

## MINUTES

# DORSET LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP SKILLS ADVISORY PANEL AND BOARD

**13 September, 2 – 4 pm**  
**Virtual meeting**

### Board Attendees:

- Emma Hunt, AUB, Chair (EH)
- David Matthews, Upton Beach Consulting (DM)
- Diane Grannell, Bournemouth and Poole College (DG),
- Jim Andrews, Bournemouth University (JA)
- Jon Bird, Dorset Council (JB)
- Luke Rake, Kingston Maurward College (LR)
- Lesley Haig –AECC (LH)
- Lesley Spain, Skills and Adult Community Education (LS)
- Nicola Newman, Ansbury Guidance (NN)
- Rod Davis, Dorset and Somerset Training Providers (RoD)
- Steph Simpson, Department for Work and Pensions (SS)
- Zannah Chisholm , Pavilion Dance South West (ZC)

### Also Present:

- Deborah Smart - Dorset Council Corporate Director for Digital & Change (DS)
- Penny Syddall, Dorset Council Digital adoption and skills programme lead, (PS)
- Rebecca Davies, Dorset LEP Head Of Enterprise, Skills And Industry (RD)
- Rebecca Philips, Dorset LEP Strategic Hub Lead (RP)
- Mira Koseva, Dorset LEP Skills Analyst (MK)

### Apologies:

- Hugh Joseph, Air Bearing Solutions (HJ)
- Adrian Trevett, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (AT)
- Julia Howe, Weymouth College (JH)
- Richard Renaut, University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust (RR)
- Tim Ford, Independent Director (TF)

Item	Welcome, introductions and apologies	Action
1	The Chair noted apologies and welcomed all delegates, extending special welcome to Jon Bird joining the panel as a representative from Dorset Council and the Digital Dorset team, joining the meeting for an update on their work.	
2	<b>Minutes, Actions and Matters Arising</b>	
	The Chair verified the meeting minutes were accurate reflection of the 6 <sup>th</sup> July proceedings and can be published as final. RD gave an update on actions arising from the previous meeting, confirming them as completed.	MK: Publish minutes
3	<b>Place</b>	

	<p><b>Digital Dorset Presentation</b></p> <p>DS and PS provided some background and an update on the Digital Dorset programme. Dorset Council has adopted its Digital strategy earlier in 2021 with key strands around <b>digital skills and inclusion; designing future services; technology and infrastructure; data and intelligence; culture and leadership.</b></p> <p>PS spoke about the challenges, opportunities and success stories around developing and adopting digital skills in Dorset. Some programmes mentioned were “Routes to Inclusion” a community programme to help people develop digital skills and “Digital Champions” a successful network of 75 volunteers in the community and 175 in the workplace that support the development of digital skills.</p> <p>Ambitions for the future of Dorset’s digital skills include a Fibre Training Centre, a Digital Academy, and creating a <b>Digital Skills Partnership</b> as a priority, working with government departments and partnership organisations across the county.</p> <p>PS invited all interested parties to join in this drive, offering some of the Digital Dorset team resources to develop and support the Digital Partnership ambition starting with mapping the digital skills training on offer to enable effective signposting, to understand what we are already doing and identify any gaps in provision.</p> <p>Finally, PS also announced <a href="#">the Festival of the Future</a> taking place 4 - 8 October with various face-to-face and online events.</p> <p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>DG wanted to confirm the Digital Skills Partnership proposals are considered as a pan-Dorset project involving both councils and PS confirmed that is the intention.</p> <p>EH asked about available funding and DS said initial funding is available to kick the initiative off and DG said that tapping into partners’ funding is also a possibility based on strategic synergies.</p> <p>JA said that a mapping meeting where key provision is discussed should be initialised at the early stages and shared a wide range of BU courses and projects in the digital space.</p>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Recovery: Current Skills Activities</b>	
4.1	<p><b>Latest LMI Update</b></p> <p>MK gave a presentation on the <b>labour market developments over the summer highlighting labour shortages and expected developments in wrapping up the furlough scheme.</b> Following a noted growth in the economy and vacancies in the <a href="#">Quarter 2 Labour Market Update</a> the labour market narrative has changed from the feared spike in unemployment to a job seekers market. Switching the entire economy on over the summer created a unique peak in demand, while the number of candidates fell at a record rate. Businesses recruiting from the same talent pool are struggling to fill gaps and there are warning signs this is not a short-term crisis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Vacancies</b> - The vacancy growth in Dorset seen earlier in 2021 continued throughout July and August, with a record number of vacancies posted in August 2021.</li> </ul>	

<p><b>4.2</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Shortages of supplies linked to staff shortages and a <a href="#">100,000 shortage of HGV drivers</a></b> in particular across a range of businesses and services have resulted in slowing down of economic recovery.</li> <li>- Dorset has staffing challenges and <b>hard-to-fill vacancies</b> across sectors and occupations, most pronounced in Health, Care &amp; IT, the diminishing IT demand might be a sign of shrinking sector due to staff shortages.</li> <li>- <b>Employment response is lagging</b> – there are still over 10,000 more unemployed people than pre-pandemic. There were also 15,600 people still on furlough but there is evidence that returning from furlough would not solve the labour demand.</li> <li>- <b>Some social effects linked to the pandemic and Brexit are:</b> reluctance to switch jobs, decline in EU workers, higher prevalence of precarious, temporary jobs due to demand spike</li> </ul> <p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>The Chair commented the findings are sobering and felt more details on good vs precarious jobs would be useful to identify whether the growth in vacancies is mostly driven by a low wage economy and the small growth in some sectors is in occupations with higher wages.</p> <p>JA agreed that salary information and the level of job vacancies would be useful to start determining the right interventions. Another interesting detail would be experience and education demand by sector.</p> <p>RP commented that some employers might be experiencing recruitment difficulties due to small teams and no specialist HR support and suggested could be part of the Dorset Gateway work. LH said that virtual working could be one of the solutions and challenging employers to reconsider their requirements. JA also suggested employers consider a rolling student placement in contrast to long-term appointment.</p> <p>NN said the talent attraction issue should be taken further at Board and LA level and EH agreed. DM noted that clear local stories of impact would be useful as well as future projections. NN responded that skills gaps have led to both short and long-term loss of productivity and business according to anecdotal evidence and JA concurred that has a knock-on impact on teams and leads to sickness and burnout. RD proposed this as a discussion at the business growth and inward investment committee.</p> <p><b>Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council Update</b></p> <p>LS gave an update on the skills related work led by BCP Council, noting the leadership support of a number of initiatives encouraging the future skills and talent pipeline for business/economy. Economic Development are consulting on a plan for this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>The BCP Economic Development Strategy</b> - going to Council in November. The Economic Development team (and consultant) are currently drafting priorities and actions around business support and skills. This can be shared at a future SAPB meeting.</li> <li>- <b>Boscombe Skills Hub (Boscombe Town Deal - Royal Arcade)</b></li> </ul> <p>Proposed pilot on 18<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> October in the Royal Arcade placing employment advisors onsite for the week, providing stands,</p>	<p>MK: Follow up on query – salary education and experience by industry</p> <p>RD: Follow up on query: Recruitment support – Gateway</p> <p>RD: Follow up on talent attraction</p>
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<p>4.3</p>	<p>materials, equipment and presentations. Dorset Growth Hub committed to a number of events for the pilot.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Virtual Skills platform</b> – (Boscombe Town Deal.)</li> </ul> <p>A platform is being developed with AI and API to skills profile people and link them to local job and training opportunities along with typical education and training pathways. Second Provider MIS meeting in planning and consulting to integrate CEIAG.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>R3 Group</b></li> </ul> <p>Through the Council's Covid response, meetings have focussed on skills needs including the Retail Hospitality &amp; Leisure (RHL) group. These meetings have discussed business needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Covid Additional Restrictions Grant funding</b></li> </ul> <p>Provided as a covid response to a number of organisations for business support including: DGH/WSX, Silicon South, BCHA, Chambers (Dorset, Bournemouth and Christchurch), CAN &amp; DLEP. For example, BCHA are using the funding to deliver a skills and employment project in the hospitality and leisure sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>BCP Information Officers (IOs)</b> have visited over 74 businesses to inform the Insights Newsletters and found lockdown effects on footfall and furlough effects on employment were significant.</li> <li>- <b>Skills and Learning – Developing apprenticeships</b> Apprenticeship employers (e.g. Dorset Council and BCP Council, Stour Valley &amp; Poole Partnership) actively contributing to programme design.</li> <li>- Work with JCP on SWAPs (sector-based work academy programmes) - employers very active during the SWAP contribute to the design of content, offer interviews and short placements</li> <li>- Delivering discrete qualification courses for a number of employers e.g. teaching &amp; training qualifications, bespoke IT training, English, ESOL &amp; Maths.</li> </ul> <p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>JA was interested in retention conversations with the Council. Proposed engaging with students to find what are the important factors on staying locally to inform interventions.</p> <p><b>Dorset Careers Hub update</b></p> <p>RP gave an update on the emerging strategic priorities for the Dorset Careers Hub, including addressing key challenges and barriers to employment, whilst responding to local developmental plans and economic strategies. Some priority areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing awareness campaigns highlighting and demystifying critical employment pathways, e.g. hospitality and tourism. These will aim to support long-term pipeline and directly address skills shortages.</li> <li>- SEND focus – changing perception and leading by example to change the narrative and benefit people with SEND</li> </ul>	<p>BCP &amp; BU: Follow up on retention</p>
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<p><b>4.4</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building long term relationships, expanding Cornerstone Employers, engaging careers leaders, ensuring all schools are matched with an enterprise advisor, improving Gatsby Benchmark results and focusing on direct workplace experience in particular</li> <li>- Becoming a thought leader locally by building a strong website, narrative and marketing presence</li> </ul> <p><b>DWP update</b>          SS gave an update on the <b>DWP initiatives</b>. Currently the focus area of work is the Afghan refugee resettlement and supporting families with housing, schools and benefits setup.          Another area of work is identifying self-employed that are claiming grants and making steps to get their businesses back on track or challenging their sustainability. This is an area of work for further collaboration with Dorset LEP.</p> <p><u>Comments</u>          DG and LS said they would be willing to work in partnership to support the ESOL provision.</p>	<p>SS &amp; RD: Follow up on supporting self-employed into sustainable business</p> <p>SS: Follow up on ESOL provision with BPC and S&amp;L if needed</p>
<p><b>4.5</b></p>	<p><b>Independent training providers update</b>          RoD gave an update on apprenticeships and training provider network:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The <a href="#">incentive payments for hiring an apprentice made available to businesses since April, are to be stopped at the end of September</a>. The payment was a positive step and RoD expressed regret at its reversal. CORRECTED RD (8 Nov) - the incentive has been confirmed as continued with the Spending Review.</li> <li>- Regarding apprenticeships uptake, some vacancies were hard to fill – there was geographical and sector variation.</li> <li>- Training providers are currently going through another process of registration– only 18 months after the previous one. Those who have completed it have reported the bar has risen quite significantly in terms of quality and technical requirements.</li> <li>- Ofsted inspections have resumed on a risk assessment basis, which is a welcome news for providers looking to be reassessed to develop their provision.</li> <li>- DSTPN is working to create a directory of providers locally to be used with stakeholders and will help with skills plan updates.</li> <li>- ASK project is open to support schools in offering apprenticeships and looking to collaborate with the Dorset Careers Hub on this.</li> </ul> <p><u>Comments</u>          LH commented that the projects happening across the board, e.g. the training provider directory being developed should be linked with the Boscombe town fund virtual platform.</p>	<p>RD &amp; LS: collaborate on the development of online tools</p>
<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>Future</b></p>	
	<p><b>Skills and Post-16 Education Bill</b></p> <p>The Chair updated the board on the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill developments with opinions varying on its proposed legislative changes.</p>	

	<p>There is increased focused on employment outcomes and we are awaiting to find out how the LSIPs will be delivered locally and how all that is captured in the spending review.</p> <p><u>Comments</u>          LR commented that whilst there is uncertainty on the policy developments we have created a strong SAP collaborative network and a powerful forum that should continue its work regardless.</p> <p><b>Green Skills Provision</b></p> <p>RD informed members of the serious investment the government is making in green energy and skills offering a range of opportunities to bid for. We would be looking to thread the links and make sure that we communicate the message across our audiences and provide information.</p> <p><b>Lifelong learning entitlement</b></p> <p>There is also an opportunity to bid for credit bearing short courses as part of the Lifelong learning entitlement pilots.</p>	
<b>6</b>	<b>AOB</b>	
	<p><b>Chair's news</b>          EH announced that she will be leaving AUB and Dorset in December and the role of Chair of the SAPB as she has accepted a Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive post in the University of Falmouth. EH will chair one more meeting in November and a LEP process to select new chair will take place. All congratulated EH on her success and wished her all the best.</p>	
<b>7</b>	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	
	8 November 2021 2-4 pm	