

Coast to Capital – Skills 360 Board Meeting 7

Tuesday 02 June 4.00pm – 5.30pm

This meeting was held virtually on Zoom

Meeting Minutes

Board Members:

Frances Rutter (FR) - Chair; Andy Brown (AB); Alison Addy (AA); Christina Dennis (CD); Jenny Andersson (JA); Jonathan Sharrock (JS); Kevin Delf (KD); Liane Richardson (LR); Nick Juba (NJ); Ruth Whittaker (RW); Simon Bland (SB); Simon Pringle (SP); Tim Walder (TW); Winston Mahaffy (WM)

Attendees:

Cath Goodall (CG) – BEIS; Claire Witz (CW) – Coast to Capital; Kirsten Trussell (KT) – Coast to Capital; Millie Bew (MB) – Coast to Capital

1. Introduction

a) Welcome, apologies and introductions

FR introduced the seventh meeting of the Skills 360 Board, the Skills Advisory Panel for the Coast to Capital area, and reminded attendees of the etiquette and protocols for the virtual meeting.

Apologies were noted from Robert Pye from Ethos and it was noted that Dena Read from the ESFA may join the meeting later.

Note: Dena Read did not join the meeting

FR welcomed three new board members, AA for Gatwick Airport, RW for University of Brighton and SB as the new local authority representative from Reigate and Banstead District Council.

Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

b) Minutes from last meeting and Matters Arising

FR gave a recap of the minutes from the last meeting, the minutes were confirmed as accurate.

There were two actions from the previous meeting that were noted as still in progress.

c) Conflict of interest

FR read out the new standard Conflicts of Interest statement. There were no conflicts arising from agenda items.

2. Coast to Capital update

FR introduced the Coast to Capital update agenda item.

JS gave an overview of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on drivers of the Coast to Capital economy, including Gatwick Airport, the tourism and leisure and cultural industries, and the impact on places such as Worthing and Brighton that rely on hospitality.

Some sectors, such as IT and digital, finance and insurance, and manufacturing have been less affected, and some are showing early signs of recovery, for instance the Construction and Viticulture sectors, however it is not expected that the economy will recover quickly.

JS then provided more general information, including:

- Discussions with Government about their plans for interventions for recovery, including emphasis on skills playing an important part.
- An update on the status of the Local Industrial Strategy – it is still expected that this will be produced this year, but is likely to be more of a recovery document.

JS opened the discussion for questions.

NJ asked whether there was any more detail about the expected role of skills in the Government's recovery plans. JS informed that there has been no further detail on this to date, however Government are looking to support and bring forward new sectors, therefore skills and innovation will be important.

TW informed that Arcadis have been looking at transferrable skills to re-deploy employees internally, and suggested that this would be something to consider in the work of the Skills 360 Board and wider recovery plans.

FR informed the board that she will be organising a discussion between Higher Education (HE) and Further Education (FE) partners in the area to gain a clearer picture of the effect on the sector.

JS added that COVID-19 may also provide an opportunity to describe what we want the region to be, and help sectors to come back with higher levels of skills and investment behind them. There is both a threat and an opportunity in what will happen in London and with commuting. If commuting were to decrease or stop, places in the Coast to Capital area may be an attractive alternative for both businesses and workers.

3. Review of priorities in light of COVID-19

FR introduced KT to present this agenda item.

KT introduced the paper and annexes and gave an overview of the work of the Skills 360 Board to date for the benefit of new members, including the Skills and Labour Market Study, development of initial high level Skills 360 Board priorities, and progress to date with development of the Skills Action Plan.

KT informed the board that Coast to Capital are about to commission an impact assessment to understand the effect of the pandemic on the five foundations of productivity in the area, and conduct a SWOT analysis on the recommendations that came out of the original LIS evidence base research.

KT summarised the information in the paper and annexes, including the SWOT analyses in some detail, and an overview of the proposed revised Skills 360 Board priorities and areas of focus.

KT opened the discussion for questions and comments on the priorities.

JA asked whether the research would identify which sectors and industries are more resilient and sustainable, in order to understand their skills demand to support businesses in future as part of the newly emerging economy. KT answered that part of the commissioned research will be to identify which sectors might provide opportunities in the post-COVID economy, as well as those that have been hardest hit. Information on sector strength and resilience is also coming through from business intelligence surveys that the Growth Hub have been conducting, as well as webinars delivered with partners around the economy in certain sectors including tourism and events.

AA stated that the information around the priorities and areas of focus was conveyed very concisely. FR agreed that it was more straightforward to identify the priorities and areas of focus post-COVID.

WM asked what stimulus there might be to encourage businesses to start or resume taking on apprentices, which would increase opportunities for those coming into the workforce under the 'Starting out in work' priority. KT responded that although there were no specific ideas around apprenticeships at the moment, there had been discussions with the University of Brighton and the Growers Association around the idea of a UK gap year as an example of an initiative that would encourage businesses working with graduates. The role of the LEP would be a leadership and coordination role to show businesses the opportunities while supporting them with their recovery.

SP agreed with the priority around digital skills, and suggested that the opportunity should be defined further to specify particular areas for development such as automation. SP also highlighted that the opportunity previously mentioned around commuters could be more of a short term opportunity which should be acted on quickly.

FR noted that board members were happy with the high level revised priorities.

KD added that there should be consideration around the large number of recently unemployed people - it will be important to retain adult education budget (AEB) in the area for 'top up' training of those with transferrable skills to allow them to move into new roles and sectors, and also important that employers recognise transferrable skills. KD also highlighted that for many this will be the first time they have been unemployed in a long time and they will need support to get back into employment. Local authorities, voluntary organisations and housing associations are currently working on plans for this type of support, so there is potential for collaboration with such organisations.

KT presented some high level suggestions for interventions which included:

- Investigating how existing European Social Fund (ESF) project contracts can be flexed to support those affected by COVID-19
- Investigating how AEB can be used most effectively within the area, and for those not eligible for AEB, how can affordable payment plans be explored with education and training providers
- Ensuring any provision available in response to COVID-19 is communicated out effectively through the various training provider networks.

NJ added that Greater Brighton Metropolitan College had allocated around £1 million of their AEB to support local people with COVID-19 recovery.

LR suggested a work placement programme for adults which could help people gain experience to either transfer into a new sector or industry or re-enter the workforce. KT replied that it would

be worth looking into further, however there was a question around how this would be funded which would need exploring.

SP agreed this idea should be explored, and asked whether it needed to be funded or whether there could be a centralised process for businesses to sign themselves up for a work placement. KT explained that the facilitation would need to be funded somehow. RW added that the University of Brighton are running paid internships which are funded through a variety of streams such as Santander and ESF, and that an unpaid placement is often difficult for people to commit to, so a paid placement would be preferable.

RW went on to say that she was supportive of all of the priorities and areas of focused mentioned, and that it gave a good opportunity for HE and FE providers in the area to refresh partnership working and pull resources together to help the adult workforce re-skill or get back into the workforce.

Action: KT and CW to draft an action plan to support the agreed priorities by end of June.

SB added that it's possible to become overwhelmed with the number of people unemployed and short term support, which could distract from looking at what education and training is needed to support the identified growth areas, and in the past there has been a lag between skills supply and employer skills demand.

4. Skills Advisory Panel MOU and Funding Action Plan

FR invited CW to present the item. CW gave an overview of the funding action plan, highlighting changes since the original paper was distributed. *(The updated paper has since been published on the website).*

WM asked if Coast to Capital were looking to explore the potential to pool with other LEPs. CW responded that as the priorities and actions are decided then discussions will be had between Coast to Capital and EM3 and South East LEP (SELEP) on where collaboration might be possible.

Members voted via an online poll and the MOU and funding Action Plan were approved.

5. Institute of Technology

FR invited KT to present the item. KT updated that since the last meeting Coast to Capital had had discussions with various HE and FE providers about an Institute of Technology in the area. The current proposal is for level 4 and 5 provision in engineering and digital in the area around Gatwick Airport and Crawley. The next stage is to draft statement on behalf of the Skills 360 Board setting out the need for an Institute of Technology and its area of specialism for Further and Higher Education providers to respond to. The Coast to Capital board are supportive of an Institute of Technology, linking in with the Innovation Centre that is in the pipeline for European Regional Development Funding (ERDF).

6. Enterprise Adviser Network

FR introduced the item. *This sentence has been redacted.*

CW talked through the paper and gave updates on where figures had progressed since the time of writing in March. The Benchmark 6 target is now being met at 55%, and progress against the target for Benchmark 5 has also been made. Progress has slowed significantly since the COVID-

19 pandemic but Coast to Capital continue to work closely with the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) and they are aware of the situation which is impacting nationally.

7. Close

FR asked for any other business.

TW raised that there may be opportunities to work with industry bodies where 'green shoots' might be appearing, for example working with a tourism board to promote skills needed in the recovery of the tourism sector, especially as more consumers are likely to be staying in the UK rather than going abroad on holiday. JS responded that the process is sequential, at present not many businesses are hiring however there will come a time when businesses start to re-open and there will be a clearer picture of the shape of the recovery, at that time this kind of collaboration should be considered.

AA added that for the September meeting she hopes to have a clearer picture of the recovery of Gatwick Airport.

CD stated that there would be some interesting questions around what products and services we had outsourced overseas, and what the opportunities might be to bring this business back into the area.

FR closed the meeting.

Footnote: Unconfirmed minutes – subject to approval/amendment as necessary at the next meeting of the Committee.