

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GM SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIP, HELD ON 26 JANUARY 2017 AT CHURCHGATE HOUSE

PRESENT:

Cllr Sean Anstee	GM Combined Authority
Cllr Jenny Bullen	GM Combined Authority
Cllr Abdul Jabbar	GM Combined Authority
Clive Memmott	GM Chamber
Mark Currie	GM Learner Provider Network
Alex Whinnom	GMCVO
Derek O'Toole	GM Colleges Group
Donna Edwards	Job Centre Plus
Alison Burnett	GM DCS
Mayor Paul Dennett	Salford Council
Paul Rowlett	Salford University
Theresa Grant	Trafford Council
Julie Price	Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Gemma Marsh	New Economy
Mat Ainsworth	New Economy
Emma Stonier	GMIST

SEP16/08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and noted from Mike Blackburn, Mark Hughes Justin Kelly, Andrew Lightfoot, Simon Nokes, Cathy Starbuck and Bill Webster.

SEP16/09 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair welcomed members of the Skills and Employment Partnership (SEP) to the meeting and noted the length of time since the last meeting. It was confirmed that future dates have been arranged and will be circulated to members of the partnership.

SEP16/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There was one declaration of interest made from Cllr Abdul Jabbar for Item 16/15 Area Based Review Development.

SEP16/11 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Skills and Employment Partnership, held on 14 June 2016 were submitted.

Resolved/-

To approve the minutes of the Skills and Employment Partnership, held on 14 June 2016, as a correct record.

SEP16/12 GOVERNANCE

Members received a document which outlined proposed changes to the governance and terms of reference (TOR) of the Skills and Employment Partnership (SEP). The main proposed amendment to the governance was that going forward the SEP would be a consultative group rather than a decision making body.

Following discussion members requested the following amendments to the governance document;

- The inclusion of the membership of the Skills and Employment Partnership;
- How the Skills and Employment Partnership will feed into the work and skills programme, the other committees in the governance structure and the CA needs to be articulated more clearly; and
- The inclusion of how often the Skills and Employment Partnership will meet.

RESOLVED/-

To receive an updated TOR for approval at the next meeting of the Skills and Employment Partnership.

SEP16/13 WORK AND HEALTH UPDATE

Members received a report which provided update on the Work and Health programme. It was noted that figures in the report were redacted due to the commercial sensitivity of the data and the paper being considered at the GMCA meeting on 27 January 2017.

Mat Ainsworth outlined the national position for the commissioning of work and health. DWP has developed an umbrella commissioning framework, with providers asked to bid on regional lots. In GM, under the devolution agreement, services will be co-commissioned with the DWP but funding will be devolved, and GM will have the ability to co-design, procure and manage the local work and health programme enabling it to be delivered on a local footprint (subject to certain national conditions). A GM/DWP governance board will be established to support the management of the programme and provide a forum for issues resolution. It is intended that Trafford Council will

run the procurement process and be the contract holder until the GMCA has the requisite legal status to act as a contracting authority. A MOU and accompanying grant funding letter, between the DWP and GM, is expected to be finalised and signed shortly.

GM has been looking to increase investment through the European Social Fund, however post-Brexit there are still some areas that are to be decided in relation this funding.

Members were informed of the next steps for the work and health programme;

1. DWP will launch their commercial exercise and the redacted information in the report will be made public. This will be circulated to members when available.
2. A specification will be launched in April 2017 and how to build in information from focus groups carried out with local residents/service users will be considered.
3. Provision is expected to be launched in early 2018.

Discussion took place around;

- How smaller providers can join partnerships and/or the framework to be considered for contracts. It was confirmed that a meeting was due to take place with the Provider Network when discussions could take place with opportunities for; exchanging ideas, information gathering at an early stage, networks and stakeholders to be listened to.
- The involvement of districts in the design of the programmes. Programmes do have to be commissioner at a GM level with a single contractual bid, although bidder alliances and local providers becoming part of the delivery network will be possible. Localities are also involved through Provider Network Boards and other meetings attended which discuss locality input, delivery and integration.
- Whether GM would have its own framework. It was confirmed that GM can run its own procurement processes outside of the framework and go out to tender. Procurement would take place using the STAR process.
- How GM resources a potential expansion of capacity and expertise to carry out the procurement process and ensure the appropriate staffing is in place to lead this. This was confirmed as a challenge but one which was currently being worked through. It was noted that GM should continue to make the case to government for more resources.

RESOLVED/-

1. To receive and note the update on the Area Based Review.
2. To circulate commissioning timeline and draft consultation once available to enable members to provide feedback.

SEP16/14 ADULT EDUCATION BUDGET: UPDATE

Members received a report which provided an update on progress in relation to the devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) in Greater Manchester. The report highlighted issues for consideration, areas where action was required and set out a timetable for the activity in preparation for a devolved AEB from 2018/19. Following the Brexit referendum and the change in government there has been a 6 month delay in the timeline of government agencies regarding AEB Devolution whilst the new Secretary of State considered the proposals to take forward the devolution process. The current AEB in GM is approximately £80m. The SFA is proposing a new formula but as yet it was not clear how this would affect GM. Work had taken place with the GMLPN and FE Colleges to establish what can be different, what needs to be different and how the AEB can be used across GM to maximise the effectiveness of AEB to improve job outcomes for individuals. Discussions have also taken place with GM employers around employability, the skills which employers are looking for and how this can be articulated and supported by the best use of the AEB.

It was highlighted there was still a considerable amount of work which needed to take place before the AEB budget was devolved to GM in 2018/19. From 2018 GM will have the ability to implement its own funding policy, including payment rates, rules and performance management KPIs and GM will work closely with the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) to ensure effective transition from SFA policy to local policy. During 2017/18 'shadow budgets' and 'Provider Agreements' will be in place to shape conversations with providers about their future adult skills offer.

Comments from the Partnership included;

- The importance of digital/IT skills to employers and potential conflicts between employers' needs and wider strategies. It was emphasised that the aim in GM was to use the AEB to get the most value and best outcomes possible; focusing on progression, achievement, job outcomes and higher earnings.
- That medium and small companies needed help and incentives to de-risk employment decisions.
- Consideration should be given to how the AEB is aligned with GMs commitment to social value and the GMSF.
- How universal entitlement would fit into the proposed changes to the provision of adult education and the fact that a significant amount of FE Colleges business was English, Maths and ESOL skills. GM was currently working through this and it was intended to build an entitlements pathway alongside outcomes employers also recognised.

RESOLVED/-

To note the report.

SEP16/15 AREA BASED REVIEW DEVELOPMENT – VERBAL

Theresa Grant, Chief Executive, Trafford Council provided a verbal update the Area Based Review development.

The Partnership were informed that the Area Based Review was submitted in June 2016 and a report was published in November 2016.

1. Following a visit in November 2016 the Further Education (FE) Commissioner recommended that a different option was required for Stockport due to them receiving a Grade 4 by Ofsted. The FE Commissioner is due back in February 2017 and a meeting is being arranged with council leaders.
2. The decision regarding the Bolton and Bury merger has been delayed due to the change in government with an announcement about whether this can progress expected over the next few weeks.

Discussions are taking place with DfE to ensure that CA is clear that the outcomes are what is wanted in GM, the results will be fit for purpose and driven by a local, not national, agenda. Additionally consultation will take place with each locality make clear that any change in GM should be tested against and support the ambitions of the CA. It was noted that the FE Commissioner was supportive of this and intends to work with the CA. It was indicated that GM was in a good place to shape the future and to get beneficial outcomes for GM.

Members asked about progress against the potential Trafford/Manchester merger. Members were updated that this is waiting on legislation and at present GM are not aware of the exact timescales for this. Trafford College was also seeking further opportunities, with discussions taking place regarding a merger with Stockport College to ensure provision and as a solution to identified issues. The FE Commissioner has been involved in these discussions.

A member asked about the position of Oldham College following Tameside's decision to withdraw from the proposed merger. Members were informed that the FE Commissioner was visiting Oldham College in February 2017 and there should be an opportunity to raise concerns then. It was confirmed that the merger had been agreed by the CA but that since this time Tameside had stepped back until a later stage but now with the outcome of Stockport the proposal is not going ahead: Tameside will still stay involved in future implementation of the ABR as outlined in the report

RESOLVED/-

To note the verbal update.

SEP16/16 HIGHLIGHT REPORT – UPDATES ON PROGRESS OF WORK AND SKILLS PROGRAMME

Members received a report which provided an update on the progress work and skills programme.

Mat Ainsworth highlighted that the co-location of Job Centre Pluses had received universal support within GM. An official response from the Department of Health and announcement with regards to co-location of centre was expected soon.

RESOLVED/-

To note the report.

SEP16/17 GMCA/AGMA TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT

Members received a report which was submitted to the CA in July 2016. The report outlined the findings and recommendations of the GM Scrutiny Pool's task and finish group into education, employment and skills.

RESOLVED/-

To note the recommendations in the report with a view to scrutiny members receiving updates on progress.

SEP16/17 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members asked about the recent announcement of the £130m Growth Deal and whether the SEP will have any input into this. Members were informed that once this had been discussed further an item could be submitted to a meeting of the Partnership related to the Growth Deal.

Members asked about the Work and Skills Strategy Update and whether they would have sight of this. It was confirmed that this was still being updated and members would be involved.

SEP16/18 FUTURE MEETING DATES

Thursday 11th May 1.30-3.30pm, Scrutiny Room, Manchester Town Hall

Friday 21st July 9.30-11.30am, Meeting Room 12, Trafford Town Hall