

Notes of Skills and Training Working Group

Meeting held on 16 December 2009 at 2 p.m. in the Chief Executive's office, MDC offices

Present: Jenny Lewsey, Chairman Maldon District Council (MDC) (JL)
Helen Russell, Essex County Council (ECC) (HR)
Darren Connew, Connexions (DC)
David Stephenson, Local Delivery Group Leader (DS)
Keith Hughes, Business Link East (KH)
Brian Farrington, Essex Chamber of Commerce
Keith Brown, Federation of Small Businesses (KB)
Rob Bristow, ECC for Joanna Sears
Maya West, MDC

In attendance: Susan Hylands (notes)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Joanna Sears, Learning Skills Council (LSC), Hazel Berrett, MDC, nda Riley, Voluntary Sector Training, Tony Stringer, Writtle College and Linda Hamilton, LOTA Training.

2. Notes of the Last Meeting

The notes of the last meeting held on 23 November 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising

JL tabled information received from MDC's Conservation Officer in response to the query regarding the skills shortages identified by the Natural and Built Heritage Working Group. It was also noted that Writtle College has just opened a traditional skills suite.

4. Feedback from LSP Steering Group

JL advised that she had attended the LSP Steering Group as Chairman of this Working Group and discussed the proposal to engage with local businesses. The proposals on the approach and business engagement were tabled for discussion. The approach used with the marine sector for the Maritime Skills Apprenticeship was suggested. KH asked whether a district survey has been undertaken to assess the requirement identified by local businesses. It was confirmed that MDC will take part in the Essex survey and that this should provide the evidence to show why certain sectors are targeted. There was some discussion around how best to engage businesses and concerns were noted around raising expectations. However it was felt that areas need to be identified and gap/needs identified first before funding issues are addressed. A progress update on the maritime skills exercise was given and it was confirmed that will the next stage will be to invite people to sign up. Around 50% of the original businesses have remained interested; some have said that they don't wish to be involved in the first cohort or don't want to take on an

apprentice full time but remain interested in the scheme. It was confirmed that when the scheme was started it was known that funding was in place and the scheme could be delivered. It was felt important that this group defines the process. HR was asked to circulate a timeline for the maritime skills apprenticeship scheme.

The three sectors suggested were agreed. KB noted that with regard to local food and produce production it may be worth working with partners. Rochford DC is working with ARU. JL confirmed that she is in contact with ARU and worked with Taste of England and ECC to run the recent Food Festival. It was also suggested that links are made with Essex County Council Tourism and this could include the Essex Tourism Business Awards. HR advised that hospitality is one of the priority sectors in terms of the Essex Apprenticeship Scheme and ECC is working closely with Wivenhoe Park. It was agreed that there is a lot of work already happening and there is a need to identify and link with existing opportunities. Members of the group will identify key opportunities and forward these to SH/JL.

**Action: HR to circulate timeline for the Maritime Skills Apprenticeship Scheme.
ALL to forward list of opportunities to SH/JL.**

5. Employability Issues – Data Feedback

DC tabled information providing an overview for the District. Maldon NEETs have risen by 0.4% which equates to seven young people. As a County there is a .5% reduction. The Maldon specific figures were also tabled. 98 is the unadjusted NEET which then becomes 102 once adjusted to take into account “not knowns”. There has been a reduction in “not knowns” from 11% to 5% which shows success in tracking, but does increase the NEET figure, however this should still be seen as a positive as dialogue has commenced. DC advised that there had been some students drop out of courses from Colchester Institute. Overall figure is 10.7% compared to 10% last year. There is some fluctuation in the figures due to some vocational courses not starting until January, however concern was noted that the differential is widening against the County figures which now stand at 9%. Issues to consider are things such as managing student’s expectations in terms of what they expect from courses as opposed to the reality. DS asked whether data was available on the courses that students are leaving and whether these could then be looked at. DC will see if this information can be collected. There was also a discussion around whether there is a family history connection to NEETs and whether there is any distinction between rural and urban areas. DC will look for data against postcodes. RB advised that there are some issues around Connexions releasing information. It was felt that it would be useful for RS/RB/DC to meet to discuss issues around NEETs and look for ways of tackling. HR advised that ECC is looking to develop a strategy around employability. This will be circulated prior to the next meeting and be an agenda item for discussion on 22/1/10.

Action: DC to collate further data on courses where students have dropped out from college courses and provide an analysis of postcodes for the next meeting.

RB/DS to liaise outside of the meeting regarding identifying and tackling NEETs and feedback to the meeting on 22/2/10.

HR to circulate strategy around employability. This to be an agenda item at the next meeting.

Items 6 & 7 - Employers Proposal how we facilitate & Traditional Skills re Natural Built Heritage Working Group

There was nothing further to add to the earlier discussion.

8. Any Other Business

MW provided an overview of the apprentices being employed by MDC. To date there have been six apprentices, predominantly in Revenues & Benefits, Customer Services, HR and Parks. Courses are available and can be vocational or office based is business administration through local providers. The first two apprentices were secured via LOTA. There have been some issues with delays when using Connexions and MW and DC will discuss this further outside of the meeting. It was felt that it would be good to use case studies to "sell" the scheme to local businesses and for use by schools.

Action: MW to look at producing an employer's pack of success stories including case studies, managers' and students' experiences.

JL to look at local business case studies, draft copy to be sent out with minutes, please do not copy case study to other parties as copy write owned by TCHC.

Maldon LOTA has now opened up a new office in Witham and the Maldon office will be focussing on NEETs.

The Shaw Trust is looking to set up provision within the District. JL will circulate the e-mail from the Shaw Trust.

Action: JL to circulate e-mail re Shaw Trust. - attached

KH noted that it would be useful for MDC/LSP to be signatories to the Skills Pledge.

There was a discussion around the job fund and whether it would be possible to mirror the success of West Essex which has been given over £1m to create jobs. HR noted that there had been some concerns around sustainability but ECC is looking at this again.

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Friday 22 January 2010 at 10.00 a.m. in the Training Room, MDC offices.