

Finance & Resources Committee

26 June 2018

Background

This paper sets out the role of a dedicated Digital Skills Partnership specialist to take forward the work of the local DSP. The role is funded for 12 months by DCMS so represents no additional cost to the LEP.

Recommendation

That F&R agrees to the recruitment of a dedicated Digital Skills Partnership specialist for a 12-month period as funded by DCMS.

Background

The Heart of the SW, along with Lancashire, is one of only two LEP areas to be awarded pilot local Digital Skills Partnership status. As briefed to the May Board local DSPs are part of Government's Digital Strategy which sets out 7 strands of activity to complement the aims of the Industrial Strategy and build the economy of the future. The strands are

1. Building world-class digital infrastructure for the UK
2. Giving everyone access to the digital skills they need: overall aim of addressing the root cause of digital exclusion, ensuring people of businesses have the skills needed for a digital economy and tackling the digital skills gap in a co-ordinated and coherent way.
3. Making the UK the best place to start and grow a digital business
4. Helping every British business become a digital business
5. Making the UK the safest place in the world to live and work online
6. Maintaining the UK government as a world leader in serving its citizens online
7. Unlocking the power of data in the UK economy and improving public confidence in its use

DCMS have established a national Digital Skills Partnership under the second strand above and HotSW and Lancashire have been selected to pilot local DSPs as part of delivering the two objectives of the national body. Those objectives are:

- increase the digital capability needed to build thriving local digital economies by sharing and incentivising best practice at a local level and supporting the creation of Local Digital Skills Partnerships; and
- create a more coherent framework that enables people and organisations to identify and access good digital skills training opportunities and enables providers to collaborate to upscale and innovate.

Local DSP status enables the drawing down of delivery from Government's national partners which include Lloyds Bank, Google and Microsoft and the HotSW DSP is expected to share its learnings with DCMS and other LEP areas.

HotSW Local DSP Specialist

DCMS have recognised that DSPs add additional work onto LEPs and will provide £75,000 to fund a 12-month dedicated post to deliver the work. DCMS expect this to cover expenses of travelling to London twice per month so on an estimated train cost of £6,000 this leaves £69,000 for salary plus on costs, meaning a salary of c£48,000. The intention would be to have the post filled by end July.

An early draft of a programme of work is attached to this paper – this will be refined and developed when the specialist is in place. Devon CC have offered to be the accountable body for the post which would align with the People group role delivered for the LEP. A paper formalising the DSP will be taken to the June People Group meeting and will reflect previous requests by F&R that an equitable and transparent process is established for membership of the DSP. The post is cost-neutral to the LEP and the contract will be for 12 months to match available funding. Lancashire have provided the job description for their role (circulated with this paper for reference) and the HotSW post will be developed from this.

Annex – Outline Digital Skills Partnership Work Programme

This is not a comprehensive work programme, rather it is a starting point for development.

A. Research

1. Finalise the local research now under way and identify priority areas to deploy efforts
2. DCMS are developing a series of mapping/ research tools – need to consider how best to draw on these and use HotSW pilot status to support their development.
3. As part of the DCMS suite, DWP are developing a tool to map vacancies to skills delivery; DWP data analyst keen to meet with HotSW DSP specialist to test and get feedback. Provisionally scheduled for September.

B. Delivery

4. Developing detailed delivery work schedule which will flow from our own local research, the national partners available and the national DCMS/DWP tools and intelligence. Includes, but not limited to the following (noting that DCMS tools will be ready spring 2019):
 - Freeformers – discussion with Justin Dewhurst
 - Google – discussion with Celia Varet
 - Comptia – how to make use of this and the free CyberSecure offer they've made? Follow up with Zeshan Sattar
 - Lloyds seminars: how best to connect with these? Richard Davis, Area Director, was impressed with the launch and keen to work closer.
5. Comms: develop overall comms messages and plan for the DSP, including MPs
6. Development of peer to peer networks and learning
7. Ambition: driving employers to be more digitally driven and driving people to be more digitally driven

C. Other

8. Being bold: the above is a starting point only. What more could the partnership be doing which is ground-breaking activity?