

West Lancashire Local Strategic Partnership

Employment, Learning & Skills Thematic Group

Minutes of Meeting 23rd November 2011

Present:

Paula Huber	West Lancashire Borough Council (Acting Chairperson)
Colin Geering	Knowsley Borough Council
Louise Dawson	West Lancashire College
Sara Gaskell	West Lancashire College, Business Solutions
Pat Perkins	Skills Academy for Health
Michelle Davies	Job Centre Plus (JCP)
Greg Swift	West Lancashire Council for Voluntary Service (WLCVS) & Quarry Bank Social Enterprise
Matt Wynn	Inspire 2 Independence (i2i)
John Corish	WLBC
Alex Lambie	WLBC

1. Welcome and Introductions

As Councillor Owens was unable to attend, PH chaired the meeting. PH welcomed all to the meeting and individual introductions were made.

2. Apologies

Councillor Owens, WLBC; Greg Mitten, WLCVS; Maureen Fazal, Exsel CIC; Sue Hogan, YPS; Alison Quirk, JCP and Jane Friend, Groundwork Wigan and West Lancashire.

3. Presentation from Colin Geering, Knowsley Borough Council – Employment and Skills Activity

3.1 Colin gave an overview of the Liverpool City Region Employment and Skills activity.

3.2 Areas covered included changing Government policy with a focus on reducing budget deficit; a move from Regional Development Agencies to Local Enterprise Partnerships; the end of funding programmes such as Working Neighbourhood Funds, Future Jobs Fund, and welfare and benefit reform.

3.3 Looking to the future, the skills of the workforce will need to adapt to the developing and growing sectors such as the visitor economy, Superport, Low Carbon and Knowledge economy.

3.4 CG explained the new governance structures in place in relation to the Local Enterprise Partnership and shared with the group a copy of their 10 year Employment and Skills Strategy, together with a copy of their Apprenticeship Strategy.

3.5 There were many similarities to issues facing West Lancashire such as the loss of funding and public sector job losses, however CG also

highlighted practical examples of what can be achieved by working in partnerships. PH reiterated the strengths within this thematic group from the range of partners involved.

- 3.6 PP made the point about how organisations and providers are dictated to by the funding bodies, and how Future Jobs Fund gave individuals enough time to gain true employment skills, with over 60% success rate in securing employment within her sector.
- 3.7 LD commented about getting the balance right as some young people are more job ready than others, which is where the provider can intervene and make a difference. The FE sector was responding to the flexibility CG referred to, with the College adapting short and sharp training courses where required.
- 3.8 Following a request by JC, CG agreed to investigate if the bus they currently use to promote apprenticeships would be available for the WL Challenge in West Lancashire. *The slides would be circulated to the group with the minutes. PH*

4. Minutes of the last meeting, 20th July 2011

With an amendment to the number of childcare places available at the College's nursery to read 74, the minutes were agreed as a true and correct record.

5. Matters Arising

- 5.1 JC reported that Porters Horticultural had put their plans for an apprentice on hold and that our contact had unfortunately been made redundant. However links are still being maintained with the National Farmers Union.
- 5.2 Item 10.3 JC updated that the care industry pilot had commenced.

6. Job Centre Plus – Get Britain Working

- 6.1 MD provided group members with a two-page JCP update entitled 'How you can help to get Britain working', explaining each of the current initiatives, including Work Experience; Sector-based work academies; Work Clubs and Enterprise Clubs; New Enterprise Allowance and Work Together and local contact details were also provided.
- 6.2 In terms of Work Experience, MD reported that 71 host agreements had been signed by SME's, providers and public sector (West Lancashire Borough Council is expected to sign up very shortly). By the end of November, there had been 97 starts in Skelmersdale and 28 in Ormskirk, a very encouraging start to the programme.
- 6.3 PP queried whether CRB checks could be funded. MD responded it is unlikely to be problematic, but the onus was on providers to provide any necessary checks/equipment. LD followed that there are mechanisms

within the College to work through these issues, as they are very keen to minimise problems young people have in accessing employment.

- 6.4 GS commented that in his role as Treasurer for the SE Hub he was keen to develop links to Mentors and the New Enterprise Allowance, LD also added how he could work with the College to 'timebank' volunteering hours.

7. Economic Regeneration Manager Update

- 7.1 PH reported on a number of issues for the group including the number of Lancashire events taking place in 2012 and how the Council were trying to ensure all local events that would attract visitors to the area are being promoted through the www.VisitLancashire.com website. PH updated the group on four West Lancashire finalists in the Tourism Awards, including WWT Martin Mere, Victoria Fellowes (WWT Martin Mere) and Martin Lane Farmhouse Holiday Cottages. *Please forward any events to PH for inclusion on the website - ALL.*

- 7.2 The second item reported was the Sefton and West Lancashire visitor economy project and although in its infancy, a web page has been developed and the small grants scheme is now open to applicants.

8. Policy Update on Employment and Skills

- 8.1 JC circulated a paper to the group, which included information on a recent apprenticeship event he attended in Manchester relating to public sector procurement and capital projects. AL reported on the number of apprenticeship and JCP vacancies across the Borough, providing spreadsheets and charts, which the group found extremely useful. MD commented on how the vacancy numbers for 'Distribution' are misleading as they relate to the number of agencies advertising the same jobs rather than the number of individual jobs. *Members would like to receive this information on a monthly basis if possible – PH/AL.*
- 8.2 SG reported to the group the extension of the SWOP project across Lancashire due to its success, an example being 22 apprentices working within 1 school, and that the College are investing highly in this project.

9. West Lancashire Challenge Project

- 9.1 JC worked through each of the outcomes in the summary circulated. LD commented that the passport was not being offered indiscriminately and the numbers are expected to grow over the next few months.
- 9.2 With regards to the Community Development section, PP commented on a skills club scheme in the Cheshire area that she was aware of with the use of £12k financial support that included health benefits. *PP to provide more information to JC.*

- 9.3 Outcome 8, LD reported that the new Young Persons Service structure was now in place, which would help in providing data in a user-friendly format with links also made to the employer event.
- 9.4 Outcome 16, LD was expecting large numbers to the Open Event in February, with over 800 people attending the last event.
- 9.5 Outcome 18, LD reported how they are looking forward to a further staff volunteering day at the College in July 2012, where they expect good levels of attendance and that volunteering was taking place on an ongoing basis within the College.

10. Any Other Business

- 10.1 PP: ESF -14 week model in the Wigan area, but looking to partner with WL College in the near future. Working Families contract, which is to develop a skills pre-cursor to the pre-employment training, which would involve 20hrs of health and wellbeing awareness.
- 10.2 LD: Various events and launches taking place, including Family Fun Day on Saturday to promote the Nursery on campus and the Business Event on 1st December, full details of all events on website. The College have introduced a replacement EMA scheme, which is great news for a large number of students.
- 10.3 MD: JCP would endeavour to attend these meetings in future.
- 10.4 GS/CVS: AGM held last week (w/c 14 Nov) in Hesketh Bank, a great event, which was very well attended. A calendar has also produced with photography by GS, any queries/copies to GS.
GS/Quarry Bank: Receiving referrals from JCP and A4E.
- 10.5 MW: Chris Grayling, Minister of State (Employment), Work and Pensions attended an event at i2i offices. Of their 282 clients, they have assisted 71 back into work, and of the 144 i2i centres Skelmersdale is the second most successful. Will be linking through to WL College, and the WL Challenge in particular re: agency working and the Cleaning and Environmental Service apprenticeship qualification.
- 10.6 JF (received via email): Working in partnership with neighbouring Trust Groundwork Pennine Lancashire to assess the feasibility of providing health and safety and environmental sustainability training to 16 and 17 yr olds who are in employment. Connections will be made with businesses through Groundwork's Environmental Business Service's. If work is feasible, completion is required by the end of December 2011.

11. Date of Next Meeting

22nd February 2012 at 10am
West Lancashire Investment Centre