

Heart of the South West Skills Advisory Panel

26 May 2020
from
10:00am – 12:00pm

Microsoft Teams

10:00am Welcome, Introductions and Declarations of Interest

Attendees:

- Paul Blackmore
- Bill Blythe
- Gabrielle Climie
- Edward Coley
- David Ralph
- Chris Evans
- Guy Hazelhurst
- Helen Higgs
- Nora Corkery
- Rod Davis
- Rosie Bates
- Tony Skeel
- Hilary Stevens
- Helen Davidson
- Jackie Grubb
- John Laramy
- Kristine Norton
- Mark Sheppard
- Mel Roberts
- Mike Green
- Mike Matthews
- Phill Adams
- Fiona McMillan
- Sharron Robbie
- Steve Cardew
- Lee Tozer
- Nicola Williams
- Julie Hawker
- Katy Quinn
- Suzanne Bond
- Victoria Hatfield
- Karl Fredrick
- Stuart Elford
- Elaine Cooke
- Rob Bosworth
- Matt Harbour
- Carl Wyard
- Keri Denton
- Jacob Coburn
- Andy Berry

Apologises:

- Alan Denby
- Jamie Evans
- Sean Mackney
- Stephen Henagulph
- Debbie Wright

10:05am Minutes of Last Meeting

- Actions from last meeting:
 - ***Presentation on emerging Institute for Technology for members to happen at next meeting (now delayed to later in the year)***
 - ***Deputy chair position – Jackie Grubb has agreed to take forward role and discussion ongoing to support***
 - ***Doug Lloyd from Kier has been invited to the next meeting. This will focus on nuclear, construction and digital***

- ***Social Mobility Panel being taken forward. This will feature in COVID recovery plan, Phill Adams is in liaison with Martha***

10:15am Impact of COVID – Phill Adams

- Phill Adams (PA) shared a paper with the group from Exeter University which highlighted some of the impacts of Covid19, and presented on key messages.
- Unsure how long and deep the economic impact will be from Covid19. Advised that impact on labour market, employment and skill performance in HoTSW likely to be exacerbated because of reliance on vulnerable sectors, lower value roles and relative underperformance on higher skilled individuals.
- PA presented a claimant count data summary table for April. It was advised that since the pandemic the number of claims had doubled for every area in the HoTSW with some areas seeing almost a triple increase in claimant figures.
- PA advised Plymouth to have seen an additional 3,000-4,000 additional people in unemployment since the pandemic, with other hotspot areas likely to be Teignbridge, Torridge and North Devon because of their rural/market town areas being hit the hardest.
- Advised that not all areas in retraction. An initial 50% increase in vacancies seen in some health and digital areas, with a noticeable sector shift within employment opportunities.
- PA presented a perception survey which highlighted which sectors are interested in particular furlough schemes. Health and digital have not shown much interest in any of the highlighted schemes, but tourism and hospitality almost entirely engaged.
- PA advised that there is a large amount of ongoing work taking place around assessing the likely impact, including 2/3 pieces of work around joint modelling/research, and the acceleration of the SAP evidence-based work.
- In conclusion, there are huge economic challenges to come and we are already starting to see signs of distress with businesses however more intel with come within the upcoming months.

Action - PA to share a copy of the slides with the group.

10:35am Feedback from Members – All

- Members feedback a range of observations:
 - **Tourism** - South West takes 20% of tourism industry which is worth £100bn. £15bn might be stay at home this year. Significant challenge to be addressed, though may be some opportunities.
 - **Manufacturing** - Manufacturing is looking bleak, with a shift towards a recovery footing already ongoing. Advised that it may be worth looking at Plymouth in more detail to get a more accurate picture as large employers may be masking data.

- **Plymouth** - LA colleagues have been working hard to push out grants to businesses and ascertain what the situation looks like with employees being furloughed etc and what is needed. Construction have been continuing with house builds but are now trying to secure key projects. Local partners including schools are engaged.

Data remains short and hard to get hold off. Businesses are grateful for grants and business rates relief however they do not want loans as they do not know how they will pay them back. Seasonal sectors are concerned what to do during the winter months as they have been unable to reopen yet. Distance learning for apprentices is a challenge. Hospitality is presenting a big issue and a major concern. Employers are questioning how things will restart and when this is going to happen.

- **Colleges and Providers** - Number of apprentices furloughed but continuing learning. Current concern for recruitment patterns next year. Fortunate the private providers have continued. If blended approach continues, how long will it last?

Apprenticeship picture is currently OK but looking concerning for next year. Commercial training has fallen off a cliff edge however some businesses are trying to bring back commercial training and asks are starting to come through. Online training has picked up, it is likely this will be a new trend next year as teaching and learning is adapted. Providers are looking at Government guidance for 1st and 15th June to see what happens next. Cost of delivery has increased with less people but more resources needed.

Completed telephone survey across Devon with training providers, including PETROC, Exeter and South Devon and SWAPRO. Concerned around drop in vacancies. Particular sectors including construction, hair and beauty and hospitality have been hard hit. All providers have put training online and are supporting students, particular recognition needs to go to the training sector who have done a great job with this. Student health and mental health has been a challenge with many feeling the impact of isolation however support is being offered. Concerns around what will be offered to yr11 and 13 so options need to be offered to keep engaged with learning. DCC – TP, more online, recruitment cycle will change, numbers won't be as high, warehousing / logistics growing. Some providers will disappear as a result of this pandemic.

- **Retail** - Food retail has been fortunate during the pandemic as it has been protected. Lessons have been learnt from the pandemic which can be rolled out to the further economy. Cost world in a Covid world is very different to before with additional costs of equipment etc, this can potentially see an increase for most businesses of 25% to reopen, retail is going to struggle to cope. Further businesses without an online presence will struggle as fewer people will be able to access shops. Sickness levels are higher than they were. When furlough ends there will be a high cliff edge/job retention. Without any money in the bank, how will businesses cope? Technology is likely to change to world of work, headquarters are likely to reduce as pandemic has shown there is no need for them and that can be a massive reduction in costs. Businesses that dominated the South West are likely to take a hit as they will be last back into business.

Retail sectors are choosing to sell online with many option to use this method going forward. An example of Sancho's dress was provided who used to only do 10% of business online but is now doing 100% of business online. They have advised they are going to continue business online going forward and they are going to keep the shop

but not use it to sell the products. Some other businesses are looking at shedding office space and doing more WFH. Further some businesses are offering alternative solutions including some technology companies who are moving video production to webinars.

- **Somerset** - Biggest concern is the visitor economy. Developing a programme of support for sectors is ongoing but this is a work in progress. Advised that Somerset already had a high number of NEETS. With young people being one of the hardest hit, this figure is likely to increase. 80% of business grants have gone out. Business representative organisations have advised that SME's will collapse after grants have been used.
- **Hinkley** - Hinkley point C has continued throughout the pandemic by reducing its workforce in half. There are plans to increase number of workers on site in not to distant future. It was advised that HPC are going to be creating a large number of jobs and opportunities for upskilling. Currently clarifying what these opportunities are. Guy advised that Longer term aims need to prepare for the bathtub effect, how do we pipeline into retraining for jobs that are in place, ATAs? Government is likely to be investing so need to play on that.

11:15am Recovery Plans and Skills Strategy – Phill Adams

- DfE have asked SAPs to ensure that emerging intelligence around COVID is built into the emerging Skills Strategy. Skills Strategy development therefore delayed by a couple of months to allow us to link into recovery approach, but we are now seeking the restart process.
- Phill Adams advised that DfE are discussing enhanced scheme for apprentices, adult training etc however this is still early days.
- ESB roles are critical with this.
- Mike Matthews – Unsure how much time there is left for businesses. Need to get information back out quickly. PA reassured that LA and LEP are working at pace to reduce impacts on businesses and ensure recovery strategies will pick up key concerns.
- Nora Corkery – VCS hard hit. Snapshot is funding is coming through, but a cliff edge is approaching as traditional funding has stopped therefore creating a lot of uncertainty. Covid helpline has been introduced where intelligence suggests that town and parish councils, particularly those with assets, are being hard hit as they are losing a lot of revenue.

Action – Phill Adams to sketch out the timescales of work / forward work programmes as recovery piece is finalised.

Action – All to copy in Phill Adams to any additional intelligence you would like to share.

11.30am Deep Dive: Future of Work and Social Mobility– Hilary Stevens, University of Exeter

- Hilary Stevens advised that the idea of a deep dive was discussed around a year ago. Since then, two themes have been produced, including future of work and social mobility. These themes have been researched, followed by an online interaction process and now a workshop. A briefing paper on each them has been produced and distributed to board members. Hilary introduced Ilke to the group who is helping to conduct the research.
- Ilke advised that an online round table is being organised including key stakeholder groups to discuss the themes and unpick further.
- There is lots of overlap between both themes.
- Future of work will be exploring following areas as a starter for ten;
 - **Human aspects including artificial intelligence and digital** technology – how can this be developed further and what does this mean for businesses?
 - **Ethics** - What does the future of work look like // use of data / trust
 - **Business Operations** – what are our new business models. The circular economy model is being considered also.
 - **Skills** - how we ensure everyone has access to the necessary skills they need and determining what it is that will be needed?
- Ilke advised that they have a couple of groups in mind but would like to ensure that they link closely with this group.
- Want to limit to number of participants in first group workshop but then open up further following this and potentially run focus groups alongside the main meeting that could feed in.
- Resource for research assistant available
- PA advised that this is a fast piece of work that they want to have produced by July. We need to consider how we draw people into this. PA advised that they will be coming back to ESB's to provide a rep and sector rep to sit on these groups.
- Guy Hazelhurst – Important research gets turned into application promptly
- Steve Cardew – Timing is crucial. Can only do scenario work at the moment to anticipate so do not want to put too much work in too soon that will not be useful.
- Mike Matthews – Important to be mindful that people will react differently to the situation going forward. There are two groups of people, one who need to be pushed and the others who are pushing forward already.
- Mick Green – Aware that some small businesses are planning to shred staff through redundancies when furlough ends. Some businesses are also surveying staff to ask how

this is for them and obtain their thoughts about going forward. The current picture is a very mixed bag.

- John Laramy – Need to get pipeline right and ensure skills training is matched by job opportunities going forward by training young people so they can fill these jobs. Advised that flexibility with apprenticeships is needed going forward as this is likely to look very different. There has been a 50% decrease in starts next year modelled at Exeter.
- Ilke – Work is future facing. Expertise can be look at to determine what can be introduced now to support long term solutions.
- Hilary Stevens – Other strand is social mobility. Consultation to be launched over next couple of weeks. Briefing that was issued provides broad picture. Interested to know if there is anything missing or anything good to focus on within the paper to know how to take this topic forward.
- Fiona McMillan – Are we ensuring that working is connected up with the work Martha is completing? PA reassured that work is underway to look at joining both pieces of work up.
- John Laramy – Advised that a short term challenge is the nervousness around travel now. There are also those struggling with online connectivity and digital poverty.
- Kristine Norton – Services are looking at ways to provide support to families. Sometimes experiencing difficulties with digital inclusions.
- Mel Roberts – Data poverty is something widely recognised within Taunton. This pandemic will widen the gaps within families due to not having access to the resources required.
- Hilary – Encourage everyone in consultation discussion to unpick these ideas. Want practical solutions that can help support most vulnerable.
- David Ralph – LEP recovery plan identifies need for digital acceleration and the digital divide so this have been put forward as one of the asks from Government.
- Phill Adams – Two deeps dives taken forward. How do we link everything up? Recovery strategies taken across all 4 areas. Feed in immediate skills issues. Skills strategy needs to be long term.

Action – All members encouraged to get involved with Deep Dive Programmes as events taken forward.

11:50am AOB / Round Up

- There was no other business to report.

11:55am Close