

SKILLS COMMITTEE – 9 NOVEMBER 2020

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question
1.	Cllr Coles – Overview and Scrutiny Lead for Skills	Skills Committee	<p>Item 2.1: Kickstart Scheme</p> <p>The report at 3.5 suggests 700 placements are achievable in the 6 authority areas. How are these placements distributed across the authorities? Has the appetite for the initiative changed following on from the latest coronavirus lockdown and the potential impact on participating businesses? Payment profiles for the recruits to the scheme are potentially a sticking point. Wages are described at 3.2 as being refunded in arrears to potential employers by the gateway organisation. Is this realistic considering the impact of the coronavirus lockdowns on the business sector and the ability of companies to fund 30 placements in arrears (>£150K)? Which sectors are most likely to provide these opportunities and are they of sufficient size and liquidity?</p>
	Response from:	Response to:	Response
	Cllr John Holdich – Chairman of Skills the Committee	Cllr Coles – Overview and Scrutiny Lead for Skills	<p>We have looked at businesses in the region to identify where the likely demand can be expected from. We have used Small and Mid-Size Enterprise (SME) data when assessing the demand, due to the promotion of the scheme and linkages to Growth Hub. As a region we have 36,045 active SMEs which is broken down by LA as follows:</p> <p>Cambridge: 4,905 East Cambridge: 4,160 Fenland: 3,515 Huntingdonshire: 7,895 Peterborough: 7,095 South Cambridgeshire: 8,475</p> <p>We have had over 200 businesses express an interest in the scheme, offering between 1 and 6 placements each. We believe a conservative approach of engaging with 400 businesses will offer us the 700 placements targeted, which is</p>

			<p>just 1.1% of the registered SMEs in the region. Once the Skills brokerage team is operational and businesses are engaged at volume, the split over the LA areas will become clearer.</p> <p>Whilst a second lockdown is no doubt having a profound effect on many businesses, there is still an appetite for the Kickstart Scheme. Many businesses have been expecting interruption to their operation due to Covid and have been planning for how they can mitigate the impact. There have been numerous discussions within a variety of sectors of how remote placements could be offered or flexibilities in working patterns applied to ensure social distancing is adhered to whilst businesses are operating. The initial payment offered to companies allows for them to factor in additional costs that offering a placement incurs. The scheme is set to run for 12 months, with placements lasting 6 months, timescales mean businesses are planning on accessing the scheme at different times in the year and see the scheme as a way of supporting their economic recovery. Our LMI shows that the sectors in the area that are continuing to recruit and offer green shoots of hope are Health and Social Care, Manufacturing and Construction. SMEs registered in those sectors across the area are:</p> <p>Construction: 4,585 Manufacturing: 2,240 Health and social work: 1,270</p> <p>We are looking to seek funding for organisations offering less than 30 placements and will bid for the funding by coordinating 30 opportunities via multiple organisations. Payment in arrears was raised as an issue in conversations with Department for Work and Pensions, but this has been agreed by central government for a national approach.</p>
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2.	Cllr Coles – Overview and Scrutiny Lead for Skills	Skills Committee	<p>Item 3.1: Local Economic Recovery Strategy Update (LERS)</p> <p>Para 4.6 of the report recognises the potential impact of behaviour change as a result of social distancing, particularly in a change from working in business premises to home working. How well placed are CPCA to support this more</p>

			<p>common and growing way of working with skills training for young people entering the world of work for the first time and for workers seeking new employment? How is this likely to be distributed across the CPCA area?</p> <p>P 25- 26 of Local Economic Recovery Strategy. Paragraph 2.4 gives three cases defining scenarios around the shape of recovery. With the second lockdown are we now looking at a worst case scenario in the modelling? Are preparations fit for purpose and in place for the phases of recovery should the worst case scenario come to pass?</p>
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	Cllr John Holdich – Chairman of Skills the Committee	Cllr Coles – Overview and Scrutiny Lead for Skills	<p>The Local Growth Fund (LGF) Capital Growth Fund, available via the Business Growth Service, will enable Businesses to make physical adaptations to their workplaces. These grants could also be applied to fully embrace the technologies to digitise processes which is already an emerging theme across manufacturing sector. The Growth Coaching Service will also fund specialist coaches/experts to help businesses plan and implement these types of fundamental changes to increase their resilience and accelerate their return to previous productivity levels.</p> <p>The Combined Authority are very well placed to support the shift in our resident's ability to access learning that will result in employment opportunities or on to further training. With our funding, our Adult Education providers have been able to help socially disadvantaged learners access laptops/tablets and the internet. Underspend from the first years Adult Education delivery is also now being utilised in levelling up the digital access agenda.</p> <p>The second lockdown will reduce the pace recovery, but the three possible scenarios of recovery should be largely unaffected on a macro-scale if the lockdown ends promptly in early December. This is based on evidence that a large proportion of businesses will be better prepared for this lockdown and already accustomed to working remotely and efficiently. However, businesses in sectors such as Hospitality, Leisure, Retail (especially Independent Retail) and Entertainment - along with their respective supply chains will take the greatest impact.</p>
3.	Question from:	Question to:	Question

	Cllr Coles – Overview and Scrutiny Lead for Skills	Skills Committee	<p>Item 3.2: Lifetime Skills Guarantee (LSG) and Post-16 Education</p> <p>Historically Further Education (FE) provision has been the Cinderella of education. The announced additional infrastructure funding of £1.5 Billion to upgrade the national FE estate is good news. Moving £2.5 Billion of funding for FE training access through local arrangements and away from central government is also very much to be welcomed. What level of additional funding capable of local distribution do the committee feel would enable a localised lifetime skills programme to adequately support the region’s learners under the three scenarios posited by the Local Economic Recovery Strategy in para 2.4? What proportion of the available funding will we need to enable the Lifetime Skills Guarantee to work for our residents?</p>
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	Cllr John Holdich – Chairman of Skills the Committee	Cllr Coles – Overview and Scrutiny Lead for Skills	This is the subject of evidence gathering and negotiation with the Department for Education and Officers will report back when the evidence can support a specific bid for funding, and we have received a reaction from Department for Education on the potential devolution of it.