

Heart of the South West Skills Advisory Panel

21st January 2021
from
11:00am – 13:30pm

Via Microsoft Teams

11:00am Welcome, Introductions and Declarations of Interest

Attendees:

- Fiona McMillan
- Steve Cardew
- David Ralph
- Bill Blythe
- Stuart Elford
- Rod Davis
- Carl Wyard
- Phill Adams
- Keri Denton
- Sharron Robbie
- Hilary Stevens
- Paul Blackmore
- Jackie Grubb
- Rosie Bates
- John Laramy
- Laurence Frewin
- Jo Holmes
- Andy Berry
- Helen Higgs
- Gabrielle Climbe
- Jacob Coburn
- Chris Evans
- Sean Mackney
- Tina Brinkworth
- Nicky Keast
- Katy Quinn
- Suzanne Bond
- Victoria Hatfield
- Mike Green
- Mike Matthews
- Mel Roberts
- Edward Coley
- Khristine Norton
- Tony Skeel
- Nora Corkery
- Cheryl Ward
- Stephen Henagulph
- Lee Tozer
- Joanna Caine
- Mark Sheppard

Apologies:

- Rob Bosworth
- Alan Denby
- Jamie Evans
- Debbie Wright
- Nicola Williams
- Julie Hawker

11:05am Minutes of Last Meeting

- Actions from last meeting:
 - There were no declarations of interest to report and all actions had been completed.

11:15am Update on Impact of COVID – Phill Adams

- It was advised that since the last update, national figures are now showing an economic dip of an additional 4%, therefore we will see a drop of 13-14% across the financial year.
- We are now expecting to see an additional 9-12months recovery period. Tourism and hospitality have been two of the hardest hit sectors as expected.
- A map was presented to the group showing areas within the UK economically impacted by COVID-19 crisis and left behind. HoTSW is shown to be badly affected by COVID areas.

Two specific areas are Plymouth and Torbay who have been hit by both long-term challenges coupled with COVID.

- It was highlighted that it is important that these messages are being communicated accordingly to make sure this is known. PA advised that they are currently waiting for the next round of data where they will know more.
- John Laramy emphasised that their heat map was an excellent example of a simple way to understand the effects that are being noticed by HoTSW and should potentially be shared with MP's accordingly. It was advised that David Ralph would pick this up and would also share this at the LEP Board meeting tomorrow.
- Chris Evans highlighted that the South West isn't featuring on the agenda during levelling up discussions. It is important to emphasise this message going forward to push the South West onto future levelling up discussions.
- Stuart Elford advised that the chamber have provided evidence on levelling up. The chamber will be writing to all stakeholders next week to ramp up levelling up agenda so if you have any issues you would like to raise contact Stuart directly.

11:20am Update from ESBs and Members – All

- John Laramy advised that businesses resilience has been better than anticipated thus far. It is unsure if this is due to the furlough scheme or not.
- Chris Evans highlighted that COVID has had a high impact on Uni's including Exeter. The main problem with Exeter Uni is the number of international students that come to the Uni who have been unable to join due to Covid. Delivery has now gone online which has been a huge piece of work and investment but is going well. The Uni will be using this experience to look at expanding CPD offer available.
- Rosie Bates highlighted that business resilience is being seen. Footfall is low in the city centre. Focus within the council is currently supporting businesses with grants but also on recovery work more long term.
- Steve Cardew advised that it has been a difficult period for businesses. Brexit and Covid has preoccupied many businesses. Self-isolation has caused some problems with staffing. 75% of manufacturing is exported and therefore Brexit is causing issues with this. The team are currently supporting Plymouth initiatives such as start up support.
- Jackie Grubb advised that the skills for Plymouth is proactive. Apprenticeship start-ups are still buoyant however the concern now lies with adults. The focus is now on how this can be repurposed and refocus online.
- Tina Brinkworth advised that it is currently stable at the moment, but it is thought that the impact may show when furlough ends. There are significant growth areas in the city so they are currently working hard to align skills to these jobs opportunities.
- Laurence Frewin advised that sectors are performing well at the moment. As advised earlier the hospitality, tourism, leisure and retail sectors have been hit hard. Fishing has also been hard hit from Covid and Brexit. Marine is currently holding up and looking strong, we are seeing fewer breaks in learning and positive apprenticeship rates. It was advised that they are not seeing as much interest with adults which they are unsure why. Town deal and future high street funds is currently the priority as well as recovery.
- Carl Wyard advised that they are pulling together the Tourism recovery plan which will be circulated to the group when ready. They are waiting for formal confirmation from the kickstart submission in November.
- Phill Adams advised that they are pushing with Kickstart. DWP have advised that internal systems are not working as initially expected.

All to ensure you have pushed this message through to kickstart reps.

- Nicky Keast advised that they were not anticipating the volume kickstart interest they had received. It was advised to raise any problems through DWP at national level. In the next couple weeks, it has been advised that there will be a dedicated kickstart team who will be looking into what can be done locally.
- Bill Blythe advised that apprenticeship numbers have bounced slightly however there are currently delays with recruiting. Business confidence in manufacturing and pharmaceuticals is strong. Digital is not as strong as we would like so will remain a skills strategy development area. It was also advised that the team would like to work with the LEP to support this.
- Andy Berry highlighted that there are many frustrations with the ever-changing Government testing, we are only receiving decisions as they are released which is extremely difficult to plan for and meaning that difficult decisions need to be made at the last minute. Adult learning is going well and it is expected that they will be oversubscribed soon. It was advised that over 120 applications were received for the bootcamps. The welding bootcamps has been unable to run and has therefore been postponed however the digital bootcamps can go ahead as planned. Residential accommodation has lost a large amount of income and hospitality has been hard hit as well. It was advised that DAS complexity has put huge delays of apprenticeships. A blended online approach will be taken going forward.
- Phill Adams advised that Learn Devon are finding that there are some cohort of learners who are booming with online learning however there are a cohort of learners who are struggling with this and as a result are dropping out of the courses.
- John Laramy highlighted that he is concerned around students mental health. A learners voice survey identified how many individuals are missing catching up with friends etc.
- Helen Higgs advised that work is progressing ok at the moment. They are developing a national heatmap on skills. It would be good to see if we can support the region on what we think are critical skills.
- Sharron Robbie highlighted that the FE White Paper was published (a link was provided in the comments section on Teams). Training provider sector is currently buoyant. Majority of providers have gone out of their way to ensure that staff and students are kept safe and have moved learning online. Currently seeing a huge amount of digital poverty which is causing problems with learners accessing learning as this is happening online. Apprentices with digital poverty is a huge concern and they need access to a digital device to assist with learning. Further they are currently unable to get assessors into the workplace which is also causing problems with apprenticeships. Most employers are pausing recruitment for now. The current growth area is being seen in professional services. The team are currently seeking levelling up support to help balance apprenticeships and kickstart. Digital bootcamps are currently out for wave 2 and we are looking for expressions of interest. A webinar is being held on Tuesday around widening the geographical area, Sharron advised she could provide additional information if required.
- Rod Davis highlighted that current challenges have been around interpreting guidance. Providers have been very resilient.

11:50am Review on the Local Skills Report – Phill Adams

- PA provided an overview to board members on the current status with the Local Skills Report. He advised that this needs to be produced by 31st March. The second iteration was circulate to members prior to the meeting. A large amount of comments have been received which have been used to tweak the document accordingly. A big effort has been made to build in as much content as possible however the sheer

quantum and overlaps has meant that not everything has been able to go into the document. Current version is plain text edition, once this is approved and tweaked it will be submitted to produce a final designed version.

- As stated earlier in the meeting the Skills White Paper was published this morning, PA commented on key messages as identified below:
 - **Local Skills Improvement Plans** – Pilots of Local Skills Improvement Plans, which will bring together business representative organisations, providers and wider partners to set a three year plan for local provision. Will build on the work of the SAPs. More detail to follow.
 - **Strategic Development Fund** – Capital and revenue fund, aligned to LSIPs to deliver local priorities and projects.
 - **Skills and Productivity Board** – National board to align and bring together national demand and issues
 - **Employer Led Standards** – Employers to be put at centre of qualification design.
- John Laramy highlighted that the paper advises that they want employers to be at the heart of the system. There is a focus on high technical qualifications in technical roles. They are overhauling funding and accountability to allow a 3 year look at funding rather than short term views.
- Bill Blythe highlighted that clarity on the definition of locality would be helpful.
- Stuart Elford advised that this talks about accredited chambers network and recognises that chambers are the voice of the business.
- PA moved on to discuss the core vision and priorities of the skills plan. The core vision is defined as ‘Every individual in the Heart of the South West should be able to access the training or learning they need to thrive in a productive job they value, supporting inclusive growth and prosperity’. This will be achieved by;
 - Ensuring that our skills and training environment is responsive and forward facing, meeting individual and business need;
 - Ensuring that every individual can access the skills and training they need to achieve their own potential; and
 - Ensuring that all skills and training investment and activity contributes to both improving our shared prosperity and collective productivity
- Tina Brinkworth questioned if we should reflect that this is about employers having the skill set they required to fill jobs? It was suggested to swap business and individual around in the 1st bullet and tweak the second bullet to emphasise this point.
- PA moved on to discuss key sectors. It was advised that the three local industrial strategy sector opportunities had been identified as engineering futures, digital futures and energy futures/low carbon growth. Other sectors also highlighted to ensure a successful recovery are health and social care, construction, agritech and food and drink production as well as tourism, hospitality, retail and leisure.

- Fiona McMillan highlighted that creative industries are missing from the list.
- PA then moved on to discuss how the Geography had been split within the document. It was advised that the report recognises that the HoTSW is a varied place so there is a need to recognise the differing labour market and skills markets that make it up including Plymouth, Exeter and its travel to work area, Northern and Western Devon, Western Somerset and Mendip, South Somerset and Torbay and South Devon
- It was highlighted that these categorisations do not reflect political catchments.
- It was agreed to include and its travel to work area to Plymouth as well. Overall, the board agreed they were happy with this.
- PA moved on to discuss the local skills action plan for the paper. It was advised that these need to be balanced appropriately.
- The first objective is to ensure that skills and training environments are responsive and forward facing, meeting individual and business need. 7 core areas have been identified and can be found below:
 - Ensure a fit between skills supply and demand
 - Support our LIS growth sectors – Digital, Advanced Engineering, Energy Futures / Green Growth
 - Support skills development in core sectors
 - Support more vulnerable sectors to recover
 - Raise profile of higher-level apprenticeship
 - Support Innovation and Enterprise Activity
 - Secure additional FE, HE, IoT and other specialist investment
- Tina Brinkworth advised that engineering should come first in the second bullet point.
- Steve Cardew advised that is important to prioritise skills supply chain and demand.
- Object 2 focuses on Ensure that every individual can access the skills and training they need to achieve their own potential. 8 key areas have been identified.
- Laurence Frewin questioned if in the advice and guidance piece we can include parents as part of the engagement process?
- Chris Evans highlighted that HE and FE are already working with schools to widen participation. Can we do more to support the education eco system, happy to share practice on this.
- Paul Blackmore advised that he feels strongly that early education is part of the pipeline.

- Steve Cardew advised that schools should be engaged to provide early intervention and therefore should be mentioned.
- Andy Berry discussed the formation of business hubs and highlighted that businesses could be connected with schools by using FE and training provider network.
- PA discussed the wider content and areas yet to be finalised. This includes the introduction, evidence chapter and annex, case studies, forward look and design.
- PA advised that there will not be another SAP meeting scheduled before 31st March therefore a copy of the amended paper will be circulated virtually for approval. Board agreed they were happy with this approach.

13:15pm LEP Pipeline Update

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13:25pm AOB / Round Up

There was nothing further to report.

13:30pm Close