MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GM WORK AND SKILLS EXECUTIVE MEMBERS,
HELD ON FRIDAY 12 MAY 2017 AT MANCHESTER TOWN HALL

PRESENT:

Cllr Sean Anstee                  GM Combined Authority
Cllr Shoab Akhtar                Oldham Council
Cllr Kate Butler                 Stockport MBC
Cllr Ged Cooney                  Tameside MBC
Cllr Dean Fitzpatrick            Stockport MBC
Cllr Terence Halliwell           Wigan Council
Cllr John Walsh                  Salford Council

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mat Ainsworth                    GM Combined Authority
Emma Stonier                     GM Combined Authority

WSE/17/01 INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed Members to the inaugural meeting of the Work and Skills Executive Members. The Work and Skills Executive is intended to provide political support across the districts to the work, skills and employment agenda. The Chair informed Members that he would be continuing as the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Portfolio Lead for Skills and Employment to drive this agenda forward and ensure that the people of Greater Manchester benefited from growth across the conurbation.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Bernard Priest, Cllr Lisa Stone and Cllr Peter Williams.

WSE/17/02 CHAIR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

There were no Chair’s announcements or urgent business.

WSE/17/03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declaration of interests received.

WSE/17/04 GOVERNANCE – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members received draft terms of reference for Work and Skills Executive Members. The following was proposed in relation to the Work and Skills Executive; that the group will be
Chaired by the GMCA Leader who holds the work and skills portfolio; that the group will meet quarterly; that the group will be made up of Executive Members who have responsibility for Work and Skills in their district and will be nominated by each local authority.

The group is intended to provide strategic political oversight for the development of the work and skills programme in Greater Manchester and to provide a forum in which Members can share information regarding their own localities, and information regarding the work taking place at a Greater Manchester level can be shared with Members and disseminated into districts.

The group approved the terms of reference; it was agreed that these could be updated if required as the work of the group progressed.

RESOLVED:

To approve the Terms of Reference for the Work and Skills Executive Members.

WSE/17/05 WORK AND SKILLS STRATEGY OVERVIEW – PRESENTATION

Members received a presentation which provided an overview of the Work and Skills strategy. The main areas highlighted were;

- The 40% of children entering school in Greater Manchester who were not school ready and the numbers of young people leaving school without 5 GCSEs including English and Maths;
- Level 2 qualifications accounted for 70% of the Adult Skills Budget spend within Greater Manchester;
- The difficulties faced by businesses in recruiting staff with the relevant qualifications and skills;
- 227,000 working age residents across Greater Manchester claim out-of-work benefits, with 140,000 out of work due to ill-health;
- The estimated cost of worklessness and the impact of low pay to Greater Manchester is £2billion;
- The vision of Greater Manchester to create an integrated system which has the individual and employer at its heart, and better responds to the needs of residents, businesses and contributes to the growth and productivity of the Greater Manchester economy;
- The work and skills strategy that has been developed to tackle the issues identified across Greater Manchester; this runs for 3 years and is refreshed to ensure that it is up to date;
- The alignment between the Work and Skills strategy and the Health and Social Care agenda;
- That programmes will be locally designed to provide solutions for Greater Manchester needs; and
- That work will be driven by local businesses, employees and skills system, with pan Greater Manchester Officer level groups to drive these priorities across Greater Manchester.

Members noted the presentation and the following comments/questions were discussed;
• The possibility of Ofsted inspections looking at skills levels and young people’s preparedness for work; Members were informed that Greater Manchester was lobbying government with regards to areas Ofsted inspections covered;
• The majority of apprenticeships require grade C which effectively bars some young people from these schemes, the potential of working with employees regarding lowering the barrier in some instances was discussed to enable young people to gain experience of the job market;
• Young people should be entering school ‘school ready’ and school should prepare young people for employment;
• The need to maximise the influence that Greater Manchester has over the work and skills system to ensure the best possible outcomes across Greater Manchester;
• Ways in which GM can influence mean average wage improvements and incentivise employers to do this; the role of Local Authorities in leading by example was discussed, for example through being a real living wage employer or through considering social value in procurement, although the budgetary constraints on organisations were recognised;
• The importance of people within Greater Manchester having the skills which lead to higher paid employment, skills pathways being in place within paid work and retaining graduates within Greater Manchester. It was also noted that there was inequality of pay within Greater Manchester, as well as between Greater Manchester and regional/national figures. It was confirmed that conversations are taking place in relation to a Further Education Technology Institute for L4, L5, L6 and degree level qualifications to bridge the skills gap, with data informing overall decisions
• The importance of good careers advice was highlighted; this has been identified as one of the ten key priorities in the Skills Strategy and funding for careers advice going forward is being looked at;
• Work taking place to bring forward a Greater Manchester wide approach to the apprenticeship levy, including looking at new and in work apprenticeships and up-skilling employees; and
• The pledge made by the Mayor in his manifesto regarding UCAS style apprenticeships; Members’ noted that these could also benefit the wider adult population alongside young people.

RESOLVED:/

• To note the presentation; and
• To receive a copy of the slides.

WSE/17/06 WORK AND HEALTH UPDATE

Members received a presentation which provided an update on Work and Health and the Working Well Programme in Greater Manchester. The main items highlighted in the presentation were;

• The benefits of a focus on work and health to both employment and health outcomes;
• The learning from the Working Well programme included identification of complex barriers to work, such as severe mental and/or physical health problems, the relevant skills or qualifications, length of time out of work and age. The Working Well programme has also enabled analysis of which barriers have the greatest impact on
The greatest barrier identified was level of qualifications (individuals without 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C significantly less likely to find work than those that have these qualifications). Physical and mental health was also a significant factor in securing employment;

- The Working Well programme alongside impacting on employment has also influenced health, skills, work experience and wellbeing;
- The increase of uptake in Working Well support when referrals were received from GPs; around 60% of people referred by the Job Centre Plus decided to take up support, which increased to around 77% for those who had been signposted by their GP;
- The commissioning of talking therapies to support those with a mental health barrier into work with initial positive signs regarding the effect on outcomes. This is delivered within the employment system, joint working with a keyworker takes place, more complex cases are eligible following an agreement with mental health commissioners and outcomes are measured by both the therapist and the individual;
- The development of a transformational five point plan to create a new employment and health system to deliver improved health and prosperity. This included;
  
  i. Health in work – developing the contribution that Greater Manchester employers make to good quality work and healthy work places, which included the public sector leading by example;
  
  ii. In work but at risk – creating an early intervention model for people in work who become ill and at risk of falling out of employment, this included looking at a GM Working Well (Early Help) Service;
  
  iii. Recently unemployed – early support for the newly unemployed who require an enhanced health support offer, which included identifying new ways of working with Jobcentre Plus;
  
  iv. Longer term unemployed – mainstreaming the Working Well Programme through the devolved GM Work and Health Programme; and
  
  v. Complex health barriers – developing a health pathway into employment, skills and social determinants for those who are long term economically inactive and receive limited Jobcentre Plus support.

- The Working Well programme will be procured and commissioned by Greater Manchester, with a Joint Governance Board established with the Department of Work and Pensions to provide oversight. This process has begun; five bidders have been shortlisted and the contract is expected to be awarded in October. The scoring criteria will be 70% for quality, 20% for Social Value and 10% for finance. GMCVO had provided workshops for potential bidders and 100 service users were consulted to help inform the design of the programme. The contract is expected to go live in January 2018 and it will be awarded as a single contract. It was noted that the contract could be awarded to a consortium/alliance but that if this was the case it would still be awarded as a single contract.

Members were supportive of the work being undertaken in relation to Work and Health; in particular the importance of Social Value in ensuring that funding has the maximum benefit was noted.

The connectivity of Greater Manchester was highlighted, especially with regards to access to public transport and employment across the conurbation. Members were informed that the
Greater Manchester Spatial Framework will be looking at this alongside other considerations, and it will be linked to Greater Manchester growth and employment. A Member informed the group of work taking place in Stockport to map services and funding streams, to reduce duplication and ensure services were joined up. The possibility of this being carried out on a wider scale in future was noted.

Members asked if it was possible to receive more detail about the five point plan, particularly regarding those in work and at risk. Members were informed that the project brief was in development and that once finalised an update will be brought back to Members.

A Member highlighted the role of Job Centres, and the importance of individuals receiving the right advice and training to maximise their chances of gaining employment. Members were informed that in terms of Job Centre Plus greater local influence over delivery was crucial; currently work coaches are being recruited who will be placed in specific areas and receive training in relation to local labour markets and skills employees need to ensure the best possible advice is given to individuals.

Members influence in Local Authorities was highlighted as being important in assisting with driving the Work and Health agenda forward; for example through support for own workforce; through procurement with Social Value and through highlighting the characteristics of a good employer.

**RESOLVED/:**

- To note the presentation; and
- To receive updates regarding the progress of the Work and Health Programme.

**SEP/17/07   EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND UPDATE – VERBAL**

Members received a verbal update regarding the European Social Fund (ESF). Greater Manchester currently still has the European Social Fund; this is matched from the Work and Health Programme until 2020. Members were informed that the majority of this funding was committed. Greater Manchester is expecting an announcement regarding Adult Education Budgets (AEB) following the general election, and additional opportunities for further match funding could arise from this. Contingency plans related to ESF funding are being looked at and Members will be kept updated.

**RESOLVED/:**

- To note the verbal update; and
- To receive updates on ESF funding.

**WSE/17/08   HIGHLIGHT REPORT – UPDATES ON PROGRESS OF WORK AND SKILLS PROGRAMME & STRATEGY REVIEW**

Members received a highlight report which provided an update on progress of the work and skills programme and strategy review. Two areas highlighted were;
• Devolution of the Adult Education Budget; this has been delayed due to the announcement of the general election and Greater Manchester are now working towards a September 2018 date. Following the general election clarity around timescales will be sought; and

• The Working Well programme.

Members were informed that the Highlight Report was shared with this group, officer groups and local authorities with the expectation that this would feed into local governance structures. A Member questions what the abbreviation ABR stood for; it was confirmed that this meant Area Based Review.

A Member referred to the Working Well Pilot and asked whether there were any plans to extend this out further. Members were informed that the pilot had focused on GP referrals and that currently there were no plans to extend this further. It was also noted that it is planned to use local implementations boards to identify people; although there is still an eligibility criteria for the programme. Members noted that in future it may be useful to look at other organisations which could refer people into the programme, for example housing providers or Citizen Advice Bureaus.

RESOLVED:

• To note the Highlight Report.

**WSE/17/09 AOB**

There were no items of other business.

**WSE/17/10 FUTURE MEETING DATES**

Future meeting dates will be set and circulated to Members.