MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GM SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIP, HELD ON THURSDAY 11 MAY 2017 AT MANCHESTER TOWN HALL

PRESENT:

Cllr Sean Anstee          GM Combined Authority
Cllr Abdul Jabbar         GM Combined Authority
Mark Currie               GM Learning Provider Network
Robert Berry              Local Authority Children’s Services (Tameside Council)
Marie Graham              GMCVO
Clive Memmott             GM Chamber of Commerce
Nick Mellor               Job Centre Plus
Theresa Grant             Trafford Council

IN ATTENDANCE:

Gemma Marsh               GM Combined Authority
Mat Ainsworth             GM Combined Authority
Emma Stonier              GM Combined Authority

SEP/17/01  INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed members of the Skills and Employment Partnership (SEP) to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Jenny Bullen, Vicky Beer, Justin Kelly, Mike Macloughlin, Cathy Starbuck and Alex Whinnom.

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

There were no Chair’s announcements or urgent business.

SEP/17/03  DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There was one declaration of interest received from Cllr Abdul Jabbar for Item 8 Area Based Review: Implementation Discussion.

SEP/17/04  MINUTES AND ACTIONS

The minutes of the Skills and Employment Partnership, held on 26 January 2017, were submitted for approval.

There was an amendment to the minutes in Item SEP16/14 (page 4, bullet point 1). The bullet point should also include reference to qualifications and licenses; ‘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. The importance of qualifications and licenses to employers as a gateway to employment was also noted’.

RESOLVED:/

That the minutes of the Skills and Employment Partnership held on 26 January 2017 be approved as an accurate record subject to the amendments been made, as outlined above, to page 4, bullet point 1.

SEP/17/05 GOVERNANCE – TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Chair introduced the updated Terms of Reference which now included; the membership of the Partnership, where the Partnership sits in governance structures and the frequency of Partnership meetings.

Members will be forwarded relevant information outside of meetings to ensure they are kept updated on the progress of the Skills and Employment programme.

RESOLVED:/

To approve the updated Terms of Reference.

SEP/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 securing employment. 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.

The Partnership noted the update and discussed the following:

- The possibility of future leadership programmes including how to support employees in healthy lifestyles and how employees are signposted to and offered appropriate support services. The adoption of proactive sickness management approaches to enable employees to be supported to remain in work as much as possible was also discussed;
- It was highlighted that if a significant amount of resource was used in supporting those in work that those out of work, who were the main priority, could be lost sight of;
- The skills shortages issue, particularly in STEM areas, and the difficulty of building this into recruitment and employers recruiting people with the relevant qualifications and skills;
- The link between Skills and Employment and the wider system, for example housing and health, and the importance of improving these to ensure better overall outcomes;
- The importance of employment opportunities which offer in work progression and career pathways;
- Ongoing conversations and discussions were identified as encompassing a wider remit than the Working Well Programme, and included Adult Education Budgets (AEB), future funding and working with the Jobcentre Plus and the Department of Work and Pensions to discuss the possibility of devolving further powers to Greater Manchester;
• Additional work will be taking place with Jobcentre Plus employees around understanding the needs of employers and providing tailored advice;
• Programme outcomes will be measured differently to national programme outcomes, with providers being awarded for job outcomes paying at the national living wage. Apprenticeships will not be included as an outcome (unless the apprenticeship pays the living wage), but will be evaluated in the bidders Social Value score.

The Partnership will be kept updated as to the progress of Work and Health and the Greater Manchester Working Well Programme.

RESOLVED/-

• To note the presentation and update.
• To receive regular updates regarding the work and health programme.

SEP/17/07 EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND UPDATE – VERBAL

Members received a verbal update regarding the European Social Fund (ESF). The GMCA has been more involved in the ESF than in other areas. The GMCA have worked with the provider relating to young people not in education, training or employment and has had a positive impact; work is also taking place with providers to target this further, for example working with looked after children. The current fund is due to finish in 2018 and work is being undertaken with the SFA and other partners to explore future funding options to ensure the maximum amount of resource is drawn into Greater Manchester. Following the general election Greater Manchester should have the requisite information to further progress this work.

A Member asked whether current contracts were in place and established. It was confirmed that some contracts had begun and that regular tripartite meetings were being held to provide updates.

RESOLVED/-

To note the information contained in the report.

SEP/17/08 AREA BASED REVIEW: IMPLEMENTATION DISCUSSION

Members received an update on progress of the Area Based Review (ABR). The following updates were highlighted;

• The Trafford and Stockport merger was entering the due diligence stage;
• Manchester was still awaiting a decision about its designation request but remained committed to the ABR;
• Oldham has entered a Structure and Proposals Appraisal to identify a long term sustainable business model following the visit of the FE Commissioner; and
• Bolton and Bury University were working through due diligence to establish the next steps, a formal response following the Board meetings is expected.
The Further Education Commissioner met with Greater Manchester Leaders’ in April and the meeting discussed various items including how FE colleges meet the needs of the local labour market. It was noted as key to this work that Greater Manchester focused on what was required from the Further Education system and how performance could be improved across the system. Engagement will take place with providers and it was emphasised that any potential mergers would have to be agreed to by all parties. A member noted the Structure and Prospects Appraisal underway in Oldham and whether this would have an effect on the college’s long term growth and change in business. Relating to this a question was raised about whether the FE Commissioner had met individually with Local Authorities, as had been raised in the previous meeting. The Partnership were informed that the FE Commissioner’s office had made contact regarding meetings, through each Local Authorities Leaders’ office.

The main areas of focus going forward for the Skills and Employment programme in GM will be;

- Raising attainment at 16 to ensure more young people leave school with 5 A*-C GCSEs including English and Maths;
- Developing pathways linked to the Skills Plan White Paper and economic need; ensuring employer involvement;
- Ensuring young people and adults have access to high quality career advice to ensure they make the right decision for their future learning and employment journey;
- Using AEB Devolution to drive a quality provision in each area up to Level 3 and measure progression outcomes;
- Utilising the Apprenticeship Levy across Greater Manchester in both the public and private sector to drive growth and ensure the new system is driving skills development at Level 3+ in the existing workforce; and
- Seeking flexibility in Further Education Loans to increase uptake for Level 3+ in Further Education to support relevant higher level skill qualifications/courses.

Following the update members discussed the following;

- The changes to the sector should be led from an overarching Greater Manchester perspective and criteria, which will determine how this work is best driven forward to realise the ambitions of Greater Manchester;
- The development of a strategic skills plan which outlined pathways to employment, including technical pathways, the provision of appropriate careers advice and a focus on employability. This was highlighted as being a requirement of devolving the Adult Education Budget (AEB);
- The level of attainment at GCSE/school level and the impact of this on the post 16 education sector. English and Maths attainment was also discussed, work is taking place across Greater Manchester to emphasise the function/importance of English and Maths and how this impacts on achieving long-term career goals;
- How the work and skills agenda is included in the wider Greater Manchester agenda, for example through Inclusive Growth, the Greater Manchester Strategy (GMS) refresh and the Spatial Framework, to ensure that it does not sit outside the system;
- Education leaders’ focus on Ofsted and outcomes; if Ofsted frameworks included reference to local employment needs and the labour market this could assist in influencing providers to adopt this approach. The Chair confirmed that discussions had
taken place regarding this and that this would be picked up further outside this meeting; and
- The increasing of competition in the post-16 education market and in particular how this could potentially impact on performance improvements.

The partnership will receive updates regarding the progress of the ABR and the creation of a Greater Manchester post-16 education and skills system focused on quality and economic need, as and when these are available.

**RESOLVED/-**

To note the presentation and update.

**SEP/17/09 HIGHLIGHT REPORT – UPDATES ON PROGRESS OF WORK AND SKILLS PROGRAMME & STRATEGY REVIEW**

Members received a report which provided an update on the programme of the work and skills programme and the strategy review.

Members discussed the following;

- The Greater Manchester Talent Match report into hidden young people was highlighted. The report looked at young people not in education, employment or training and not in receipt of welfare support; so unable to access available support. It was suggested that in future the inclusive growth agenda should look at how this cohort were identified and engaged with.
- Gemma Marsh provided a brief update regarding the Adult Education Budget. There had been delays to this due to the change in government following Brexit. Prior to the announcement of the General Election positive communication had been received from Government and the Combined Authority continued to work towards current timescales. Following the election further clarity will be sought regarding this.

**RESOLVED/-**

To note the report.

**SEP/17/10 AOB**

The Chair noted that member representation on the Partnership was needed from Greater Manchester Housing Providers, Greater Manchester Trade Unions and Greater Manchester Universities. The Chair requested that members considered potential candidates for these positions and that any suggestions were forwarded to him.

A Member informed the Partnership that the recent allocation of government funding for apprenticeships in GM began 1 May 2017. Across GM 75% of SME members have reported that they had not received the allocation of funding required to fulfil the necessary number of starts. It was confirmed that communication had been sent to GM Leaders regarding this and that following subsequent discussions it would be followed up with the DfE/Government if required.
**SEP/17/11  FUTURE MEETING DATES**

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<tr>
<td>Friday 21&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; July</td>
<td>9:30-11:30am</td>
<td>Meeting Room 12, Trafford Town Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 17&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; October</td>
<td>1:00-3:00pm</td>
<td>Meeting Room 12, Trafford Town Hall</td>
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<td>Tuesday 23&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; January</td>
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