

Notes of Skills and Training Working Group

**Meeting held on Friday 22 January 2010 at 10 am in the Council Chamber,
Maldon District Council**

Present: Jenny Lewsey, Chairman, Maldon District Council (MDC) (JL)
Darren Connew, Connexions (DC)
David Stephenson, Local Delivery Group Leader (DS)
Keith Hughes, Business Link East (KH)
Brian Farrington, Essex Chamber of Commerce (BF)
Keith Brown, Federation of Small Businesses (KB)
Maya West, MDC (MW)
Jan Smith, Lota Training (JS)
Beverley Patnell, Shaw Trust (BP)

In attendance: Amy Baker for Vikkie Massey, The Dengie Project Trust (AB)
Lynn Marston, MDC (LM)
Susan Hylands (notes)

LM attended to advise that the LSP has commissioned the IDeA to carry out a workshop around the issue of skills in the District. This is to be held at 2 pm on 15/3/10 and is in response to the LSP deciding that skills are a critical issue for the District. It is hoped to have a mix of strategic and practitioner level attendees and LM would like suggestions from the meeting as to possible invitees. Any suggestions should be sent to LM directly or via JL.

Action: ALL to forward suggestions for invitees to the Skills Workshop to LM or JL.

LM also advised that the Essex Partnership is looking at how the Total Place project might work in Essex. There has been a pilot case study on NEETs in Tendring and a report is being made to the Essex Partnership Forum on 24/3/10.

LM noted that there may be some additional PRG money coming into the Essex Partnership. There is currently no further information on how this might be spent but it may be useful for the group to identify a proposal for match funding should any funding become available to bid for.

Lynn thanked the group and left the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Vikkie Massey (Amy Baker attended on her behalf), Helen Russell, Linda Riley, Joanna Sears and Hazel Berrett.

2. Notes of the Last Meeting

The notes of the last meeting held on 16 December 2009 were agreed as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

The timeline for the Maritime Skills Apprenticeship Scheme had not been circulated however JL advised that the launch is scheduled for 5/2/10. Information on construction skills had been sent by KH to JL. The meeting discussed the “golden hello” apprenticeship grant scheme for 16 and 17 year old apprentices where firms can receive funding towards apprentices. The grant is in addition to the costs of training which is met by the National Apprenticeship Service. This is a short term initiative with a closing date of March 2010. Further information is available on the LSC website. In view of the tight deadline there is a need to cascade this information to businesses locally as soon as possible. Employers need to register and there is an online enquiry form. JL will talk to the Maldon Business Partnership Forum which is meeting on 26/1/10. The Communications Department at MDC may also be able to assist and JL will discuss with Russell Dawes, Communications Manager. KB advised that he is also attending an event on 4/2/10 at Stanstead where Ian Wright, the Schools Minister, will be in attendance.

**Action: JL to discuss promoting the Apprenticeship Grant Scheme with Russell Dawes, Communications Manager at MDC.
ALL to cascade information to local businesses as opportunities present.**

Bev Patnell, Shaw Trust joined the meeting and advised that the Shaw Trust has secured a lease on premises in Station Road, Maldon. B will be managing the Maldon contract and working with 16-18 year old NEETs at risk of offending or in care/looked after.

DC circulated data on NEET figures. It was advised that in real terms the number of NEETs has reduced to 88. Further reductions are expected through other initiatives. JY advised that the youth fund is being used to run courses three days a week as pre NEET and the young people will be reassessed at the end of this to see if they ready to go into an apprenticeship or require a further course. The Shaw Trust is also hoping to work with 13-16 year olds. The number of hours in the courses allows Education Maintenance Allowance payments to still be made. It was confirmed however, that if at the end of the course, young people will come back into the NEETs figures if they do not progress into employment or further training. KH noted that when young people reach the age of 19 it becomes a different issue and it would be useful for the group to understand what interventions are available at this point. It was felt that it would be useful to link with Job Centre Plus.

It was felt that there could be an opportunity to publicise the reduction in NEETs figures and how agencies are working together to achieve this, through a press campaign. It was agreed that a communications plan could be part of the overall Action Plan for the group.

Action: JL to contact Lesley Foster, Job Centre Plus to issue an invitation to join the group.

JL to discuss press campaign with Russell Dawes.

The employability strategy had not been circulated and this agenda item will be deferred to the next meeting. However there was a brief discussion around some employability issues and it was felt that it would be useful if employers gave a brief resume if candidates were unsuccessful in securing a job. MW advised that this is

normal practice and is usually done via the organisation which arranged the placement. Employers also need to monitor to ensure that standards are maintained.

RB/DS have liaised outside the meeting to discuss issues around NEETs and to look at ways of tackling these. DS will now also link with the Shaw Trust and Essex 14-19 and will feedback to the meeting on 22/2/10 as previously agreed.

The action for MW to produce an employer's pack of success stories is outstanding. JL had distributed a case study from The Emporium. JL will ask for case studies at the business meeting. KB noted that it would be useful to get permission from the case study sources to use and distribute the information.

Action: JL to ask Business Forum for any success story case studies.

The Shaw Trust e-mail had been circulated with the notes of the last meeting.

KH asked whether the LSP would be asked to request its partners to sign up to the Skills Pledge. MW confirmed that MDC has signed up. JL agreed to check whether the LSP is a signatory to the Skills Pledge.

Action: JL to discuss whether the LSP is a signatory to the Skills Pledge with Lynn Marston.

4. Employability Issues

As Helen Russell was not present it was agreed to defer this agenda item to the next meeting.

Agreed: Employability Issues/Employability Strategy to be an agenda item at the next meeting.

5. Draft Template of Activity

JL advised that she had been tasked with producing an action plan and circulated a draft which requires inputting with current activity. It was felt that it would be useful to take this to the LSP workshop as a starting point from the discussions at this group. KH asked whether the information is already available from other sources such as Job Centre Plus, LSC. JY advised that the LSC is breaking up into three organisations and that apprenticeships are undergoing a national reconciliation of funding with no money available until the end of March. It was noted that the economic participation fund is targeted through Helen Russell's team at ECC. It was felt that a mapping exercise is required to obtain a baseline of information and to assess how opportunities could be pursued. Once this had been gathered the LSP workshop could be an opportunity to look at in more detail.

**Action: JL, KH and HR to meet and agree how to take forward.
ALL to provide one liner of what training aware of, who is delivering, is it being delivered in Maldon and finish date.**

6. Any Other Business

JY wanted to note that it is important to obtain the "buy in " of parents and that this is an important role for schools. DS advised of new "parentmail" initiative aimed at improving communication with parents

There was also a discussion around data protection issues and the problems that this can cause with placing young people. There have been problems with putting young people on inappropriate courses because information about the student has been withheld. MW advised that as an employer MDC would carry out checks on applicants and would dismiss them at a later date if they had been found to lie. The application form requires a signature which provides authority to check personal information. JY noted that they would write to schools to receive a reference but a response is not always received. DS advised that if this occurred with requests to his school he would want to be made aware to ensure that a response is sent. In response to a question DS advised that there is a problem around providing exit reports as actual grades are not available at the point these are produced. However, all young people are provided with a unique reference number that links to exam boards and their results can be checked. There is also an issue around ensuring that young people take responsibility for ensuring that they keep and provide original certificates etc. and this should be covered by employability training.

JL advised that a meeting has been arranged with Writtle College to look at the proposed business engagement plan and she will report back to this group at a later date.

JL noted that a procurement skills charter is being developed for use by local authorities which will ensure that skilled contractors and craftsmen are used.

JL updated the meeting on the Food Festival and advised that discussions are ongoing with a proposed date 18/19 September.

JL also advised that she is in discussion with East of England Tourism to talk about the sustainable tourism project. EET is looking for a £40 contribution. JL will feedback to the next meeting. KH noted that it might be worth talking to County after these discussions.

- 7. Date and Time of Next Meeting** – the next meeting will be held on Monday 22 February 2010 at 2 pm in Room 8, MDC offices.