MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GM SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIP, HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2015 AT TRAFFORD TOWN HALL

PRESENT:

Cllr Sean Anstee  GM Combined Authority
Cllr Ian Roberts  GM Combined Authority
Cllr Bernard Priest  GM Combined Authority
Cllr Michael Young  GM Combined Authority
City Mayor Ian Stewart  GM Combined Authority
Theresa Grant  Lead Chief Executive
Simon Nokes  New Economy
Mike Blackburn  GM Local Enterprise Partnership
Jurgen Maier  GM Local Enterprise Partnership
Clive Memmott  GM Chamber
Mark Hughes  GM Growth Company
Mark Currie  GM Learner Provider Network
Marie Gilluley  GM Colleges Group
Alex Whinnom  GM Centre for Voluntary Organisations
Karen Lee  Job Centre Plus
John Myers  Skills Funding Agency
Cathy Starbuck  GM DCS
Linda Magrath  Cheadle Hulme High School
Maggie Pearson  Salford University

IN ATTENDANCE:

Gemma Marsh  New Economy
Paul Harris  GMIST

SEP15/01  APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

To note that Councillor Sean Anstee, as GM Portfolio holder for Skills, Employment and Worklessness be appointed Chair of the Skills and Employment Partnership

SEP15/02  MEMBERSHIP OF THE SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIP

Agreed/-

To note the Membership of the Skills and Employment Partnership for 2015/16 as set out below:-
Members considered the Terms of Reference for the Skills and Employment Partnership.

A Member suggested with regard to the Role of the Partnership, support to post and pre school should be specified. It was noted that higher skills should also be referenced.

Agreed/–

To note the terms of reference for the Skills and Employment Partnership.

There were no declarations of Interest made by any Member of the Skills and Employment Partnership.

A report was presented which provided an overview of the consultation process underway in relation to the proposals for an Apprenticeship Levy for employer owned apprenticeship training. Members noted that further information on the rate and scope of the Levy would be provided, following the autumn spending review, together with the details of how employers that are not in the scope to pay the levy will access apprenticeship funding.
Members noted that the levy:-

- will apply to both public and private sector organisations
- will provide apprentice employers with more than they contribute via the digital voucher mechanism (which will be the same mechanism used by all employers to pay for apprenticeship training, regardless of whether or not they are in scope to pay the levy)
- will be rolled out April 2017.

A discussion took place during which the following matters were highlighted:-

a) The threshold for big businesses was yet to be determined, however employers with over 250 employees were considered as large companies.

b) Concern was raised that some SMEs would be unable to draw down funding for apprenticeships.

c) Noted that local authorities would also be required to pay the levy.

d) A co-ordinated response to the consultation was required.

e) Further understanding was required as to what the levy would mean for Skills and Education in Greater Manchester.

f) Noted that this presented an opportunity to revisit the way skills provision was provided, particularly within the health sector. Capacity to support employers on how to implement any new system was required.

Agreed/-

1) To note the update on the Apprenticeship Levy Consultation.
2) To agree that a coordinated response to the Apprenticeship Levy consultation be submitted.
3) To agree that officers undertake to write to professional bodies within Greater Manchester to encourage them to respond to the consultation process.

SEP15/06 WORKING WELL EXPANSION

Members received a presentation which provided them with an overview of the expansion of the Working Well Pilot, following the GM Devolution Agreement.

The presentation highlighted that the working well pilot had been established to:

- Reduce wordlessness.
- Ensure skills provision is appropriate to the needs of different learners across GM, increasing the numbers of high-skilled residents and contributing to increase GVA.
- Ensure employment and skills provision and infrastructure is aligned to the requirements of the current & future labour market and the skills required from employers.
• Ensure there are clear pathways through the system and that where appropriate, residents are supported through integrated packages of support from a range of local services
• Deliver value for money by reducing duplication and ensuring GM does not pay multiple times for outcomes
• Maximise and incentivise an integrated employment and skills system.

It was noted that the staged expansion of Working Well from summer 2015. The GM Agreement includes a range of reforms across the work and skills landscape, enabling GM to directly control or influence over £500m of funding. These are:-

• The programme will cover 50,000 individuals and have a £100m budget, including a pilot supporting older workers with long-term health conditions back to work.
• Reshaping and restructuring Further Education (post 19 skills) provision worth £150m (including Apprenticeships) within GM and aligning to £170m of EFA spend.
• Mental Health & Work pilot to develop a service model which supports unemployed.
• people who are finding it difficult to get in to work because of mental health issues.
• Government designing the Work Programme in a way that allows GM to be a joint commissioner. Work Programme contracts across GM are worth c£100m.
• Devolution of the AGE Grant to GM from April 2015.

Agreed/-

1) To receive the informative presentation with thanks.
2) To note the presentation on the Working Well Expansion.

SEP15/07 WORK PROGRAMME CO-COMMISSIONING

A report was presented which provided an update on the process with Work Programme Co-commissioning following the Devolution Agreement for Greater Manchester.

Agreed/-

To note the report.

SEP15/08 SKILLS AND FURTHER EDUCATION RECONFIGURATION: UPDATE ON DEVOLUTION

Members considered a report which provided an update on devolution with regard to the Skills and Further Education Reconfiguration.
The report set out the Adult Skills Budget (ASB) reductions in the broader context of government policy and the delivery/financial challenges that the FE sector faces and outlined the impact on provision at Level 2 and below and then at Level 3+ in terms of funding and starts.

Consideration was given to how, following the ASB reductions, GM can minimise the impact on provision and deliver both the growth and reform agenda and presented suggested recommendations about what competencies should be included to improve the impact of Level 2 provision and considered the options for additional funding for Level 3+.

Members noted that there was not a requirement for GM to wait until 2017 to make changes and progress can be made now on greater integration between Adult Community Learning (ACL) and ASB, and European Social Fund 2014-20.

Agreed/-

To note that the next steps under the first stage of Devolution include:

1. Agreement from the Partnership to develop proposals for Level 2 and below provision.
2. Agreement from the Partnership to start to bring together the research and analysis for Level 3+.
3. Early engagement with BIS & the FE Commissioner around an Area Based Review.
4. Bring back to the Partnership a Skills Capital Commissioning Statement that will support 1, 2 & 3.
5. Engage with providers and colleges around proposals for Level 2 below provision subject to point 1.
6. Continue to develop CSR & Devo 2 proposals.

SEP15/09 AREA BASED REVIEW

Members received a verbal update on the Area Based Review. It was noted that the review would consider what the needs were for a Greater Manchester Skills and Education System.

The arrangements for Post 16 funding, FE and 6th Form Colleges was also to be considered.

Members noted that a Steering Group was to be convened to consider the Area Based Review. A Member suggested that consideration of the Membership of the Steering Group was needed to ensure that service delivers, including post 16 training providers, were represented. It was noted that it would be helpful if informal updates from the Steering Group were provided to SEP members.
Clarification was needed to understand if SEP would be included as part of the Area Based Review or if this could be linked to the role of the Local Enterprise Partnership.

A Member suggested that the impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review needed to be included.

Agreed/-

1) To note the update.

SEP15/10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next SEP meeting takes place on Tuesday 10 November 2015, commencing at 11.30 am in Trafford Town Hall.