



Skills And Employment Committee

Monday, 20 January 2025

Venue:	CPCA Meeting Room, Pathfinder House, Huntingdon	
Time:	10.00 am	
	Councillor Lucy Nethsingha	Cambridgeshire Country Council
	Councillor Alice Gilderdale	Cambridge City Council
	Councillor Ian Benney	Fenland District Council
	Councillor Elieen Wilson	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Katy Davies	Business Board
	Charlotte Horobin	Business Board
	Councillor Lara Davenport-Ray	Huntingdonshire District Council
	Councillor Anna Smith	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority

Minutes

1 Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed Cllr Pettitt from East Cambridgeshire District Council who was attending the meeting remotely.

Apologies were received from Mayor Dr Nik Johnson who was substituted by Deputy Mayor Cllr Anna Smith, and also from Cllr Wakeford who was substituted by Cllr Davenport-Ray.

2 Declaration of Interests

Katy Davies, Business Board Representative, declared two interests; the first as a non-executive Director of the Cambridgeshire Chamber of Commerce and the second as a Director of Citizen Hub St Neots Community Interest Company (CIC). This interest was related to the FE Cold Spots Programme as although the Citizen Hub was not a direct applicant, an application had been submitted by a provider operating in the same space.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 21 October 2024 were approved as an accurate record.

The Action Log was noted by the Committee.

4 Public Questions

One Public Question had been submitted. This was read out by the Governance Manager and a response was given by the Chair. The question had been previously circulated to members of the Committee and published on the website. Following the meeting the response would also be published on the website here: [Public Questions](#)

5 **Forward Plan**

That the Combined Authority Forward Plan be noted.

6 **Director's Highlight Report**

The Assistant Director Skills gave a presentation (appended to the minutes) providing a summary of significant national policy changes that were influencing local initiatives.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- a) Skills England was a newly established body for oversight of post-16 skills and higher education. The Combined Authority was collaborating with the Department for Education (DfE) on its development.
- b) The Post-16 Curriculum was under review and updates on Statutory work experience guidance were expected next year
- c) The DfE was revising the apprenticeship levy to create a Growth and Skills Levy. The Combined Authority would be hosting an employer engagement session, led by Alexis McLoud, to discuss these changes.
- d) The English Devolution Bill included the consolidation of funding streams and closer collaboration with employer representative bodies on the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).
- e) Cambridgeshire and Peterborough were one of eight areas nationally for the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer which was aimed at supporting economically inactive 18-21-year-olds by ensuring access to training and employment opportunities.
- f) Regional skills priorities included
 1. Addressing labour market exclusion in Fenland.
 2. Responding to increased demand for green skills.
 3. Tackling workforce shortages in sectors such as care.
 4. Mitigating the impact of rising economic inactivity due to long-term sickness.
 5. Planning for future digital skills demand.
- g) A new working group has been established to develop the skills element of the Local Growth Plan and address priorities identified in the LSIP. This Skills for Growth working Group was chaired by Charlotte Horobin, the Chair of the Employment and Skills Board and Business Board representative on the Committee.
- h) Questions were raised about identifying and supporting those who had dropped out of education or employment due to COVID-19 and were not on the radar of services. The Assistant Director emphasised the need for a systems approach, involving statutory and non-statutory services, the community, voluntary sector, and health services to identify and support these individuals. She noted the rising numbers of young people experiencing mental health challenges post-COVID and highlighted the project's focus on working with health services to prioritise these groups
- i) The Assistant Director elaborated on the barriers to an efficient skills system, such as long-term inactivity and workforce shortages in teaching and care. She stressed the importance of supporting individuals to gain skills in digital, green, and other strategic areas to address these challenges effectively
- j) Committee members commended the efforts to work collaboratively with the Business Board and other committees, particularly in addressing infrastructure challenges. The alignment between transport initiatives and access to education, training, and employment opportunities was acknowledged.
- k) The Assistant Director provided an update on the Devolution White Paper, noting that while it proposed consolidating funding streams—which was welcomed—it fell short of addressing several lobbying priorities for greater devolution in the skills landscape. She reaffirmed the commitment to engaging with Skills England, the Department for Education, and the Skills Minister to advocate for meaningful changes.

RESOLVED:

- A. To note the contents of the report.

7 CPCA's Wider Outcomes Framework

Jaki Bradley, Skills Partnership Manager introduced Mark Ravenhall, freelance educational researcher, who was in attendance (virtually) to give a presentation to Members (appended to the minutes) which gave an update on CPCA's Wider Outcomes Framework (Phases Two and Three).

During discussion the following points were noted:

- a) Dr. Helen Plant and Mr. Mark Ravenhall had been commissioned to develop the framework, with both bringing extensive expertise in educational policy, research, and evaluation.
- b) The Framework aligned with UNESCO's Global Report on Adult Learning and Education, focusing on benefits across three domains: Health and Well-being, Social, Civic, and Community Life and the Employment and Labor Market.
- c) The Chair emphasised the importance of understanding the broader impacts of learning to ensure efficient use of public funds and achieve better outcomes for learners across multiple domains.
- d) Members expressed concerns that capturing data only at the end might not fully capture the impact of the training and that a two-phase consultation (at the beginning and end of the course) could better reflect learner experiences and outcomes
- e) Officers explained the triangulation process with the Individualised Learner Record (ILR), where learners stated one of seven purposes for their learning at the beginning of a course. This data was then analysed alongside three to four key domains. Providers also measured learning outcomes through qualifications or the "Recognizing and Recording Progress and Achievement" (RARPA) process, which was accepted by Ofsted.
- f) The survey approach involved asking learners to reflect on whether aspects of their life had improved since taking the course. While this approach was widely used, the wording of the questions was still being refined in collaboration with providers to avoid unexpected or misleading outcomes.
- g) Employer surveys were planned for the future to evaluate the impact of adult learning program and help understand if employers' needs, particularly in addressing hard-to-fill roles, were being met.
- h) The commissioning strategy and employer engagement would be addressed in the next phase of work. The importance of not overburdening the current project and ensuring it was executed effectively was emphasised.
- i) Officers confirmed that two reports on the project's progress were scheduled for this academic year. The first report would include initial findings and any necessary adjustments. The second report, due at the end of the academic year, would provide a comprehensive analysis
- j) The importance of refining consultation methods and survey questions was acknowledged to ensure robust and meaningful data collection from learners, providers, and employers.
- k) Members noted the progress and looked forward to receiving further updates in the Summer.

RESOLVED:

- A. To note the update on CPCA's Wider Outcomes Framework (Phases Two and Three)

8 Youth Forum for the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer

Eva Woods, Programme Administrator, introduced the report which provided Members with a proposed Terms of Reference and delivery timeline for the establishment of a Youth Forum that would ensure the young person's voice was embedded into plans for the delivery of the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- a) Members expressed excitement about the project and emphasised the significance of the project for the region's future, highlighting its potential to unlock opportunities for future generations.
- b) The Assistant Director supported Members' requests to align this forum with the Skills and Employment Board and to increase youth involvement in all relevant programmes, emphasising the benefits of co-production of policies and initiatives with young people.
- c) Officers agreed that the application process to become involved in the Youth Forum should be as straightforward as possible and that alternative methods for expressing interest, such as video or audio submissions, be considered to accommodate different communication preferences.

	<p>d) The importance of diverse representation was highlighted. The Committee discussed strategies to involve young people outside established youth organisations such as collaboration with job centres, youth organisations, and community groups working with vulnerable groups such as young parents and care leavers.</p> <p>e) Members expressed the need for employer support in adapting to the needs of younger generations in the workforce and highlighted existing efforts, such as initiatives to create "young person-ready" workplaces. They agreed on the importance of not reinventing existing frameworks but instead building on successful models.</p> <p>f) Concerns were raised about overburdening young volunteers with multiple requests from various organisations and the Committee agreed to streamline requests and coordinate efforts across organisations to ensure effective collaboration.</p> <p>g) Officers clarified that the terms of reference to be agreed by the Committee were a 'starter for ten' and would be subject to review and refinement by the youth participants but would update the Terms of Reference to explicitly state that the "terms were subject to refinement by the Youth Forum upon formation."</p> <p>RESOLVED: On being proposed by Cllr Nethsingha and seconded by Cllr Smith the Committee unanimously resolved to:</p> <p>A. Approve the establishment of a Youth Forum (age 16-21) that will ensure the young person's voice is embedded into plans for the delivery of the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer.</p> <p>ACTION: 1. Officers to amend the Terms of Reference for the Forum to explicitly state the terms were subject to refinement by the Youth Forum upon formation.</p>
9	<p>Further Education Cold Spots</p>
	<p>The Committee had received a Members' briefing prior to the public meeting which had given some information on the expressions of interest (EOIs) that had come forward for this programme.</p> <p>The Assistant Director introduced the report which asked the Committee to note the progress made towards the establishment of a Skills Capital Grant Funding opportunity to resolve the FE Cold Spots identified by the Combined Authority.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">---o0o---</p> <p>At this point, on the advice of the Deputy Monitoring Officer in response to an interest declared, Katy Davies, Business Board representative left the meeting.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">---o0o---</p> <p>During discussion the following points were noted:</p> <p>a) Officers clarified that items classified as capital assets such as furniture, technical equipment, software, rent, leases, and building costs were eligible expenditure and revenue costs including salaries of staff or managers and operational costs for learning activities were ineligible expenditures.</p> <p>b) The Authority would monitor the Return on Investment (RoI) for three years post-investment to evaluate the number of learners benefiting from the capital assets.</p> <p>c) Providers would be assisted in identifying alternative funding sources for revenue needs.</p> <p>d) In cases where revenue constraints posed barriers, options would be reviewed to support the programme's success.</p> <p>e) Members expressed encouragement and enthusiasm regarding the volume and quality of EOIs received, reflecting the sector's readiness to effectively utilise the capital funding to increase learning access in underserved areas.</p> <p>f) The discussion highlighted the broader need for capital funding in the sector and the success of the Combined Authority's approach in leveraging funding to enhance educational opportunities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.</p>

	<p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>On being proposed by Cllr Nethsingha and seconded by Cllr Wilson the Committee unanimously resolved to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Note the progress made towards the establishment of a Skills Capital Grant Funding opportunity to resolve the FE Cold Spots identified by the Combined Authority. B. Recommend to the Combined Authority Board the approval of the proposed Grant Funding approach to spend the £4.5m Capital Investment. C. Recommend to the Combined Authority Board the delegation to the Assistant Director of Skills and Employment, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer, to enter into grant funding agreements with selected providers on behalf of the Combined Authority <p style="text-align: center;">---o0o---</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Katy Davies rejoined the meeting at 11.21am following the conclusion of this item</p> <p style="text-align: center;">---o0o---</p>
10	<p>Adult Skills Commissioning Strategy</p>
	<p>The Assistant Director introduced the report which sought approval for the proposed Adult Skills Commissioning Strategy 2025-2028 and to undertake an open and competitive tendering process to procure Independent Training Providers (ITPs) for delivery of training courses funded by the Adult Skills Fund and Free Courses for Jobs Fund.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Members expressed support for the renewed focus on community learning, noting that previously there had been a reduction in focus on non-qualification-based learning. b) The importance of providing confidence-building opportunities in communities was emphasised especially in areas where lifelong learning played a significant role in personal development. c) Flexibility would be given to providers to allocate funds based on their local needs and priorities. This approach would ensure providers could make decisions based on their understanding of local barriers, such as transport costs or childcare needs. d) Providers would then be required to report on how funds were being used for learner support, which would allow the Combined Authority to monitor the extent to which these needs were being addressed. e) Members expressed strong support for the Strategy and the work done so far, recognising its importance in addressing the region's skills needs and improving access to adult learning opportunities. <p>RESOLVED: (Unanimous)</p> <p>On being proposed by the Chair and seconded by Cllr Wilson, the Committee resolved to recommend to the Combined Authority Board the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Approval of the proposed Adult Skills Commissioning Strategy 2025-2028 B. Approval of implementing three-year plan-led grant funding agreements for FE Colleges and Local Authorities and the WEA subject to DfE funding for the period 2025 – 2028. C. Approval of the procurement of Independent Training Providers (ITPs) under contracts for services, subject to DfE funding. D. Approval for contracts for services to be issued over 3 years (2025 – 2028) to bring them in line with grant funding agreements and support sustainability and capacity building within the sector. E. Delegation to the Assistant Director for Skills & Employment, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer, to enter into multi-year grant funding agreements and contracts for services for the Adult Skills Fund and Free Courses for Jobs Fund on behalf of the Combined Authority.

11	Work Programme
	<u>RESOLVED:</u> To note the Skills and Employment Committee Work Programme.
12	Date of Next Meeting
	The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Monday 24 February 2025.