



CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY
SKILLS COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Monday 9 March 2020

Time: 10:00am to 11.05am

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

Apologies: None

53. APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No apologies received.

Councillor Mike Davey declared an interest as his wife Sarah Ferguson is the Assistant Director: Housing, Communities & Youth Community & Safety across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

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

Members noted that the single action identified in the minutes in relation to the Work Readiness Pilot was ongoing and the pilot was to be rolled into Skills Brokerage.

54. MINUTES – 17 JANUARY 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2020 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

55. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Two questions were received from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. As Councillor Coles was not in attendance, the Chairman proposed to read out a written response at the start of item 2.2 on the agenda.

56. SKILLS COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN

The agenda plan was noted.

57. COMBINED AUTHORITY FORWARD PLAN

The Combined Authority Forward Plan was noted.

58. ADULT EDUCATION BUDGET (AEB) ALLOCATIONS FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-21

The Committee received a report that sought delegated authority for the Director of Business and Skills in consultation with the Lead Member for Skills to award the Adult Education Budget (AEB) award allocations to the 12 Local Colleges and the Local



Authority Providers and Independent Training Providers in June 2020 for the academic year 2020-21.

In introducing the report officers explained that this was a transitional year for the budget and that funding had previously been done nationally and there had been quite a shift and change in the system and process and that residents were an integral part of the allocation process. Officers explained that there was a need to procure and choose the right providers going forwards to implement the new Commissioning Strategy. Officers clarified that there had been an initial review of 70 providers in November 2019 and that a second review took place in February 2020 with a view to changing AEB policies and programmes to achieve the priorities identified in the Commissioning Strategy. Officers highlighted that contracts were currently at the six month mark and that an indicative allocation of funding had been made. Officers highlighted that some of the Independent Providers would need more time to adjust to the new strategy and it had been agreed that final allocations would be awarded in June for 2020-21.

In discussing the report:

- The Chairman commented that the process had moved a long way in a very short space of time and that the focus was on spending the money on Cambridgeshire and Peterborough students.
- A Member queried how synergies between providers would work in particular providers in the same area who could potentially waste money looking for the same learners. Officers explained that they were working closely with providers to ensure that there was no duplication.
- A Member questioned whether providers could take learners from other places that were funded separately. Officers confirmed that they could and that the Combined Authority funding would not be the only funding providers would be receiving, and this would allow providers to utilise their experience and help the courses to be more viable.
- A Member queried whether there were any particular types of learners that would be more vulnerable as part of this process. Officers highlighted that the numbers of learners that providers were getting from job centre plus would be lower and that providers would need to change their strategies to focus on industry and businesses.
- A Member questioned why indicative allocations had not been stated for some providers. Officers explained that indicative allocations had been given to providers that were performing well. Officers clarified that they had not been able to do this for the Independent Training Providers (ITPs) and would review performance during quarter three before agreeing final allocations. The Director of Business and Skills explained that the top seven organisations were Grant Funded and included FE Colleges and Local Authorities. The remainder of the organisations were ITPs and were not grant funded and were procured and officers needed to ensure that they were strategic partners that the Combined



Authority could invest in. The Director of Business and Skills clarified that a report would be coming back to Committee to update on the allocations made.

ACTION

It was resolved unanimously to

- a) Approve the indicative Adult Education Budget allocations of DfE funding to the Providers identified within this report.
- b) Delegate authority to the Director of Business and Skills, in consultation with the Lead Member for Skills and the Section 73 Officer, to approve the final allocation figures by June 2020. The delegation will include the authority to withdraw, reduce or increase the allocation for 2020-21.

59. ADULT EDUCATION BUDGET COMMISSIONING STRATEGY 2020 – 2025 AND REDISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

The Chairman explained that two questions had been received from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on this report and he read out a written response (see appendix 1)

Members queried why the Overview and Scrutiny questions were being asked before the report was debated and decisions made at Committee. Officers explained that this was part of the Scrutiny function to scrutinise decisions before they were made.

The Committee received a report that sought approval of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) Commissioning Strategy for 2020-2025.

In introducing the report officers gave a brief introduction to the AEB and explained that AEB funding had moved from many different mechanisms of funding to one budget that sat with the Combined Authority. Officers highlighted that this brought Community Learning and Learning in Employment together and that Adult Education was the bedrock of the Skills Strategy. Officers explained that the focus was on localism and flexibility, focusing on the low skilled and low paid.

In discussing the report:

- A Member raised concerns about how the strategy would be implemented. In particular she highlighted her concerns in relation to failure rates and the knowledge that Maths and English were preventing people from getting on, in particular preventing people getting on to apprenticeships. She explained that there needed to be a more innovative and creative approach in this area. The Director of Business and Skills explained that there was a broader process in relation to 'how' the strategy would be implemented. He explained that the Commissioning Strategy presented the 'what' and that officers had been working with Further Education (FE) partners on the 'how'. He clarified that there would be a report on the grant process presented at a future Committee meeting, which would explain the 'how' in detail. He also explained that there had been discussions with FE partners about an Innovation Fund and that the FE Colleges were working collaboratively to create an atmosphere of innovation and collaboration, to share best practice. Officers explained that the vast



majority of the preparation for living and work training contained functional skills for English and Maths; this was almost 50% of the local AEB expenditure. The local achievement levels on this training were over 90% and above the national average. Officers acknowledged that there were some areas where adults did not have a good secondary education experience. FE Principals were aware of this, and acknowledged that this was an area for exploring more innovative practices. A Member highlighted that Maths and English was also a big problem for younger people and that in some cases individuals were going back to FE Colleges 2-3 times to retake in these subjects and were not getting on to apprenticeship courses. Officers explained that the funding for those aged 19-23 without a level 2, level 3 or English and Maths GCSE was free and this represented only 10-15% of the total participation of AEB; a circumstance that was replicated nationally. Officer explained that many individuals did not go back to look at retaking their Maths and English again until they were older, at around the age of 25. Officers explained that there were ongoing discussions about funding in this area for 25-30 year olds and older. The Chairman commented that the key was to help individuals to find their niche and they would then want to get back into the classroom to learn.

- A Member queried how the accountability in terms of milestones and deliverables were going to be metricised. The Director of Business and Skills explained that this detailed would be covered in the implementation report to Committee.
- A Member commented that she had read a report from an organisation called School Dash who were Education Analysts, on how poor public transport was linked to failing schools and the impact transport had on individuals and their ability to study. She queried whether this has been factored into the Strategy. Officers explained that they had been talking to providers about learner support including transport and childcare. Officers explained that providers were looking into delivering courses in the evenings and at weekends and that a number of colleges were looking to open up adult centres in their areas, including in Fenland. Officers acknowledged that the take up of learner support in the area was not strong and that they would continue talks with providers on how learner support could be further utilised.
- A Member explained that they welcomed the Strategy and commented that the notion of localism needed to be more explicit as part of the main aims in the Executive Summary. He explained that in section 17 of the strategy under challenges, the hidden nature of deprivation and inequality in Cambridge needed to be considered. He commented that the Combined Authority needed to be challenging employers in Cambridge to do more. Officers explained that they would look again at the areas of deprivation and include where there were pockets of deprivation highlighted in both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and refer back to the Social Mobility Commissioning Report.
- A Member highlighted the need to ensure that work that was already being carried out in relation to both larger and smaller pockets of deprivation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough needed to be linked up, in particular work



being carried out by Cambridgeshire County Council.

- A Member highlighted the need for caution in terms of the levelling up agenda and the danger that areas where there is a real need were not addressed.
- Members acknowledged the excellent work that had been carried out on shaping the Strategy overall.

In bringing the debate to a close the Chairman highlighted the good work of the Health and Social Care Academy in getting individuals who had studied for a level to in getting jobs and staying in education and that it was a good model to reflect on.

The Chairman proposed that the recommendation was amended to reflect that the strategy would be approved subject to the amendments suggested by the Committee.

ACTION

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Endorse and approve the Adult Education Budget Commissioning Strategy for 2020-2025, subject to the amendments recommended by the Committee, which are reflected in the minutes of the meeting.

60. BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee received a report on the position of budget and performance monitoring for the Business and Skills Directorate.

In discussing the report:

- A Member queried whether the Market Town Strategy underspend would be rolled through to the next year. Officers explained that the Market Town Strategy Underspend would be rolled forward subject to approval by the Combined Authority Board.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the January budget and performance monitoring update
- b) Recommend that the Combined Authority Board note the forecast underspends as set out in the report. 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 Board in June once the outturn position has been finalised.

61. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Members noted the date of the next meeting as 27 April 2020

Chairman