



Agenda Item No: 3.7

Employment and Skills Strategy

To: Business Board

Meeting Date: 19 July 2021

Public report: Yes

Lead Member: Chair of the Business Board, Austen Adams

From: Senior Responsible Officer - Workforce Skills, Fliss Miller

Key decision: No

Recommendations: The Business Board is invited to:

Note the approved approach to the development of the new
Employment and Skills Strategy

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to inform the Business Board about the proposed approach to the development of the refresh of the current Skills Strategy.
- 1.2 The proposed approach was presented to the Skills Committee on 14 June 2021 and approved by the Combined Authority Board at its meeting on 30 June 2021.

2. Background

- 2.1 The current Skills Strategy was created in 2019. The strategy is clearly aligned to the Local Industry Strategy (LIS) and has subsequently informed the development of the Local Economic Recovery Strategy (LERS) in relation to Skills.
- 2.2 The existing Skills Strategy sets the vision to grow a successful, globally competitive economy grounded in high-skilled, better paid jobs, increased productivity and strong sustainable communities through: 'An inclusive world-class local skills eco-system that matches the needs of our employers, learners and communities'.
- 2.3 The current Skills Strategy has guided how investment has been distributed in a programmatic way. The Combined Authority has used its devolved funding powers for Adult Education Budget (AEB) together with the Local Growth Fund (LGF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) to strategically invest in ways to meet the unique needs of each of the sub-economies.
- 2.4 Many of the actions in the Skills Strategy have been achieved or are nearing completion. Given the fast-moving pace of the skills requirement in a post COVID-19 era and the evolution of the LERS, it is proposed that the Skills Strategy will be refreshed and published in September 2021.

3. Proposed Approach to Develop the New Employment and Skills Strategy

- 3.1 The project will follow a robust framework for strategy development, with four pillars of inquiry to envision where we want to get to from where we are now.
- 3.2 An analysis of the available evidence will be robust and transparent. The evidence-base will be constructed using extensive secondary data, including a comprehensive analysis of key relevant (local, regional and national) strategy, research and policy documentation. This will provide an understanding of the CPCA's labour market and skills development system, and the broader context within which it operates, to which Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) assessment thinking will be applied to identify key issues.
- 3.3 Stakeholders will be consulted on the evidence base to approve its veracity, endorse the issues identified and reflect on what this evidence means for the future of skills in the CPCA, which will underpin the next phase of work.

- 3.4 The next phase takes forward the evidence base, SWOT assessment and key issues agreed during the first phase of the work, and translates this into a vision, and a set of strategic priorities for developing future skills in the CPCA region.
- 3.5 The crucial activity at this stage is further calibration of the strategic priorities with stakeholders, sense-checking, adjusting and building buy-in to the objectives in sight and working through emerging ideas for action. One of the key challenges at this stage of the work will be to strike a sensible balance between achieving an ambitious yet realistic and deliverable set of actions, to underpin the next phase.
- 3.6 The final stage will focus on developing actions for moving the vision forward. This phase will begin with a long list of potential actions which will be developed and then subsequently reduced to a more realistic level through a prioritisation process. The emphasis here will be on and providing the bridging for taking the skills strategy thinking to implementation - identifying broadly 'who-will-do-what-with-what'.
- 3.7 Following these stages will allow the development of strategy to follow a theory of change/logic model approach, tracing through the logic of the strategy from evidence to action.

4. Scope

- 4.1 The Employment and Skills Strategy will be inclusive and will include the strategic vision for post-16 education through to higher level skills, focusing on the skills required by the local economy to meet the Local Industrial Strategy's ambition to 'improve and grow the local skills base to support a successful, globally competitive economy and labour market grounded in high-skilled and better-paid jobs, increased productivity, and growing strong, sustainable communities'.

5. Stakeholder Engagement

- 5.1 Stakeholder engagement in the process will be crucial to achieving buy-in and support for the strategy as it develops. The strategy must be owned broadly by partners across the area, rather than being developed in isolation.
- 5.2 Engagement will include:
 - An open call for evidence, hosted on the CPCA website, which can be promoted by partners and completed by anyone with an interest in skills in the area.
 - A series of workshops with senior leaders and stakeholders from across the area.

It is intended that each District will have their own consultation event to ensure that all local needs are captured as part of the engagement exercise.

- 5.3 The iterative nature of strategy development means that individuals will be expected to engage with the process multiple times to provide input as the development of the strategy progresses.

- 5.4 The Skills Committee and Employment and Skills Board will be critical to enabling and leading stakeholder engagement. It is proposed that the Chairs of each group act as 'co-chairs' for the strategy and each provide a foreword for the final report.

Significant Implications

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 Metro Dynamics will support the development of the Employment and Skills Strategy. £25k was approved by the Combined Authority Board for this work at their 30 June meeting.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications relating to the content of this paper.

8. Other Significant Implications

- 8.1 There are no other significant implications relating to the content of this paper.

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Timeline for Development

10. Background Papers

- 10.1 [Skills Strategy](#)

- 10.2 [Local Industrial Strategy](#)

- 10.3 [Local Economic Recovery Strategy](#)

- 10.4 [Skills Committee report 14 June 2021 – Item 3.2](#)

- 10.5 [Combined Authority Board report 30 June 2021 - Item 6.2](#)