CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY
SKILLS COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Monday 27 April 2020

Time: 10:05 am to 11.22 am

Present: Councillors John Holdich (Chairman), David Ambrose-Smith, Mike Davey, Lis Every, Jon Neish, Chris Seaton and Eileen Wilson.

Apologies: None

62. APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No apologies received.

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

63. MINUTES – 9 MARCH 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2020 were agreed as a correct record and will be signed by the Chairman when next possible.

64. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Three questions were received from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Chairman explained that the questions would be addressed at the relevant item on the agenda.

65. SKILLS COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN

The agenda plan was noted.

66. COMBINED AUTHORITY FORWARD PLAN

The Combined Authority Forward Plan was noted.

67. ADULT EDUCATION BUDGET (AEB) – INNOVATION FUND

The Committee received a report that recommend the establishment of an Adult Education Budget (AEB) Innovation Fund that supported providers to deliver education and training that addressed the AEB Commissioning Strategy priorities that aimed to reduce the skills and employment gaps of CPCA learners disproportionately underrepresented in the labour market. These groups included the unemployed, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), health volunteers, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) learners and ex-offenders.

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

In introducing the report officers explained that the fund would be managed for funded delivery with immediate effect, and during the 2020-21 academic year. Officers highlighted that the fund would support all CPCA grant funded provision and contract services providers to apply for additional funding to deliver innovative provision that met the CPCA priorities for skills and training. Officers clarified that special priority would be given to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact had on the delivery of learning for residents.

In discussing the report:

- A Member queried whether there was a criteria and expectation for the submission of proposals and sought clarification on who would make the final decision on which proposals would be taken forward. Officers explained that providers were required to set out ;

    a) The priorities their proposed activity addressed (from the AEB Commissioning Strategy and the Skills Strategy)

    b) A convincing account of how the proposed activity would address the challenges identified under the relevant priorities

    c) The innovation they believe their proposed activity demonstrated

    d) The learning, employment and/or social outcomes their proposed activity would deliver.

    Officers clarified that a panel would decide on the final proposals to be taken forward which would comprise of members of the skills team and two independent panellists that had been used by the Combined Authority previously.

- A Member requested that a report on the outcome of the awarding of funding was brought to the next Committee meeting. **ACTION**

- A Member commented that they welcomed the report and queried which projects might be given priority. Officers explained that in the first instance the funding would be used to support local residents and employers through the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. Officers highlighted that the funding provided to grant and contracted providers through the innovation fund would be eligible to use as match funding for the new CPCA COVID-19 small grant. Officers explained the types of projects that would be prioitised were set out in the appendix to the report and the learning outcomes were set out in table 1 of the appendix.

It was resolved unanimously to

a) Approve the recommended approach for creation and management of the AEB Innovation Fund and;

b) Recommend the Combined Authority Board approve the carry forward of 50% of the 2019- 20 underspend on the "AEB Devolution Programme – ITP and grant " funding lines and ring-fence this for the Innovation Fund in the 2020-21 Budget, up to a maximum of £500k.

68. WORK READINESS AND CAREERS ASPIRATION PILOT – HAMPTON ACADEMIES TRUST FUTURE FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee considered a report that outlined the future funding arrangements associated with the Work Readiness and Career Aspirations Pilot and outlined the good work achieved to date and gave assurance that this would continue through the Skills Talent Apprenticeships & Recruitment (STAR) Hub incorporating the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) contract and the Skills Brokerage contract) as well as the European Social Funds (ESF) funded programmes across the region.

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

In introducing the report officers explained that the Work Readiness and Careers Aspiration pilot was currently being undertaken at the two secondary academies within Hampton, namely the Hampton Academies Trust (Hampton College and Hampton Gardens School). Officers clarified that the pilot commenced in January 2019 and had been re-profiled by the Combined Authority in December 2018 and would run for 18 months. Officers explained that however due to Covid-19 the pilot was currently on hold as the schools remain closed and the completion date of August 2020 was now likely to be extended to December 2020. Officers highlighted that the NEET work continued and was being fully funded through the Growth Service from 1 August 2020 as it was crucial that these individuals had daily contact with their teachers as they were in the most vulnerable group. Officers explained that following the pilot it was envisaged that this would be a regional wide programme.

In discussing the report:

- A Member queried whether any of the individuals that were currently involved in the pilot would be school leavers and what support was being given to them in relation to their next steps. Officers explained that individuals were currently being supported with their college applications and this was part of the ongoing day to day support during the COVID -19 crisis.

- A Member questioned how many young people were included in the pilot. Officers explained that The Bridge was a small inclusion unit and had between 15-17 learners. Officers explained that these numbers would increase due to COVID-19.

- A Member sought clarification on how the pilot would be rolled out Countywide. Officers explained that this would be done through Countywide Skills Brokerage. Officers acknowledged that it was a very difficult time to make predictions on how successful the pilot would be as it was proving difficult to

engage with individual students during the lockdown. The Director of Business and Skills commented that procurement would be for three years from August 2020 and this would involve spend of £100k per annum. He clarified that bidders had been asked how they would take into account the situation post COVID-19.

- The Chairman queried how local businesses were being involved in the pilot. Officers clarified that Enterprise Advisors had been going into the schools to connect the schools with the local businesses.

It was resolved unanimously to:

a) Note that the workstreams identified within this pilot will be subsumed into the Business Growth Service currently being procured and including; the Careers & Enterprise Company careers advice into schools, and the Skills Brokerage Services.

b) Note the good work achieved through this pilot will continue through the Business Growth Service.

c) Note the pilot benchmarking of achievements will be monitored and evaluated through externally funded provision and will be recorded in the Final Report due Spring 2021. As the pilot will finish by Spring 2021, no further funding is required

69. ADULT EDUCATION BUDGET TOP SLICE REVIEW

The Committee received a report that outlined a reduction in the top slice percentage of the Adult Education Budget to reinvest into delivery of learning for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough residents.

In introducing the report the Director of Business and Skills explained that the reduction from 4.9% to 3.4% allowed for £170k to be put back into front line delivery. He explained that the costs included 4.2 full time equivalent posts, management costs, data contracts, marketing, administration, training and travel expenses. He clarified that the reduction in costs put the CPCA amongst those Mayoral Combined Authorities with the lowest absolute cost of administration and with a similar percentage cost to the North of Tyne and West of England Combined Authorities.

In discussing the report:

- A Member queried the impact on individual posts in terms of staffing reductions. The Director of Business and Skills explained that there would be a staff consultation across the Business and Skills Directorate and that this could potentially result in redundancy costs.

- A Member queried how the £170K would be allocated in the budget going forwards. The Director of Business and Skills explained that there were a number of options and that he would bring a paper back to the Committee setting out the options with a recommendation to the Committee at the next

meeting. **ACTION**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the reduction in the top slice of the Adult Education Budget from 4.9% to 3.4%.

70. EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS BOARD UPDATE

The Committee considered a report that gave an update on the Employment and Skills Board including the appointment of new members to the Board.

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

In introducing the report officers clarified that as part of the Combined Authority's response to COVID-19 the development of the Talent Portal on the Growth Hub had been prioritised. Officers explained that this had been born out of a need to support many businesses who had to adapt the way they operated in response to COVID-19 and as a result required new staff with different expertise. Officers explained that the planned National Retraining Scheme Pilot had been brought forward from September 2020. Officers clarified that this was a localised Retraining Scheme to respond to COVID-19 and had been designed by Officers and would be launched on the Talent Portal once fully developed. Officers explained that National data via the CBI, Chambers of Commerce and FSB had demonstrated that Management and Leadership and Project Management training and development were a major skills gap for employers that the CPCA Retraining Scheme would look to address these gaps. Officers commented that an update on the progress of the Retraining Pilot would be brought to the next Committee meeting. **ACTION.** Officers advised that an Expression of Interest was due to be submitted to the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) for the area to become a 'Careers Hub' area. Officers explained that there were currently 40 Careers Hub's nationally, which were in addition to Opportunity Areas. Officers highlighted that Careers Hub's brought together a consortium of a minimum of 35 schools to attract funding to the area to support schools, CPD for Careers Leaders and adding strength to the school network.

In discussing the report:

- A Member queried what the process the bid for the Careers Hub would have to go through and when the results would to be known. Officers explained that the Mayor had supported the expression of interest and that officers were waiting to hear back on the results of the bid at the end of May. Officers explained that in the meantime they had been in touch with 42 schools to seek initial interest in being part of the Careers Hub, if the bid were to be successful. Officers had received positive responses from the majority of schools and officers hoped that this could be used as a hook to keep the momentum going in relation to career progression and the prevention of NEETs. Officers commented that currently Cambridgeshire and Peterborough were the only Combined Authority area that did not have a Careers Hub.

- The Chairman commented that the landscape of careers and the workforce would see a fundamental change due to the COVID-19 outbreak and young people would reflect on their careers due to the impact it was having on their parent's careers.

- A Members questioned how Businesses would be involved in the Careers Hub. Officers explained that this would be done through the Employment and Skills Board, Business Advisory Panel and various Business Networks which were connected to the CA Business Board. Officers clarified that there were also strong relationships with FE Colleges were the hub could be promoted.

In bringing the debate to a close the Director of Business and Skills brought to Members attention the creation of an Economic Recovery Sub Group by the Combined Authority as part of the response to COVID-19 and that all Local Authorities were involved with this work. He explained that through this group there would be an economic survey and the Local Industrial Strategy, and Skills Strategy would be reviewed to reflect the outcomes of the review. This work would take place in the Autumn.

It was resolved unanimously to:

a) Note the updates from the Employment & Skills Board

b) Note the appointment of new Board members

c) Note the launch of the Combined Authority Talent Portal

d) Note the introduction of a Retraining Scheme Pilot

e) Be advised of the Expression of Interest being submitted to bid to have a Careers Hub

71. BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee received a report on the actual expenditure to date and forecast outturn position against the budgets for the Business & Skills Directorate as at 29 February 2020. Officers explained that the report highlighted where potential carry forward of underspends from the 2019-20 budget into the 2020-21 budget were likely to be requested. Officers clarified that a report would be taken to the CPCA Board meeting in June to formally request the carry forwards where they were realised.

In discussing the report:

- A Member queried the funding for the Health & Social Care Work Academy. Officers explained that it was anticipated that the budget would have been fully spent this year with a drawdown being made during March. Officers clarified

however that further to protracted negotiations with the DWP this project would now be remaining with the CPCA and it was unlikely that this funding would be drawn in March.

It was resolved unanimously to:

a) Note the February budget and performance monitoring update.

b) Note the forecast underspends as set out in the report.

c) Note that a recommendation to approve the carry forward of unspent budget to enable the work on projects to be completed in 2020/21 will be made to the Combined Authority Board in June once the outturn position has been finalised.

72. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is 6 July 2020

Chairman