

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF OSB/SKILLS ADVISORY PANEL
Tuesday 13th June 2023
Microsoft TEAMS Virtual Meeting
4:00pm – 6:00pm
MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT

NAME	POSITION AND ORGANISATION	MEMBERSHIP
Iain Littlejohn	Director of Organisation Design and Change Management at Change Audit Ltd	Chair
Helen Hall	UK Recruitment & Partnerships Director, Oxford Brookes University	Member
Richard Kennell	Chief Executive Officer, SOFEA	Member
Richard Byard	Director of Business Development, OxLEP	Member
Bernard Grenville-Jones	Managing Director, Activate Apprenticeships	Member
Eddy McDowall	Chief Executive, Oxfordshire Association of Care Providers	Member
Prof Ewart Keep	Director, Centre for Skills Knowledge & Organisational Performance, Oxford University	Member
Mark Vingoe	Chief Executive Officer, The Engineering Trust	Member
Joanna Hart	Director, Space Partnership	Member
Paul Jones	Apprenticeships Lead, Oxford Professional Education	Member
Cllr Susan Brown	Leader of Oxford City Council	Member
Chris Meah	Chief Executive Officer, School of Code	Member
Mark Wood	Chief Operating Officer, Reaction Engines Ltd	Member
James Gilpin	DWP Oxfordshire Jobcentre Plus	Member's Deputy

IN ATTENDANCE

Graham Try	LSIP Senior Project Consultant, Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce	Speaker
Jon Adams	Group Director of Business Development at Activate Learning	Speaker
Sarah Marlow	Deputy Skills Hub Manager	OxLEP Skills
Dianne Hankin	Social Contract Programme Administrator	OxLEP Skills
Nikki Wakefield	Careers Hub Lead, OxLEP Skills	Speaker
Eleanor Gordon-Martin	Skills & Enterprise Co-ordinator, OxLEP Skills	Speaker
Deborah Montgomery	Contracts Delivery Manager, Oxfordshire Employment, Oxfordshire County Council	Speaker

APOLOGIES RECEIVED

Kate Berman	Director, Olamalu	Member
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PAPERS:

- Labour Market Information slide pack May 2023
- Impact of AI on jobs and industry in Oxfordshire
- Job Posting analytics and Economy Overview for District Councils

1	IL	<p>Welcome, apologies, members' declarations of interest</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and introduced new members, deputising members. Apologies were noted. Meeting etiquette and protocols were highlighted, and attendees were advised that the meeting would be recorded for the purposes of minute taking.</p> <p>Declarations of Interest – None. IL thanked members for returning their updated declarations of interest forms.</p>														
2	IL	<p>Previous minutes and matters arising</p> <p>The minutes from the meeting of 7th March 2023 were approved subject to an amendment to the wording of item 4. OxLEP Update under Operational Updates. At the bottom of page 5 the minutes to be amended to read:</p> <p>“HMG have a clear ambition to devolve responsibilities where practical using local government reform as the mechanism for devolution via Mayoral Combined Authorities, Unitary Authorities, County Deals or similar. In addition to the existing 10 or so areas that already have agreed devolution deals about 8 areas are currently negotiating with government. Oxfordshire is not currently engaged in any devolution negotiations – we will keep the board informed should this change.”</p> <p>The minutes will be amended and recirculated to members (12.07.2023)</p> <p>Previous meeting actions:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="379 981 1426 1518"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="379 981 1236 1032">Details</th> <th data-bbox="1236 981 1426 1032">Who</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="379 1032 1236 1115">• RB to invite Mark Wood and Chris Meah to join Skills Sub-Group</td> <td data-bbox="1236 1032 1426 1115">RB - closed</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="379 1115 1236 1198">• SM to relay thanks to Leah Bryan for exceptional help with Social Contract programme apprenticeship referrals</td> <td data-bbox="1236 1115 1426 1198">SM - closed</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="379 1198 1236 1267">• RB add information regarding older apprentices to minutes</td> <td data-bbox="1236 1198 1426 1267">RB - closed</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="379 1267 1236 1413">• All members to consider what would they like from the skills and business support ecosystem taken forward in any discussions with HMG and local stakeholders for reflection at the next meeting and give feedback</td> <td data-bbox="1236 1267 1426 1413">All - closed</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="379 1413 1236 1464">• Circulate Joanna Burrell's slides after meeting.</td> <td data-bbox="1236 1413 1426 1464">DH - closed</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="379 1464 1236 1518">• Declarations of Interest forms to be issued to all Members</td> <td data-bbox="1236 1464 1426 1518">DH - closed</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>All actions were completed / followed up in this agenda.</p>	Details	Who	• RB to invite Mark Wood and Chris Meah to join Skills Sub-Group	RB - closed	• SM to relay thanks to Leah Bryan for exceptional help with Social Contract programme apprenticeship referrals	SM - closed	• RB add information regarding older apprentices to minutes	RB - closed	• All members to consider what would they like from the skills and business support ecosystem taken forward in any discussions with HMG and local stakeholders for reflection at the next meeting and give feedback	All - closed	• Circulate Joanna Burrell's slides after meeting.	DH - closed	• Declarations of Interest forms to be issued to all Members	DH - closed
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3	IL	<p>Chairperson's Update</p> <p>IL introduced the following new Independent Provider Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark Wood, CEO Reaction Engines. • Chris Meah, CEO, School of Code <p>Cllr Susan Brown, Leader of Oxford City Council would also be attending her first meeting.</p> <p>New members were asked to give a brief personal introduction and the organisation they represent.</p> <p>IL thanked the organisers of the Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards, noting the excellent social media coverage and those who made the event so successful, which the work of OxLEP Skills well.</p>														

		<p>SA acknowledged the thanks of the Chair and invited MW's views, who attended as a new board member. MW concurred it was a fantastic evening and venue, highlighting the talent and inspirational achievements of the apprentices. SA acknowledged Mel Ringer's organisation of the OA Awards, assisted by our apprentice Sophie Laurie-Lynch, to whom the Chair's thanks would be conveyed.</p> <p>Action: SA</p> <p>IL updated the meeting on progress for appointing the new Chair due to his departure from the Board after this meeting. The LEP Board is currently reviewing sub-groups to ensure alignment with key priorities.</p> <p>There was a discussion on aligning the Skills Board with the Business Support Sub-group given that skills, employability and training are fundamental to most businesses. A question was raised whether any other LEP board had integrated Skills with other functions and whether there were any lessons learned. RB was not aware of such and agreed to reach out to the LEP network.</p> <p>Action: RB</p> <p>RB acknowledged members' contributions at the previous meeting, which had brought issues and concerns to the fore around access to cash, access to skills and the labour market, which are the biggest challenges businesses face. He felt the LEP's approach reflects the changing landscape, and whilst ensuring skills continue to be front and centre, he would not propose a deviation from the current format which, alongside the Local Skills Planning report and six Priorities, each of which are highlighted in a specific meeting, as we look to create the skills supply chain for businesses. This proposal is based on conversations with the Chair and BSG.</p> <p>The chair recommended the Skills Board merge with the Business Support Sub-group; the group agreed this recommendation. Revised ToRs will be drafted and circulated ahead of approval by LEP Board in September.</p>
4	RB	<p>OxLEP Update</p> <p>RB thanked the Board for their ongoing engagement and support and gave the following update.</p> <p>The LEP Questionnaire journey continues following the Chancellor's Statement in March. The Government's agenda is seeking to ensure that LEPs are engaged, and that local democratic institutions are responsible for broader economic development and skills activities. As part of that, LEPs across the country are on various pathways to transition into locally democratic institutions.</p> <p>There has been no further update from that previously reported in March. National policy is still being taken forward and OxLEP are engaged in whole system discussions in Oxfordshire trying to maximize opportunities for skills, labour market interventions and seek to ensure that we collectively better manage Oxfordshire's tight labour market. Government should respond with next steps in the summer upon which the Board will be informed.</p> <p>Regarding the Strategic Economic Plan flagged at the last meeting, since the drafting of the Local Industry Strategy in 2018 Oxfordshire has been without an economic strategy, apart from the reactive COVID Economic Recovery Plan in 2020. With significant shifts in the labour market and events since 2018, it was felt timely to draft a new strategy for Oxfordshire. OxLEP, as the contract holder,</p>

have engaged SQW, who involving all local authorities and the Universities are now three quarters way through the process.

Four key themes are emerging, looking to enable progression within Oxfordshire and achieving more inclusive growth:

1. Recognising the very highly skilled labour market and very highly performing resilient economy, how do we ensure that opportunity is available for all, and that growth is more inclusive?
2. How can we ensure that we can advance net zero and sustainability in shaping future economic growth? A huge amount of activity is ongoing, focussing on this agenda. This has ramifications for skills and for business in terms of how businesses can transition to net zero. Some of the targets around retrofitting homes in Oxfordshire - 16,000 homes by 2030 - require a huge amount of labour and skills to hit that target, which Oxfordshire does not currently have. SA and RB are currently working on that agenda which links in with the Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PAZCO) priority.
3. Seeking to strengthen the foundation economy, cornerstone and breakthrough businesses - service industries of health, social care, retail and public transport
4. Accelerating the high value, excellent, globally leading innovations in Oxfordshire, and diffusing those pockets of excellence out to communities and residents, to stimulate skills, labour market and job creation opportunities.

Operational updates:

SA reported that responding to one of the LSIP's biggest recommendations, that employers are seeking flexible, accessible working courses, OxLEP are looking at delivering skills bootcamps on behalf of the Department for Education. These are free, flexible training programmes lasting for around 16 weeks, for new and existing staff and those returning to work. Currently considering the sectors and types of courses that could be delivered from 2024 until March 2025, Joanna Birrell has been contracted as a consultant, having delivered the same role for Berkshire, to help OxLEP plan to take this forward.

The Social Contract team has now secured over £1 million of Apprenticeship Levy, with a target of £1.3 million. The budget has been reprofiled to extend the programme to September 2024 and the team have accepted an achievable target of £1.7 million within that timescale. The Social Contract team were congratulated on their work in enabling the apprenticeships generated by levy pledging.

SA offered to share some social media posts with members for dissemination to encourage and engage more businesses and consume more of the levy.

Action SA

SA reported the No Limits programme delivered by SOFEA through the food larders has exceeded the initial beneficiary target of 224 people. It is currently helping 265 people, including an ex-offender who after 7 years of unemployment is now working. OxLEP are exploring further support for the programme which has a significant impact on those furthest from the labour market. SA praised the whole Skills Team got working exceptionally well with amazing outputs.

IL welcomed Cllr Susan Brown to the meeting and gave a brief outline to the structure of the meeting. He asked that any questions on the circulated papers be raised in the relevant part of the agenda during the meeting.

5	RB	<p>Priority Focus Introduction – Supporting the reform of vocational and technical skills provision – Note: All presenter slides will be circulated after the meeting.</p> <p>RB introduced the third of the deep dives looking into one of the six priorities of the Local Skills Plan report, around vocational technical skills provision which involves multiple stakeholders, e.g. schools, communities, FE, HE businesses etc. Members’ contributions were received on how we enter into conversations with HMG on changing some of the priorities within the skills landscape. (Shared with members 27.06.2023).</p> <p>When drafting the Local Skills Plan 15-18 months ago LSIPS were emerging, and there is now an LSIP for Oxfordshire - Graham Try’s presentation refers.</p> <p>Alongside the very tight labour market, very successful economy, and LMI data circulated with the papers, it is noted that Universal Credit claimants are now circa 10,000, which is a good proxy of unemployment data. Pre-pandemic that was c.6,500. One cause is the rise in economic inactivity nationally, partly due to early retirement. Government is pushing for people to return to the labour market.</p> <p>RB thanked SM for the report on the initial high-level forecast of the impact of AI on skills and jobs, with early projections that c. 30% of 390,000 roles in Oxfordshire are at risk. Sectors considered most at risk will be investigated and data further interrogated by SM and her team providing future updates.</p>
5a	GT	<p>Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) Themes – Priorities, Actions and Next Steps</p> <p>Graham Try shared his slides. The following points were discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Skills Improvement Fund is capital and revenue, with a sum of £2.5 million each for Oxfordshire and for Berkshire. • At the recent meeting with the DfE concern was raised that within the current spending review there is no revenue funding allocated to the LSIF from April next year. DFE agreed to explore funding options. • Full funding guides are not expected until the latter part of the summer. • The challenge was acknowledged to spend funding well in a short period. • Is analysis being done as part of the LSIP report on where the gaps in provision are, e.g. the lack of a building or facilities rather than the lack of someone to teach the skills. • The LSIP’s Action plan will set out where the priorities are and, through the Local Skills Improvement Fund, how those resources are to be spent. The process will be continuous over the next two years. • Business administration could be one of the primary core areas that could be significantly impacted by AI and the forecast 30% reduction in roles, so it is important not to focus too much on what could be short-term sectors. <p>No further questions were raised and IL thanked GT for his contribution.</p>
5b	NW	<p>New government Provider Access Legislation</p> <p>Nikki Wakefield shared her slides and a short film explaining new legislation and technical pathways to make students, teachers and parents aware of the support available when making choices. This legislation has come from a push from training providers wanting to get more involved with schools.</p> <p>The following points were discussed:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At a recent technical education workshop with training providers and employers the issue was raised of getting the apprenticeship application process onto UCAS. UCAS have confirmed they are building that into their provision, but it will be a while before it is on a par with university applications. The CEC will explore local options to do this give an update in due course. • Acknowledging the combination of skills and business support is a huge task for schools, referring back to pre-COVID times when the Skills team undertook all the work experience matching process for schools, it was discussed how the process for work experience could be made easier for schools and employers. • IL referred to companies who utilise AI for CV to application form conversion, and the possibility for technology to enable students make multiple apprenticeship applications. NW undertook to explore this further.
5c	EG-M	<p>Supported Internships for Young People with SEND</p> <p>Eleanor Gordon-Martin explained the difficulties that many businesses she dealt with face when recruiting, highlighting key facts about employment and people with disabilities.</p> <p>Debbie Montgomery is the Contract Delivery Manager at Oxfordshire Employment who deliver the supported internships programme that can help a young person gain paid employment.</p> <p>EG-M referred to ongoing work with young people with SEND to prepare them for seeking employment, facilitating training and inclusive jobs fairs and work with training providers and employers to offer different opportunities. Parents and carers' awareness is also raised to the different pathways available to these students who are more likely to be NEET and miss out on support.</p> <p>This approach was welcomed by members and the importance of secure funding was stressed given this is a very resource-intensive approach. DM confirmed it is DfE funded and her team is paid per intern. Intense support of the intern tends to be for the first two weeks then falls away. She confirmed 42 interns were being supported this year, with 60-70% expected to progress into paid employment.</p> <p>IL alluded to the recent increase in pupils with SEND without EHCPs, some of whom have not had the support they need and whether this would be addressed by this programme. DM acknowledged some people are coming through in later life without any work experience and undertook to look into this further.</p> <p>RB thanked both for their presentations and the deep dive into this very important sector that supports people with SEND into the labour market.</p>
5d	JA All	<p>How does Devolved Skills Policy impact provision?</p> <p>Jon Adams shared his slides and gave an overview of Skills Devolution and what opportunities and challenges might present should Oxfordshire pursue it. In the "Levelling Up" White Paper the government announced they would give devolved power to any local area that wanted it. There are two tiers of devolution areas can bid for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have a directly elected mayor with the largest range of devolved powers and some money; or • A county deal where there are fewer devolved powers but involving devolution of the Adult Education budget. This does not include control of schools, the

apprenticeship levy, nor how Higher Education is delivered. Each college in the area has around £4-5 million of Adult Education Budget, but the DfE funding policies say this has to be spent on the supply-side of the economy.

If Oxfordshire were to get devolution it would have control of two key things:

- Who is eligible for funding – so could broaden the funding to include different groups of individuals
- Control over what gets funded, e.g. something there isn't a qualification for.

Providers will face challenges in having to bid for contracts with authorities that have devolved budgets. There are huge opportunities in devolution but the unintended consequences of the administrative burden for providers and a reduction in choice for individuals is highlighted if going down the devolved route.

Questions were invited and in discussion the following points were raised:

- There may not be an appetite to do any deals with the current government.
- The importance of feeding in what we would like to see happen, given the known problems highlighted in the presentation.
- Devolution should mean we can direct skills training and provision to reflect local economy and demands for the local populations. There is a need for change, but the "postcode lottery" of provision may be unavoidable.

Solutions considered are:

- Protect online provision from devolution: the LSIPs once published are expected to highlight the same issues, i.e. difficulty in recruiting health and social care staff. It appears 16-19 year-olds prefer an on campus experience, whereas adult learners prefer good quality online provision to fit around responsibilities. Could an Open College type of provision work?
- Find a solution for the learners who live on county borders giving them choice of where they go for their provision.
- By devolution care should be taken not to redirect all the funding to the higher end skills because that is what companies demand. We must not leave people behind by not giving training in basic skills.
- The challenge of getting viable tranches of students for more specialist courses and the narrowness of eligibility criteria was discussed, suggesting tweaking them to include wider groups where necessary.
- Opportunities for local people of all ages to get back into education were discussed at a recent Future Oxford Partnership meeting with the emphasis on work needed to be done reaching out into communities.
- It was acknowledged the relatively small Adult Education Budget will not solve all the adult skills problems. Other sources of funding need to be investigated. The Lifelong Learning Guarantee is a guarantee to get a loan and people may not wish to take out a loan.
- Employer spend and investment in adult training has fallen for over 20 years with no sign of changing. The State will not solve our adult skills crisis and employers will have to do more.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The smaller, specialist training providers could complement existing provision, some synergies exist, but the multitude of different funding rules and regulations may be exacerbated as we go further down the devolution route. Maybe the DfE could consider flexibilities to make provision easier. The administration for small providers tendering for AEB is discouraging. <p>RB thanked all for the discussion. He suggested if devolution can remove the rigidity and complexity of current provision it is welcomed. Other options can be explored as can opportunities to lobby ahead of the General Election cycle.</p> <p>The consistent underspend of AEB in most areas, apart from the major metropolitan areas, suggests it is not delivering its intended purpose at a local level. In the first Skills Strategy the essence of priority one was “make the funding system easier”. Further conversations are encouraged to decide what a simplified system looks like to help meet the challenges around the tight labour market and communities who are not engaging nor seeing the benefit of economic prosperity.</p> <p>With the Social Contract programme, it was acknowledged that OxLEP are leading on behalf of the whole system providing funding for individuals that current mainstream programmes do not, e.g. travel bursaries, support for IT activities and addressing the identified needs of people trying to get back into the labour market.</p>
5e	All	Roundtable Discussion on Priority Focus Covered in the above items.
6	All	AOB and Members’ Updates - No further business. In recognition of what will be his last meeting, RB thanked the Chair for his leadership, guidance and input to the Board over the past 18 months. IL wished the Board every success as the agenda moves forward.
7	AL	Future Meeting dates: Future meetings will be held at 4:00pm to 6:00pm (virtual unless notified otherwise) on the following dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuesday 12th September 2023 Tuesday 21st November 2023

ACTIONS

Item	Details	Who	When
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RB to reach out to the LEP network for experiences of integrating skills with other functions in sub-groups. 	RB	After meeting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presenters’ slides and members’ contributions to March task to be circulated after the meeting. 	DH	Complete 26.6.23
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes of March 2023 meeting to be amended on RB’s instruction and re-circulated and filed appropriately. 	DH	Complete 19.7.23
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SA to convey thanks Mel Ringer and Sophie Laurie-Lynch for their work on the Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards. 	SA	After meeting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SA to share social media posts on the Apprenticeship Levy with Members for dissemination. 	SA	After meeting

THE MEETING CLOSED: 6.02pm