

Notes of Skills and Training Working Group

Meeting held on Monday 22 February 2010 at 2 pm in Room 8, Maldon District Council

Present: Jenny Lewsey, Chairman, Maldon District Council (JL)
Vikie Massey, The Dengie Project Trust & One Place (VM)
David Stephenson, Local Delivery Group Leader (DS)
Brian Farrington, Essex Chamber of Commerce (BF)
Keith Brown, Federation of Small Businesses (KB)
Lesley Forster, Job Centre Plus Essex (LF)

In attendance: Brian Collen, Plume School (BC)
Susan Hylands (SH) (notes)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Keith Hughes, Business Link East, Darren Connew, Connexions, Linda Riley, Voluntary Sector Training, Helen Russell, ECC, Joanna Sears, Learning Skills Council and Hazel Berrett, Maldon District Council.

2. Notes of the Last Meeting

The notes of the last meeting held on 22 January 2010 were agreed as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

JL had not received any suggestions for invitees to the Skills Workshop.

JL had discussed promoting the Apprenticeship Grant Scheme with Helen Russell who advised that this should be done in partnership with ECC rather than in isolation. JL has posted the information on www.maldondistrict.biz website.

JL had contacted Lesley Forster, Job Centre Plus and LF was present at the meeting.

JL confirmed that the Chief Executive of MDC agreed to sign the Skills Pledge.

JL has obtained permission from Mary Powell to use the case study from The Emporium as an example of a success story.

Helen Russell advised that she has not yet completed the Employability Strategy.

JL has met with Keith Hughes and Helen Russell to look at the draft template of activity/action plan. It was felt that the Terms of Reference for this group were very wide and unrealistic. To be discussed further under agenda item 5.

4. Actions to Prevent NEETs

Brian Collen from the Plume School attended the meeting and outlined his role in terms of working with students supporting them with work experience, information advice and guidance on careers. BC has been awarded the Sinnot Fellowship from the DCEF which means that the DCEF will buy his time for two days a week to pursue community projects. One of these projects will be around employer engagement and BC plans to set up a Plume Community Forum. An integral part of this will be a core action group. Members would be invited to join on the basis of three criteria: being representative of their organisation; committed to partnership working and be prepared to look at innovative ways of working. The purpose of the core group would be to sign post to other members and other organisations what is available and to look at consolidating and building on what is already happening and to look for new opportunities. It is hoped that this model could then be replicated in other schools. From a school point of view by the time that a student becomes NEET it is too late to address so it is aimed to address earlier within the school. Ultimately it would be hoped to base employer engagement in the school so that employers feel that they have a vested interest in what is going on. BC would like representation from this meeting on the group and JL also offered to take this to the Maldon District Business Partnership meeting. BF/KB both confirmed that they would be willing to be involved and would like to see the Terms of Reference. BC is also looking to arrange a conference to provide a mechanism to take the project forward

Action: BC to send ToR to JL for distribution with the notes of the meeting.

JL to add to agenda for Maldon District Business Partnership meeting.

4b Additional Agenda Item – Lesley Forster from Job Centre Plus

Lesley Forster tabled information about the additional support available for unemployed young people aged 18 – 24 year and provided an overview. She clarified that LEP vacancy stands for Local Employer Partnership and engages with local employers who agree to see and consider for employment people who are more difficult to employ. With regard to apprenticeships Job Centre Plus works closely with ECC and has access to the website so are aware of available apprenticeships.

From 3 months unemployed there is now a weekly job search and an intervention team who will contact young people. Self employment support is available which allows an extra £50 per week on top of any earnings for a period of 16 weeks if the young person signs off benefit. The young person will also be put in touch with programmes such as business link start up for advice and guidance.

From 6 months as part of the “Backing Young Britain” programme there are four main themes; Routes into Work where the employer receives £1000 in two instalments for jobs in certain sectors, Future Jobs Fund which is a job creation scheme and where £6,500 is paid for every job created for a period of 6 months at least 25 hours a week; Training for Work and Community Task Force. The meeting discussed the future jobs fund and LF advised that to date Colchester is the only local authority which has made a successful bid to the fund. The criteria include that the jobs must benefit the community or be “green” jobs and need to be for around 30 jobs but can be made jointly. Bids are made monthly and JL/LF/VM will be meeting to look at whether this can be taken forward. DS confirmed that he would be happy for Plume

School to be involved. It was noted that it was important to also get this information to those businesses which don't register vacancies with Job Centre Plus.

Action: JL/LJ/VM to meet to discuss the possibilities around bidding to the Future Jobs Fund.

5. Action Plan

JL outlined the need for this group to produce an action plan or paper outlining the way forward to report to the LSP Steering Group. JL tabled a document entitled Skills Improvement in the Maldon District in Mid Essex and advised that this had been commissioned as the evidence base for the Vocational Training Centre. Although this is dated June 2007 and also covers the Braintree district it is still relevant and also provides the evidence for this group's work. JL also tabled a document which she has drafted outlining the way forward and drawing information from the Skills Improvement paper. DS advised that the BVP resubmission is imminent. A further meeting of the Partnership is scheduled for 26/2/10 and DS will provide an update subsequent to this. It was noted that much that would be included in developing the action plan is reliant upon the vocational training centre progressing but ideas for "plan B" will be included.

JL also tabled the outline programme for the LSP Skills Workshop on 15 March 2010.

**Action: JL to circulate a copy of the draft document with the minutes of this meeting.
ALL - The members of the Skills and Training Working Group to add information to the document and return to JL.**

6. Any Other Business

Details of a breakfast event to launch the Care First Careers programme had been forwarded by Linda Riley and copies were circulated to the group.

Darren Connew had provided NEET data and this will be circulated outside of the meeting.

Action: SH to circulate NEETs data outside of the meeting.

Brian Collen thanked the group for inviting him to the meeting.

7. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Friday 19 March 2010 at 10 am in the Council Chamber, MDC offices.