

Heart of the South West Skills Advisory Panel

14th December 2021, 10:00 – 12:00

Via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- Vince Flower
- Phill Adams
- Keri Denton
- Sharron Robbie
- Stuart Elford
- Hilary Stevens
- John Laramy
- Debbie Stafford
- Khristine Norton
- Carl Wyard
- Gabrielle Climie

- Rosie Bates
- Tony Skeel
- Rod Davis
- Claire Gibson
- Mike Matthews
- Melanie Roberts
- Alex Coull
- Tina Brinkworth
- Bill Blyth
- Laurence Frewin
- Hannah Keyte
- (Minutes)

Apologies:

- Paul Blackmore
- Chris Evans
- Jamie Evans
- Katy Quinn
- Nicola Allen
- Andy Berry
- Mark Sheppard
- Michael Green

10am Welcome, Housekeeping and any new Declarations

Vince Flower welcomed everyone to the meeting.

10:05am Minutes of Last Meeting

All previous actions had been completed.

Board members approved the minutes from the meeting held on 1st November 2021.

In terms of the Future of Work Report, Social Mobility is required to be included and, given attendees have been provided with the opportunity to comment, this will then be published on the website.

10:10am Update of Employment & Skills Indicators – Gabrielle Climie

Gabrielle Climie provided an update on key changes, stable indicators, no new data and points of interest. Key highlights are included within the powerpoint which has been shared with SAP Board Members. Gabrielle updated an increase in percentage of population with level 4+ qualifications and also a significant increase in the percentage of adult training and education achievements in health, public services and care which is well above the national average.

Tina Brinkworth commented that Plymouth have seen largest vacancy numbers since August 2017 and collected data from employers showing an anticipated 8,000 new jobs coming into the system. Currently experiencing skills crisis in every sector alongside inflated wages due to individuals moving between employers. Plymouth are looking at ways to attract individuals from other cities.

Stuart Elford enquired about encouraging a return to work for those over 50-year-olds who have decided to leave employment. Hilary Stevens confirmed data is showing that individuals are going from furlough to economic inactivity.

Mike Matthews made an observation around the 2% drop in retail (as stated in Gabrielle's presentation) due to the anticipation that this would be higher. Gabrielle Climie confirmed there is a delay in data, therefore may see an increase once new data has been received. Second observation was the slight drop in self-employment. Hilary Stevens commented that nationally there is a significant decline in the number of those registered as self-employed.

Sharron Robbie highlighted that a lot of employers are experiencing survey fatigue and whilst they want to complete the data surveys, they do not have the capacity to do so.

Alex Coull shared data on screen including the length of unemployment i.e., those looking for employment for between 1 to 2 years is very high.

Offers of data to Gabrielle Climie were made from Tina Brinkworth, following recent workshops with 90 reps from 64 organisations, and also Khristine Norton for data on young people and destinations provided by CSW Group.

Carl Wyard confirmed that Torbay are experiencing rising vacancy numbers and reduction in unemployment however a mismatch between required skills from employers and the skills that potential employees are presenting with.

- **Gabrielle Climie to circulate presentation after the meeting.**
- **Alex Coull to circulate the data set shared during the meeting.**

10:30am Roundtable of Members

Stuart Elford raised concerns, specifically relating to leisure and hospitality sector, following announcement of latest restrictions. Stuart advised Kickstart had placed 335 young people and, of those that completed their placement, 81% have now gone into work or further education.

Mike Matthews updated on IT Sector, seeing a lack of quality personnel thus leaving unfilled positions. There is a great wage inflationary pressure being experienced however not seeing the right calibre of candidates coming through.

Rosie Bates advised there is a lack of appropriate skills to fulfil vacancies and since July / August 2021, there has consistently been approx. 3,000 vacancies within 5 miles of Exeter City. Alongside this we are not seeing the UC claimant count reducing by much (down approx. 200 on last month) so there is a mismatch here. In terms of Kickstart, Rosie updated there have been around 91 young people enrolled on the programme.

Laurence Frewin reflected that organisations are seeing similar pressures in vacancies and matching skills. Seeing strong numbers in 16-18 apprenticeships however remains a disconnect between apprenticeship vacancies and ability to fulfil these. Reported that there has been a significant increase in number of young people leaving the area.

Bill Blythe updated that North Devon are seeing a number of students withdrawing from provision or being difficult to retain. Attendance is being impacted by requirement for face-to-face learning and increases in covid-related absences i.e., siblings / family members testing positive etc. Bill advised that apprenticeship numbers are growing, and employers are working hard however the latest 'work from home' guidance is likely to have a negative impact on this.

Sharron Robbie shared links to national reports including the Skills and Post 16 Education Bill currently going through Parliament and the Lords Youth Unemployment Report. The report found that 1 in 5 18-year-olds are currently NEET and it reported that the apprenticeship levy does not

incentivise this. National Audit Office report on Kickstart; this has been extended to end of March 2022 however the apprenticeships enhanced incentives are due to end January 2022 so attempts to get this extended.

Rod Davis stated they are having the same experience with challenges around retention and dropouts of non-apprenticeship learners across provision. Rod mentioned that apprenticeship system is putting pressure on colleges and provider resources in terms of the support required for employers.

Melanie Roberts mentioned the bootcamp programme and a conversation with DfE this morning inviting Somerset to submit an application / EOI of extension to contract.

PA updated that there has been an increase in providers stepping away from ERDF projects as it is too complicated to receive the funding.

- **Vince Flower to liaise with Phill Adams to see if we can pull together an end of year report in terms of job vacancies, NEETS etc ready for the next meeting.**

11:00am Update on Local Skills Review – Phill Adams

DfE requested an updated Local Skills Report for HotSW provided by 28th January 2022. Whilst not a review of fundamentals, this is a light touch review interested in updated data and narrative around post covid issues being funded. This includes strengths and needs, swot assessment for area and looking at the work that has been achieved through SAP / across wider partnership.

Wavehill are going to be commissioned to progress the review and currently making some amendments to strategy. They will be looking to speak to SAP Members over the next couple of weeks. Important to pull together strengths and weaknesses picking out LSIP pilot, Tourism Zone, Sectoral Delivery around health construction and Agri-Tech, CRF details and next steps and SAP specific deliveries / priorities.

In terms of timeline, once Wavehill have spoken to SAP members, this will come to the January 2022 meeting and hopeful this will be signed off.

11:15am SAP Projects & Programme Update – Phill Adams

Phill Adams updated that the Digital Skills Programme went forward to LEP board and has been approved and currently finalising the business plan to take forward. Improving Digital Engagement, Digital Skills for Key Sector and Enhanced Digital Leadership are also included. It is paramount that these programmes are aligned and joined up.

Phill Adams reported HotSW received £15m in CRF monies across 24 projects the list of which was shared on screen. In total there was approx. £10m worth of skills provision provided across the area. Devon has a significant challenge around capacity to deliver the programmes.

Tina Brinkworth updated they are currently still in investigation phase however there are some outcomes from National Marine Park in terms of skills.

Phill Adams suggested for leads to come together in January 2022 once projects have started to mobilise to align provisions where possible.

John Laramy made a plea whilst we need to be ambitious, it is important that we are sensible and focus on those that will make the biggest difference for Devon.

Claire Gibson mentioned the Digital Skills Funding is available through until December 2024 or March 2025 therefore more flexibility and could possibly be delayed. Further conversations required around this.

- **Phill Adams to arrange a meeting with leads to look at investment portfolio and delivery. Look to take this forward in the new year.**

11:25am AOB – Chair

Construction update will be provided at the next meeting.

No other business was raised by members.

11:30am Close

The next SAP Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 26th January 10:00 -12:00.