

MINUTES

DORSET LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP SKILLS ADVISORY PANEL AND BOARD

10 May 2021, 10:00 am – 11:30 am

Virtual meeting

Board Attendees:

- Emma Hunt, AUB, Chair (EH)
- Adrian Trevett, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (AT)
- David Matthews, Upton Beach Consulting (DM)
- David Walsh, Dorset Council (DW)
- Diane Grannell, Bournemouth and Poole College (DG)
- Hugh Joseph, Air Bearing Solutions (HJ)
- Julia Howe, Weymouth College (JH)
- Luke Rake, Kingston Maurward College (LR)
- Lesley Haig –Vice-Chancellor AECC (LH)
- Lesley Spain, Skills and Adult Community Education (LS)
- Nicola Newman, Ansbury Guidance (NN)
- Nigel Evans, Weymouth College (NE)
- Richard Renaut, University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust (RR)
- Rod Davis, Dorset and Somerset Training Providers (RoD)
- Steph Simpson, Department for Work and Pensions (SS)
- Tim Ford, Independent Director (TF)

Also Present:

- Ian Girling, Chief Executive at Dorset Chamber, (IG)
- Rebecca Davies, DLEP Head Of Enterprise, Skills And Industry (RD)
- Mira Koseva, DLEP Skills Analyst (MK)

Apologies:

- Jim Andrews, Bournemouth University (JA)
- Zannah Chisholm, Pavilion Dance South West (ZC)

Item	Welcome, introductions and apologies	Action
1	<p>The Chair noted apologies and welcomed all delegates, extending a special welcome to Ian Girling from the Dorset Chamber of Commerce, joining the meeting to shed light on the Department for Education Skills Accelerator bidding opportunities.</p> <p>Opening the meeting, the Chair took this opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commend the committee members and organisers for their passion and energy in engaging with the local skills agenda, acknowledging the extensive work happening behind the scenes while keeping up with a quick moving and at times perplexing skills policy context. • Briefly discuss the policy context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skills policy agenda items likely to be included in the Queen's speech were lifelong learning, lifetime skills guarantee and the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill. - The priorities around adult education, upskilling, FE/HE interface solutions and funding of particular subject areas remain firmly on the agenda. 	

	<p>- Levelling up and skills also feature heavily in the Treasury's recently published "Build Back Better" plan for growth.</p> <p>- LEP review launched as part of the budget announcements aims to ensure the Local Enterprise Partnerships evolve and offer clear representation and support for local businesses and skills.</p> <p>- Local Skills Improvement Plans to be piloted in a group of trailblazer areas in 2021-22, led by Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs).</p> <p>Details on what these policy moves mean operationally and in terms of funding will become clearer in the months to come, but the role of the Skills Advisory Panels remains crucial, as funding extended to enable identifying and joint working on local skills needs.</p>	
2	Minutes, Actions and Matters Arising	
	<p>The Chair verified the meeting minutes are accepted as accurate reflection of the 15 March proceedings and can be published as final.</p> <p>A couple of matters arising at the previous meeting were carried forward and have since been confirmed as completed.</p>	MK: Publish minutes
3	Recovery: Current Skills Activities	
3.1	<p>Dorset LEP skills activities update</p> <p>RD briefly highlighted key initiatives, noting that fuller updates are available in the skills report distributed with the meeting papers:</p> <p>The Dorset Local Skills Report (LSR) was published within the DfE recommended timelines (at the end of March) providing the key source of local skills intelligence. The report was widely shared and presented to key stakeholders and a programme of themed monthly materials is created to highlight its areas of work.</p> <p>Quarter 1 Labour Market Update was also published showing decline in employment, increase in unemployment and rise in furlough, but also significant increase in vacancies. The report provides research updates on key LSR areas of interest, such as inequalities, skills gaps and future projections, offering insight evidence to guide the SAPB's work trajectory and decision-making. Updates will be produced quarterly in 2021.</p> <p>RD noted a busy start of the year in terms of bidding activity highlighting the Restart Programme - a £2.9bn DWP programme aimed at those out of work for 1yr+ - as one of the key areas of work. Seetec have been successful in their bid to deliver the programme in the South West and are employing a representative for Dorset. Dorset LEP is working with Seetec to ensure Dorset's strategic needs and priorities are embedded in the provision as it rolls out from July.</p> <p>The Dorset Careers Hub has continued to score well in Compass assessment, placing it at the top third of Hubs nationally and has made notable progress in Enterprise Advisor recruitment. The Hub is also leading on a number of successful projects, including virtual work experience, school grants provision, Dorset Careers Live webinar series, SEND support and the Dorset Careers and Apprenticeship Show – a major event planned for 20th May, expected to demo over 60 exhibitors, 14 keynote speakers and a range of live vacancies.</p> <p><u>Comments</u></p>	MK: Investigate Apprenticeship finder query

<p>3.2</p>	<p>DG commented on the apprenticeship finder dashboard not displaying all the apprenticeship vacancies. MK will investigate the issue behind that and report back.</p> <p>The Chair also praised all involved in the development and publishing of the Local Skills Report.</p> <p>DWP update SS highlighted key DWP initiatives in Dorset: The new Bournemouth JCP pop-up job centre in Tringham House has opened at the beginning of May marking a shift in increasing safe face-to-face contact capacity. This will particularly benefit younger people where face-to-face contact enhances engagement. Currently 50 members of staff are engaged at the centre, 50 more are joining over the coming weeks and the recruitment of 30 more work coaches is underway.</p> <p>The Kickstart Scheme aimed at 16 to 24 year olds is progressing well with over 250 young people in Dorset already placed on kickstart placements and a range of opportunities available in a broad range of sectors.</p> <p>SS also confirmed the Restart programme would start in the summer focused on those on Universal Credit who have been out of work between 12 and 24 months. DWP is working with Seetec on a support package for up to 12 months.</p> <p>Another area of DWP focus, increased support and additional funding is disability employment advisers to help people unable to find work due to their health condition. They are experienced employment coaches who are currently getting specialist training to deliver enhanced coaching for these particular issues.</p> <p>In addition, an extension to Training Flexibility has been applied to Universal Credit customers who can now consider full time work related training for a period of up to 12 weeks (extended from 8 weeks) and up to 16 weeks for skills Boot Camps as part of their work search activity. This must be agreed with their work coach in advance.</p>	
<p>3.3</p>	<p>Independent training providers update RoD provided updates on apprenticeship delivery and showed over 223 apprenticeships available in and around Dorset in May (using Find an Apprenticeship service), marking an increase compared to the previous update and showing positive developments across sectors. Generally, providers report increased apprenticeship inquiries, although some challenges exist with disrupted operation models and supply chains. Interestingly, providers of apprenticeship training in engineering and manufacturing are reporting employers requesting to recruit second year apprentices in order to accelerate readiness. RoD said further work is required to understand whether this emerging trend applies to other sectors.</p> <p>RoD also shared the training providers network (DSTPN) is considering a Community Renewal Fund bid for a Dorset version of Skill-Up – an advisory service deployed in Somerset, which has supported over 250 businesses in their training journey, signposting them to apprenticeship and training providers and opportunities. This complements existing</p>	

	<p>provider base offer and provides impartiality, generating on average around 42 additional apprenticeship starts per year. The bid is in early stages and is supported by Dorset LEP. RD confirmed her support and said this could mean an accelerated long-term involvement of businesses with apprenticeships and will help to generate momentum.</p> <p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>EH asked whether the provider base has noted an increase in flexible apprenticeship provision inquiries, i.e. two employers providing one apprenticeship placement. RoD responded that currently a feasibility study is considered in Somerset and will share findings when available.</p> <p>DG asked on specifics of the Community Renewal Fund and LR cautioned that Dorset is not amongst the priority areas for the fund and being a revenue rather than capital fund it might not be the best investment of time and effort.</p>	
4	Place	
4.1	<p>The Chair provided background to the next agenda item, reminding that after publishing Skills for Jobs White Paper, the Government introduced the Skills Accelerator, which offers two opportunities for local areas to apply for: Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Trailblazer and Strategic Development Fund (SDF) Pilot. The Chair invited IG, RD and NN to give more detail, introduce Dorset's proposed plan of action and lead the group discussions.</p> <p>Introduction to the Skills Accelerator Programme</p> <p>NN offered a succinct presentation of the two opportunities, the purpose of the funding and the application success criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Key aim is to test approaches to reshape the technical skills provision responsiveness to the needs of the local labour market and economy. -Local areas that submit joint applications for both opportunities will be given priority due to the interdependence of the two initiatives. -LSIP trailblazers will be led by an Employer Representative Body (ERB) with a capacity to identify, articulate, engage and lead through the key changes needed to the technical skills system. -SDF pilots will be led by a collective with a lead educational provider (college, IoT) capable to collaboratively deliver a programme of activities in response to the employers skills needs. -Dorset proposed plan of action: Submit EOIs for both LSIP Trailblazer and SDF pilot by the May 25 deadline with ERB proposed to lead LSIP Trailblazer the Dorset Chamber and SDF pilot lead applicant on behalf of the collaboration and endorsed by the ERB Kingston Maurward College Business Centre. <p>NN concluded that despite the complexity of the bid and the short time scales, Dorset is in a strong position to compete. It meets the geographical specifications, and is able to demonstrate strong leadership voice, capability and ownership, building on a programme of work already in place in understanding and addressing the local skills needs and engaging stakeholders in collaborative working.</p> <p>Skills Accelerator – ERB view</p>	

<p>4.2</p>	<p>IG on behalf of the Dorset Chamber confirmed the Chamber's committed to lead the Trailblazer bid as an ERB with the strong support from Dorset LEP. NN was tasked to support the process as a Chamber and SAP Board member with particular expertise in local skills and positive meetings have taken place with the FE colleges as well. IG cautioned that most areas are interested in the bid and it will be a very competitive process, but remains essential for Dorset to put forward its collaborative strengths, ambitions and aspirations. The work on the bid will also enhance the joint working and partnership between the Chamber and the educational providers locally.</p>	
<p>4.3</p>	<p>Skills Accelerator – LEP view</p> <p>RD confirmed that Dorset LEP is supportive of this work and involve a wide range of partners in moving some innovative ideas of local importance forward. With the very short turnaround expected for the delivery of the funding focusing on identified areas and a targeted approach will be paramount to make a difference. One emerging theme is the smart and digital agenda, featuring heavily within the Investment Prospectus, the local authority plans, aligning with skills gaps identified by the Dorset Employer Skills Survey and the Local Skills Report evidence base.</p>	
<p>4.4</p>	<p><u>Discussion</u></p> <p>Key sector partnership</p> <p>RR proposed that the health and social care sector's needs are taken in consideration, in particular training spaces, skills labs, and digital learning - all areas in development that could do with a boost to meet a shortage of training posts capacity. RD confirmed med-tech agenda will be among the areas of focus.</p> <p>Colleges partnership</p> <p>DG summarised discussions between the Colleges and Chamber regarding the bids and reiterated the need to remain focused in our aspirations in light of the tight timelines. The scope of curriculum development possible in the timelines is restricted so the Colleges propose to use this opportunity to trial a joint College Business Centre model with digital as an overarching theme across all businesses and sectors covering the whole of Dorset. The offer will incorporate digital training needs analysis and the development and delivery of tailored packages for businesses also offering a digital skills sustainability train-the-trainer element and developing digital skills experts as focal points within businesses. DG said that while trailing different areas of training this is also an opportunity to test innovative approaches to training.</p> <p>LR, NE and JH supported DG's overview and agreed the timelines set constraints to possibilities and put strain on institutions' resources, but that building up collaboration will be important over the following years.</p> <p>RR said that the proposal aligns with UHD's needs and they will be interested to collaborate and offered contacts for follow up.</p> <p>EH suggested bringing in an experienced online learning delivery partner could be a solution to some of these challenges.</p>	<p>RR to send RD UHD digital training contacts</p>

	<p>Both councils were in support of the bids as DW and AT empathised with the challenges of short bidding windows, competitive applications and business engagement. LH also commented that universities could also be support with infrastructure, expertise and resources.</p> <p>Touching on employer engagement DM proposed that professional bodies such as CIPD are used to engage employers and IG said that a business engagement strategy would need to be discussed more widely but member organisations are a good place to start due to their wide connectivity. NN shared that different approaches should be trialled with smaller employers to reach out into their localities, such as Facebook groups. EH agreed that incorporating ideas for engaging hard to reach businesses could also be beneficial for the bid.</p> <p>The Chair wrapped up the discussion, acknowledging the challenges but also the potential of the place, commending the joint efforts and stressing the importance of this work to support Dorset and its most deprived areas through a testing time.</p>	
5	Future	
	<p>Skills Commission EH followed up on progress with the Skills Commission - an idea to involve partners across the county to move the longer-term future skills agenda, looking ahead and above the immediate policy and aligning it with the strategic aspirations for growth locally. While there are challenges in organising key stakeholders and the policy agenda is moving at pace, the Commission has now been discussed at positive meetings with Dorset Council, and more recently with BCP Council.</p> <p>DW thanked EH for the meeting Dorset Council. There was a subsequent meeting with key stakeholders of the council where both the need to move quickly on the skills front and the value of long-term approach were apparent. There was an ambition to arrive at a local plan for skills covering the next 10 years. Whether it was a commission or a different forum, there was a need to come to a mutual agreement on the future of skills in readiness for future funding.</p> <p>AT updated on BCP Council thinking as a result of the meeting, which was helpful in recognising the bigger agenda around skills and shifting the primarily regeneration focus. The benefit of a commission would be in unifying our voice in front of the government and making it clear what we want from the skills system in the long term. While we have good work coming out of the SAPB, a long term, simplified and consistent future vision will help partners to stand behind, engage MPs, and make bidding for opportunities easier in the future.</p> <p>Comments DG raised the need to involve schools and the way they address and engage with local skills needs into future skills conversations. DW confirmed that Dorset Council is working to join the schools careers agenda with the business needs. LS shared that new Director of Education will be appointed in BCP Council shortly to provide a direct portal into schools and alignment. NN raised concern that this is the role</p>	

	<p>of the independent careers advisors and there is currently a gap in this provision within schools.</p> <p>EH thanked for all the contributions noting that the work on a Skills Commission is in its early stage but these are important considerations. She also reiterated this work should not distract from what the SAPB is doing and confirmed she would be happy to facilitate it going forwards with the wider SAPB support. The next step will be to facilitate the two councils to come together hopefully in early June.</p>	
6	AOB	
	<p>NN announced that Ansbury guidance would continue its business as usual operations until the end of July at which point some of the advisers will move to Dorset Council to continue NEET student engagement and tracking of 16-18 year olds, while other advisers will move to EDT who will be the leading providers of Careers advice.</p>	
7	Date of Next Meeting	
	5 July 2021 2-4 pm	