



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

JAMES PALMER
CAMBRIDGESHIRE &
PETERBOROUGH MAYOR

Skills Committee Minutes

Date: Monday 9 November 2020

Time: 10.00am – 11.36am

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

Apologies: Councillor Mike Davey (Substituted by Councillor Mike Sargeant)

Part 1 - Governance Items

102. Announcements, Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Councillor Davey substituted by Councillor Sargeant.

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

103. Minutes of the Skills Committee meeting on 14 September 2020

The minutes of the meeting on 14 September 2020 were approved as an accurate record. A copy would be signed by the Chairman when it was practical to do so.

104. Petitions

No petitions were received.

105. Public Questions

No public questions were received. Questions were received from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

106. Skills Committee Agenda Plan

It was resolved to note the agenda plan.

107. Combined Authority Forward Plan

It was resolved to note the forward plan

Part 2 – Reports to Combined Authority Board

108. Kickstart Scheme

The Committee received a report that requested approval for the Business Growth Service to act as a Gateway Organisation to administer the Kickstart Scheme for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area and act as the primary referral partner for any Kickstart requests via the Combined Authority.

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.

Introducing the report officers explained that the scheme was a Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) initiative offering six-month high-quality work placements designed to get long-term unemployed young people, aged 16-24 into employment and gaining valuable work experience with the ambition of ongoing sustainable employment. Officers highlighted that businesses in the area could access resource at little or no cost to themselves which would support their economic recovery whilst offering support to a young person displaced by the pandemic. The scheme was launched in September 2020 and was set to run for 12 months

In discussing the report Members:

- Queried how the scheme would be resourced and recruited to, in order to ensure that employers recruited on a fair basis. The Director of Business and Skills explained that the Growth Service, which would officially start on 20 November, which included skills brokerage, would act as the primary feedback loop servicing companies relatively evenly. Officers highlighted that they were working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to scope the caseloads of 16-24 year olds and were directing numerous questions from employers through job centre plus. Officers stated that through due diligence they were ensuring that employers were offering out ethical opportunities.
- Questioned who would ensure that the trainees were right for the companies and how the payments would flow. Officers explained that trainees would be matched by a DWP coach. Officers clarified that it was difficult at this stage to have a defined process and that the process would be shared with members once it was established. (Action)
- Raised concern in relation to the numbers with 16,000 applicants and if there was enough resource in the Growth Company to facilitate the scheme. The Director of Business and Skills explained that there was a lot of latent demand already and that contractors were already working on the scheme and that it would be financially supported to scale and paid by volume.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- (a) Approve the Business Growth Service to act as a Gateway Organisation for the Kickstart Scheme in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area.
- (b) Approve the Business Growth Service to act as the primary referral partner for any Kickstart requests via the CPCA.

Part 3 – Delivery

109. Local Economic Recovery Strategy Update

The Committee considered a report that updated members on the latest version of the Local Economic Recovery Strategy following further evidence-based insight.

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.

Introducing the report the Director of Business and Skills explained that the Economic Recovery Strategy Group (ERSG), which was formed to respond to the Economic and Business impacts of Covid-19, had co-created a joint Local Economic Recovery Strategy (LERS) over the summer of 2020, the first version of which had been presented to the Business Board, Skills Committee and Combined Authority Board in September 2020. He clarified that using the latest Covid-19 Economic Insight Data that has been generated through a parallel project with Metro Dynamics, the first draft of the Local Economic Recovery Strategy (LERS) had now been updated to:(a) reflect the evolving impact of the economic shock and the further national and global restrictions that are being imposed, and to (b) help prioritise the rollout of interventions. He stated that the Strategy would be evolving and updated on a regular basis with the next version being brought to January Committee. Officers from Metro Dynamics gave a brief overview of the updates to the Strategy and explained that it was still unclear what the impact on economic output would be for the third quarter and that it was important to keep this under review. Officers stated that there would be a focus on the longer term goals outlined on page 72 of the report. Officers clarified that the dashboard that accompanied the Strategy would be updated regularly. The Chairman requested that the Committee receive regular updates on the Strategy going forwards. The Director of Business and Skills clarified that he would review and reflect this on the Committee forward plan.

(Action)

In discussing the report Members:

- Queried action 26 on page 55 of the report in relation to the targeting of re-skilling and re-employment, and how this would be taken forward including if there had been any conversations with employers in relation to what their plans were in terms of going back to the office and the impact on the economy and congestion. Officers explained that they currently only had anecdotal feedback on future plans however the arrival of the Growth Service would allow for better engagement with businesses and would gain insights in real time. The Director of Business and Skills explained that the targeting would be focused on those that had been displaced during the pandemic. He stated

that officers had access to the HR1 redundancy data so that they could make estimates of the skills requirements going forwards.

- Question the pillars highlighted on page 63 of the strategy and if there were any timings for delivery identified. The Director of Business and Skills stated that he had already received feedback through the Leaders Strategy Workshop in relation to the missing timescales and that they would be included in the January refresh. A Member highlighted that action A10 in relation to the £125K investment into schools would only be supporting 1,000 young people which he felt was very low. The Director of Business and Skills stated that the investment was for companies to go into schools to give careers and pathways advice. He clarified there would be support for 1700-1800 learners over the course of the programme.
- Sought clarity on the interventions within the strategy for getting people back into city and town centres. The Director of Business and Skills explained that action A17 in relation to the EDRF grant had already been taken up very quickly and that Cambridge City and Peterborough City had been given £1/2 million to attract people back in to the cities. He explained that there was work ongoing to look at replacing the organisation that went insolvent over the summer, and replace it with a County wide organisation between Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. He also stated that South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City were also looking at putting in place individual organisations. The Chairman stated that these options had been discussed at the Mayors Forum and that the Committee would be kept up to date with plans as they progressed.
- Commented that it would be useful to see more specific sectoral solutions
- Discussed the impacts the pandemic was having on a number of sectors including language schools and travel firms and highlighted concerns regarding research collaborations. The Director of Business and Skills commented that productivity may actually go up due to technological and organisational changes. He explained from the redundancy data received, redundancies were fairly well spread across sectors and there were no big outliers identified at the moment in the area. He stated that officers could not plan ahead in relation to the impact of Brexit until they had further information on the deal. He stated that there was no change to European research frameworks but that we would be participating in a different way, with 50% of funding coming from the UK. Officers stated that the Inward Investment Service would be a proactive function to safeguarding jobs and would work to plug the gaps of any major closures.

It was resolved to:

- (a) Recommend the Combined Authority Board approve the updated version of the Local Economic Recovery Strategy (LERS) for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. * *Recommendation to Combined Authority board withdrawn following the meeting by officer's decision and approved by the chair of the Committee.*

110. Lifetime Skills Guarantee and Post-16 Education

The Committee considered a report that gave an update and overview on the Government's recent policy announcement of a new Lifetime Skills Guarantee (LSG) and Post-16 Reform updates.

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.

Introducing the report officers explained that the Lifetime Skills Guarantee would be the backbone of Covid recovery with the alignment of Further Education and Higher Education, giving individuals the choice on which route they took. Officers stated that there would be a fully funded level 3 qualification available equivalent to an A-level and that a white paper on post 16 education and training was due from government, with the Nine Metro Mayors (M9) lobbying for devolved budgets.

In discussing the report Members:

- Queried if there would be provision for those who had already been in work but had been made redundant in relation to childcare to attend courses and if there was a gap with people wanting to re-skill and being active to continue to retain benefits and not have to actively seek work. Officers explained that childcare payments were supported via the additional learning support fund and officers would bear both of these points in mind with the planning stages, working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions.
- Sought clarity on 2.10 in the report in relation to what was meant by immediate and remedial and whether the money had already been allocated. Officers explained at the local level they did not have the detail to hand. Officers stated that £2 million had already been allocated and that Cambridge Regional College and West Suffolk College had already received money. Officers stated that there was lobbying for further devolution of funding. Officers stated that they would keep the Committee up to date on progress.
(Action)
- Commented that the reform would give further education a massive uplift and there was a big gap in the need to have a more integrated approach to post 16 education. The Chairman commented that sixth form provision was shrinking as there was a shortage of teachers for specialist subjects. Officers explained that they awaited the white paper with interest.

It was resolved to:

Note the updates around the Further Education Reform.

111. Employment and Skills Board Update

The Committee received a report that gave an update on the Employment and Skills Board (ESB).

It was resolved to:

Note the updates around the Employment and Skills Board.

112. Budget and Performance Report

The Committee considered a report that gave an update and overview of the revenue and capital funding lines that were within the Business & Skills Directorate for the period up to 30 September 2020.

Introducing the report officers drew Members attention to the exception in relation to underspend on the Health and Social Care Work Academy and stated that this funding was ring-fenced and would be reallocated to the Work Academy for the next financial year and that this had been agreed with the Department for Work and Pensions.

It was resolved to:

(a) Note the September budget and performance monitoring update

Part 4 – Date of the next meeting

113. It was resolved to:

Note the date of the next meeting as Monday 11 January 2021.