MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GM SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIP, HELD ON 10 NOVEMBER 2015 AT MANCHESTER TOWN HALL

PRESENT:

Cllr Sean Anstee  GM Combined Authority
Cllr Bernard Priest  GM Combined Authority
Cllr Michael Young  GM Combined Authority
Simon Nokes  New Economy
Andrew Lightfoot  GM PSR
Clive Memmott  GM Chamber
Mark Currie  GM Learner Provider Network
Marie Gilluley  GM Colleges Group
Alex Whinnom  GM Centre for Voluntary Organisations
Julie Price  Job Centre Plus
John Myers  Skills Funding Agency
Cathy Starbuck  GM DCS
Linda Magrath  Cheadle Hulme High School

IN ATTENDANCE:

Gemma Marsh  New Economy
Paul Harris  GMIST

SEP15/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and noted from City Mayor Ian Stewart, Cllr Ian Roberts, Mike Blackburn, Jurgen Maier, Maggie Pearson, Karen Lee, Mark Hughes and Theresa Grant.

SEP15/12 CHAIR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business reported.

SEP15/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

SEP15/14 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous Skills and Employment Partnership meeting that was held on 14 September 2015 were submitted.

It was noted that with regard to SEP15/01, Appointment of Chair, Councillor Bernard Priest had agreed to be the Vice Chair of the SEP.

Agreed/-
1) To approve the Minutes of the Skills and Employment Partnership held on 14 September 2015 as a correct record.

2) The appointment of Councillor Bernard Priest as Vice Chair of the Skills and Employment Partnership.

SEP15/15 WORK AND SKILLS UPDATE

Members received a report which presented them with an update on Work and Skills Devolution in relation to the GM Age Grant for Employers (GM AGE), Further Education Devolution 1, Area Based Review, European Social Fund, Work Programme Co-commissioning and the Working Well Expansion.

With regard to the GM AGE programme it was noted that by the end of November 2015, it was anticipated that 432 grants would have been paid to GM employers. A significant number of applications had been received than deem eligible against the GM AGE criteria. The reasons for eligibility were being reviewed. Officers undertook to provide a breakdown by sector of those applications that were deemed to be ineligible.

It was noted that the AGE grant was only available for a year and that there was uncertainty as to how funding will be provided post the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). Consideration was required to understand how higher level apprenticeships may be stimulated.

It was noted that the devolution agenda would allow GM to influence the apprentice process. Officers explained that discussions were continuing to this end.

The Group suggested that SEP would discuss the requirements for apprenticeships in relation to AGE grant funding.

A Member suggested that economic growth would come from the private sector and therefore work with this sector was required in relation to the benefits of the levy for economic growth. Entry level apprenticeships could be considered by the public sector in order to remove people from the prospect of unemployment. The public purse will fund Level 2 or below courses and noted that information regarding employer engagement was required.

A suggestion was made that the Group should consider the toolkit for apprenticeship stimulation and that employer engagement ought to be included.

With regard to FE Devolution 1, it was noted that the Adult Skills Budget (ASB), was predominately focussed on Level 2 activity and below. Work was continuing on developing an outcome funding model to ensure the impact of the current provision is improved across Greater Manchester. Discussions were continuing with providers.
A suggestion was made that a paper on regarding the progress being made towards the labour market.

In relation to the European Social Fund, Members noted that a discussion had taken place with the Skills Funding Agency to outline issues that could add on further delays to the delivery of ESF. A Member noted that any pause to the delivery was required to ensure that the correct processes were in place.

With regard to Work Programme Co-commissioning it was noted that negotiations with DWP had been fluid about exactly what they felt was meant in the GM Devolution Deal by joint commissioner. It was noted that the most recent position from DWP and HMT is that the wording of the Sheffield Seal is what they understood to be co-commissioning and therefore should be in line with the GM bid. The lack of certainty of DWP budgets until the anticipated Comprehensive Spending Review outcome was understood was noted.

Agreed/-

To note the update on work and skills.

SEP15/16 AREA BASED REVIEW

Members considered a verbal report which provided them with an update on the Area Based Review which was part of the national reforms to the post-16 education sector, with the aim of raising productivity and economic growth. Timescales and reporting processes, including the need for formal Local Enterprise Partnership endorsement was noted.

A discussion took place and the following matters were highlighted:-

a) The Greater Manchester Review was underway.
b) The review focuses on providers rather than the needs of a local area and did not include sixth form providers.
c) Discussions were ongoing with College Principals regarding specialist provision above level 3. Work was also taking place with employers.
d) A meeting of Lead Members for Work and Skills from each district was to be convened.
e) A member suggested that the requirements of the GM economy needed to be understood. Previous deep dive data should be refreshed.
f) A member suggested that the review needed to consider apprenticeships so that they meet the needs of GM employers and the local economy.

A Member suggested that the review should be undertaken to meet the needs for Greater Manchester. In doing so, the challenges of implementation were noted given that school 6th forms and private providers were exempt from this process.

With regard to future engagement, it was noted that a communications and engagement plan was to be rolled out.
Agreed/-

1) To receive and note the verbal update on the Area Based Review with thanks.
2) To request that officers undertake to contact District Lead Members for Work and Skills with regard to the review.
3) To noted that officers were to roll out the communications engagement plan.
4) To receive regular updates.

SEP15/17 FUTURE MEETING DATES

To seek dates for meetings of the partnership during February and April 2016.