

New Anglia Skills Advisory Panel Meeting

18th March 2021

Via Microsoft Teams

MINUTES OF MEETING

In attendance:

Ben Miller, Independent (BM)
Bev Moxon, ESFA (BMo)
Christine Futter, Norfolk and Suffolk Care Support (CF)
Chris Gribble, Writers' Centre Norwich (CG)
Claire Cullens, New Anglia LEP Board and SAP Chair (CC)
Clarke Willis, Swallow Barns (CW)
Corrienne Peasgood, City College Norwich (CP)
David Gartland, Abbeygate 6th Form (DG)
David Pomfret, College of West Anglia (DP)
Glen Todd, New Anglia LEP (GT)
Guy Hazlehurst, EDF (GH)
Jason Parnell, Steadfast Training (JP)
Judith Mobbs, Suffolk County Council (JM)
Julia Nix, DWP (JN)
Karen Gibson, Norfolk County Council (KG)
Karin Porter, Norfolk County Council (KP)
Lucy Walker, ESFA (LW)
Michael Gray, Suffolk County Council (MG)
Natasha Waller, New Anglia LEP (NW)
Nova Fairbank, Norfolk Chamber of Commerce (NF)
Paul Simon, Suffolk Chamber of Commerce
Richard Bridgman, Warren Services (RB)
Seb Gasse, NCC (SG)
Stuart Rimmer, East Coast College (SR)

Richard Self, agricultural representative (RS)

Tom Brown, Green Light Trust (TB)
Viv Gillespie, Suffolk New College (VG)
Yvonne Mason, The Mason Trust (YM)

Visitors:

Angela Berry, West Suffolk College (RM)
Ed Shorthouse, New Anglia LEP (ES)
Justin Hunt, CEC (JH)
Polly Bridgman, University of Suffolk (PB)
Simon Papworth, New Anglia LEP (SP)

Apologies:

Cllr Mary Evans, Suffolk County Council (ME)
Cllr Stuart Clancy, Norfolk County Council (SC)
Dayle Bayliss, Dayle Bayliss Associates (DB)
Helen Langton (Professor), University of Suffolk (HL)
Jan Feeney, Norfolk County Council (JF)
Nikos Savvas, West Suffolk College (NS)
Peter Basford, BDO Group (PB)
Stuart Smith, People with Energy (SS)
Tom Humphries, Norfolk County Council (TH)
Tracey Cox, ESFA (TC)
Vince Muspratt, Norfolk County Council (VP)

Item 1: Welcome

Claire Cullens welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The minutes were reviewed and approved.

Follow up on actions:

- All had been followed up.

ACTION: NW to circulate the link to the Local Skills Report when it has been added to the website.

Simon Papworth gave an update on a dashboard that he and Ed Shorthouse had put together looking at key skills and employment data. It will be updated every two months, shared with partners with the aim of it being utilised by business facing teams.

ACTION: Any queries to be sent to ES.

CC welcomed Judith Mobbs to her last SAP as she is leaving SCC. She was thanked by many for her hard work, her sharing of knowledge, guidance and steer. CC said that she will be enormously missed.

MG was also congratulated on his promotion to Head of Skills at SCC.

Item 2: Government White Paper – Skills for Jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth

CC summarised the White Paper as identifying the employers becoming the important part of developing curriculum, the rising profile of FE and outstanding teaching.

Business membership organisation response led by Paul Simon/Nova Fairbank:

Positives:

This paper is part of a broader tilt in government policy including the levelling up agenda. Business organisations will be part of this levelling up process which shows the seriousness of their intent.

The Chambers welcome this as an opportunity to work with existing partners, a chance to accelerate initiatives and to maximise opportunities for Norfolk and Suffolk.

Chambers have pushed DfE to have a fair representation across the trailblazers through a transparent selection process.

Chambers happy to collaborate with everyone and they already talk to different partners to the LEP, Local Authorities and FE.

They need to determine what the key interventions that are needed and positively disrupt.

Need to capitalise on the sector skills plans and produce practical solutions.

The building blocks are in the area so we need to be flexible around funding schemes and balance employer & learner need.

They are already gain the views/intelligence from employers through their current work. They are used to working with employers both members and non-members. They can ask impertinent questions and challenge responses.

Concerns:

The trailblazer will only have a year to make change and colleges have already planned for the next academic year.

Areas to be determined:

The timings for the trailblazer prospectus and EOI has shifted and is unlikely to be issued until early April now.

Any additional money for pilots is currently being negotiated within DfE.

The trailblazer should look at what is not currently in place and focus on this.

The next steps are the establishment of a working group to look at the EOI building on existing strategic documents, bringing the best ideas together and making them more transformational. They will bring these back for everyone to discuss but are likely to have 5 weeks to develop the plans.

FE response led by CP, SR, DP & VG:

Positives:

FE colleges had been working on this agenda through their work with government and the AoC.

A lot of emphasis is on the post-18 technical skills requirements. It reinstates the need for IoTs and apprenticeship standards.

Lifelong learning is mentioned and support of college estates will be seen in phased stages.

Opportunity to draw down funding for college business centres.

Opportunities to link in with supply chain/large investment projects.

The final chapter is supporting outstanding teaching and aligns with our sector skills plan & cross-cutting report.

We need more money to address the skills gaps. Level 4 and 5 development will be an opportunity but it would be good to do some piloting before 2025.

The Freeport status will be a good opportunity for us.

Concerns:

The published White Paper is not as far reaching as they had hoped as it hasn't aligned with a long term spending review.

Mayoral combined authorities have been able to model their skills landscape over a number of years.

There is connectivity between provision such as 16-18 and NEETs. Don't want to disrupt the existing good work. Would prefer a commissioning model such as with the ESF BBO programme.

Do employers really want to drive skills or are they more happy with supporting/endorsing?

How will we get it really representative with employers?

Who is left behind? 'Skills for Jobs' is not just what colleges do, there are social factors included as well including being good citizens.

A sector approach can cause tension

We are faced with mismatches of salaries between industry and FE and this is an area that one of the SAP Champion groups are looking at. Taking Teaching Further supports people to come into FE from industry but it doesn't work effectively at the moment.

Flexibilities are needed in course development but transferability of modules between HE establishments is historically challenging.

Funding can be lost in the administration process of different programmes so they need simplifying.

Areas to be determined:

Hoping to see in the coming months how it will be legislated. Colleges are independent so how will it be mandated?

There is likely to be further responses to the Augar report.

The policies behind the paper have not been written yet.

Where do LEPs stand?

What is the connectivity with LEPs, SAP, Local Skills Report and LSIPs?
DfE restrict funding on certain qualifications so need new ideas, e.g. offshore work.
Students leaving courses early to take up employment is seen as a negative by Ofsted so will this be reviewed?

Universities response led by PB on behalf of UoS, UEA and NUA:

Positives:

Welcome the apprenticeship commentary in the main and the IoT approach.
Employers already work with HE around new course development and validation.

Concerns:

There is the potential for multiple action plans from different parties.
Employers want graduate level skills – where does this fit with Level 4 and 5?
Earnings are being used as a measurement for success – is this right? What about soft skills?

Areas to be determined:

The Auger review is pending and the Uni Connect/NEACO project is likely to include more of an adult focus moving forwards.
How will the National Careers Service roll out in schools will impact adults?
Unclear how the T-level and higher technical qualifications focus will link into universities and there is concern over the removal of BTECs. Already challenging to get employer engagement with T-level industry placements.

Careers & Enterprise Company response led by Justin Hunt:

Positives:

There is good support for careers education within the paper.
They will continue to work with LEPs and local authorities.
We have a successful Careers Hub and link with NEACO.
The Enterprise Adviser Network is a partnership so pleased to see a place based approach.
Young people need to learn about career options at an early stage, not just adults.
Backing of the Gatsby benchmarks is vital and so are Career Hubs. A strong careers focus leads to better outcomes for young people.
Experiences of the workplace is a positive step in the paper. There is already work going on between the National Careers Service and themselves.
Enforcing the Baker clause to allow young people to have impartial advice leads to better outcomes.
The CEC is already supporting apprenticeships and embedding careers education into teacher training is really exciting.

Current SAP requirements: NW reminded members about the current SAP requirements that we have to abide by as part of our SAP funding from the DfE. The LEP are waiting for the 2021/22 funding agreements and to see if there are any proposed changes.

Next steps: CC thanked the contributors and noted the challenges. She commented that we need to behave like a trailblazer, even if we are not one and reminded members that we need to work together which includes listening and understanding different standpoints. We will need to identify the barriers but equally look at the opportunities.

The Expression of Interest will be reviewed on its release and what it means for the SAP.

Item 3: Fuller Working Lives

NW informed members that the LEP has been successful in being chosen by DWP to run a 10 week pilot to support the age 50+ workforce. The new name for Fuller Working Lives is 50 PLUS: Choices so this is being rolled out with the social media coverage.

A toolkit has been created to support employers, the LEP Jobs Support Programme now has a designated area for advice and resources for supporting this age bracket, a webinar is planned for the 23rd March and two peer to peer networks in April.

The LEP is planning to continue this vital work after the trial.

Item 4: AOB

No AOB.

Next meeting – May 20th at 10am

DRAFT