors added to the challenges faced.
- Sought clarity on what the 30% flexibility on sectors spend would be spent on as there was a need in Huntingdonshire for manufacturing training. A member stated that currently the report stated that this would be spent on Care, Project Management and Leadership and Management sectors. Officers explained that these were areas where additional demand had currently been identified but that there was continued work to identify further areas for demand.
- Highlighted that there was already provision for the care sector through the Health and Social Care Sector Work Academy which had proved difficult to get take up.
- Commented that there was an OFSTED report on the progress of Bootcamps which would give a picture of what was happening across the country and queried if the authority were in contact with areas that were currently doing well to understand if there was any learning to take forward. The Interim Associate Skills Director stated that there was an OFSTED Thematic review, this had now been published and would be circulated to members. **ACTION REQUIRED.** She explained that she had sought information from the Regional Director on the areas that were performing well so that she could contact them for a discussion.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Accept the Grant Funding from the Department of Education in the sum of £2,878,150.00, as stated, to deliver Wave Four Skills Bootcamps for the 2023-2024 financial year.
- b) Approve an addition of a corresponding budget for delivery of the Wave Four Skills Bootcamps in the 2023-2024 budget.
- c) Delegate authority to the Interim Associate Director of Skills, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer to:
 - i. enter into, sign and award grant agreements or awards to training providers to deliver Wave Four Skills Bootcamps with existing providers, where procurement regulations allow and enter into contracts with new providers for Wave Four following an appropriate procurement exercise and
 - ii. where appropriate, extend contracts with existing providers

Part 3 - Delivery

107. Adult Education Budget Annual Return 2021/22

The committee received a report that outlined the third submission of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) Annual Return to the Department for Education (DfE), in respect of the 2021/22 academic year and third year of devolution. This requirement was set out in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) National Growth Assurance Framework (V.4 September 2021). The report also highlighted the additional district-level local participation data from devolved AEB, that would not have been published under the national non-devolved funding model and requested by members at a previous meeting.

In particular, the presenting officers highlighted:

- The return aimed to summarise achievements and demonstrated the momentum to ensure skills programmes devolved the maximum impact to residents, businesses, and communities.
- There was an 8% increase in enrolments and 7% increase in learners with over 10,000 learners signing up.
- A dramatic increase in level 3 courses to over 400 learners and an increase in ESOL.
- Continued work to improve essential skills in the areas of literacy and numeracy and essential digital skills which had remained flat. Officers were developing an essential skills route map to revitalise this work stream
- A breakdown of participation by area was included in the report.

- An external evaluation was in the process of being commissioned to demonstrate the impact of AEB following local control of budget and a report would be brought to committee in June 2023.

Discussing the report members:

- Queries how members would be involved in the external evaluation and how the evaluation would measure the impact of the wider outcomes. Officers explained that they were just in the process of finalising the specification for the external evaluation and were looking to engage an external consultancy to carry out this work.
- Questioned what definition of learners was being used in the evaluation. Officers explained that there was a document that set this definition out and listed the wider outcomes of learning which could be circulated to members. **ACTION REQUIRED.** Officers clarified that learners were included in figures if they had enrolled in the financial year and learners were counted separately for Adult Skills and Community Learning as this related to two separate funding streams. A member commented that the percentage of take up was quite high East Cambridgeshire and she was interested in knowing what the potential of future learners was in the area.
- Queried what the completion rate was across the programme and how it compared to other authorities. Officers explained that there was ongoing work in this area to gather the data as a group of Combined Authorities to carry out benchmarking in this area and there was a data group that had started to look at this. Officers explained there was a question about the methodology and, because of the pandemic years, the achievement data had not been published.
- Sought clarity on why the report stated that there were no environmental implications in relation to the report. The Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that the report was for noting and that the report did not have any direct implications for the environment. Officers explained that environmental impacts were taken into consideration as part of the planning of the programme of courses and that there was funding for carbon literacy courses and retrofit qualifications. Officers explained that they would add environmental implications and impacts into the external evaluation specification. **ACTION REQUIRED**
- Queried whether the Skills Brokerage Service tool had been successful. Officers agreed to feedback on the progress with the tool and the number of hits and conversions. **ACTION REQUIRED**
- Sought further information on the impact of think tanks. Officers explained that the think tanks were an annual opportunity to hear from delivery partners and three groups were convened by provider type FE colleges, Independent Training Providers and Adult and Community Learning Providers, as well as

additional scrutiny from national organisations for each provider type. Officers explained it was the second time that the think tanks had been used and it was an early opportunity to discuss future funding policy changes and flexibilities. Officers commented that some of the feedback from the last set of think tanks had been fed into funding policy changes.

- Questioned how many care leavers bursaries had been awarded. Officers explained that the area had been below the national average in relation to the number of care leavers continuing in their education, and coproduction had taken place with the City and County Councils to look at different interventions to improve the numbers. Officers stated that conversations with care leavers had highlighted the need for the introduction of care leaver bursaries and last year was the first year of the bursary. Sixty care leavers had benefitted from the bursary, and this was the only Combined Authority that provided this flexibility and there had been a lot of interest nationally in the scheme. Officers stated that this year there was an enhancement to the bursary to take into account the cost of living.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the Adult Education Budget (AEB) Annual Return for submission to the Department for Education (DfE) for the 2021/22 academic year.
- b) Note the additional local participation data for devolved AEB c) note the three-year Impact Evaluation of AEB that is being commissioned and the request for members to participate.

108. ESOL Local Planning Annual Report

The committee received a report that provided an update on the progress made by the two ESOL Local Planning Partnerships that were established to improve the co-ordination and delivery of ESOL and related provision to improve integration and employment opportunities for refugee and migrant communities.

In particular, the presenting officers highlighted:

- Enrolments to ESOL courses had remained buoyant in 2021-22 with over 1500 learners benefitting
- Highlighted the Cities of Sanctuary Scheme and that Peterborough and Cambridge City Council were members of this network.

Discussing the report members:

- Queried the membership on both partnerships as some of the constituent authorities were not represented. Officers explained that there was a request for membership through the skills committee and had also sent a request out through key officers. A members stated that Cambridge City Council would

be interested, and they would be in touch regarding membership. **ACTION REQUIRED.**

- Noted that there were vacant chair and vice chair roles and queried the process for filling the roles. Officers stated that there had been a recruitment process but that unfortunately not all of the roles had been filled. Officers explained that they would circulate the brief for the roles to members so that they could gauge any potential interest from colleagues. **ACTION REQUIRED**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Receive the ESOL Local Planning Partnerships Annual Report and note the considerable progress made to date.
- b) Note and comment on the key deliverables for the ESOL Local Planning Partnerships for 2023/24.
- c) Note the City of Sanctuary scheme.

109. Mid-year Performance Review of Skills funded provision 2022-23

The committee received a report that provided a summary of the early findings of the first term of delivery of funded provision including Skills Bootcamps, Adult Education Budget, Apprenticeships, Turning Point, Careers Hub and Multiply.

In particular, the presenting officers highlighted:

- The timing of the report had not been quite right, and improvements could be made to the report and once a year could be brought together with the finance monitoring report.
- The success of the turning point project could be taken to an informal skills committee meeting.

Discussing the report members:

- Highlighted that table B on page 180 of the papers was not broken down by district and requested this information be circulated to members. **ACTION REQUIRED**
- The Chair thanked officers for the report and requested that the report come to committee in October and March so before the budget setting process and then at the end of the financial year. Officers agreed to programme the reports on to the forward agenda plan. **ACTION REQUIRED**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the current in year performance of Combined Authority funded Skills Programmes.

110. Skills and Labour Market Insights Report

The committee received a report that supported members to make informed judgements and decisions based on timely evidence relating to the local skills supply and labour market. It was proposed to continue to report this evidence to the committee bi-annually at the January and September meetings.

In particular, the presenting officers highlighted:

- Timescales of reporting to both the skills committee and business board would coincide with key data releases.
- Key headlines points in the data highlighted strengths in the labour market both in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough going into a recession and even though vacancies remained high, overall, they had fallen over the last year.
- Up to date Census data would be used when it was released, and more detailed information would be available in the next report.

Discussing the report members:

- Queried whether in the areas were more people were claiming benefits and there were lower wages, particularly in Peterborough, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, whether wages had gone down further as this was not shown in the data. Officers explained that under the workplace and residential wages section of the report it looked back over the last 10 years and Fenland and Peterborough sat at the lower end of wages compared to other Districts.
- The Chair commented that the report was extremely helpful and something that the whole of the Combined Authority would benefit from, focusing on the economic picture across the Combined Authority area. She commented that the graph that showed the total GDP, showed a significant drop in the Combined Authority area during the pandemic. She commented that it would be helpful to look at the comparison of the Combined Authority area with the regional and national data. She explained that from looking at other data in the report, although there had been a significant impact on UK growth Cambridgeshire and Peterborough had not fared as badly compared to some other areas. She also highlighted the productivity graph and the contrasts between Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and was interested to understand this data further. Officers explained that they would take away comments and speak to Metrodynamics to feedback on both points. **ACTION REQUIRED**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note and comment on the information in the report which should be used as a guide to inform future decision making; and
- b) Suggest any further additional headline insights for future reports.

111. Budget and Performance Report

The committee received a report that provided an update on the outturn position for 2022/23 and to provide analysis against the 2022/23 budgets, up to the period ending October 2022. The report also included a performance update on Skills projects and a trajectory of expected performance against devolution deal objectives.

Discussing the report members:

- Queried the performance of the two projects that were currently highlighted as red. The Interim Associate Skills Director explained that the first red project referred to Peterborough Phase 2 as new partners were currently being sought for this part of the project, as reported at the last committee meeting and the Health Sector Work Academy, as reported at the last committee meeting, was not going to meet the targets that it had been set.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the year-to-date outturn position against budget.

112. Alignment of Procurement and Contracting

The Committee received a report that outlined the implementation of a Dynamic Purchasing System for procuring skills provision with Training Providers under Skills Funded projects where a competitive tendering process was required.

It was resolved to:

Note the implementation of a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for all Skills Funding procurement activity, where a competitive tendering process is required.

113. Skills Committee Agenda Plan

It was resolved to note the agenda plan.