

Coast to Capital – Skills 360 Board Meeting 11

Tuesday 20 April 4.00pm – 6.00pm

Virtual Meeting held via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

Board Members:

Frances Rutter (FR) – Chair; Alison Addy (AA); Ana Christie (AC); Christina Dennis (CD); Jenny Andersson (JA); Jonathan Sharrock (JS); Kevin Delf (KD); Liane Richardson (LR); Louise Punter (LP); Mark Power (MP); Sian Drabble (SD); Simon Bland (SB); Simon Pringle (SP); Tim Walder (TW)

Deputies

Viki Faulkner (VF)

Officers:

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

Observers:

Lisa Mobbs (LM) - Coast to Capital

1. Introduction

a) Welcome, apologies and introductions

FR introduced the eleventh meeting of the Skills 360 Board.

Apologies were noted from Ruth Whittaker, Winston Mahaffy, Clare Mulholland and Dawn Redpath. It was noted that Mark Power would join the meeting late.

FR welcomed Sian Drabble, Ana Christie and Louise Punter to the meeting as new members.

b) Minutes from last meeting and Matters Arising

There were no outstanding actions from the last meeting.

c) Conflict of interest

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

d) Terms of reference

Board members were sent an updated Terms of Reference with the addition of the Chambers of Commerce as members. The updated Terms of Reference were approved.

2. Chair Introduction

FR introduced the Skills 360 Board and gave context around previous discussions on the contents of the recently published FE White Paper. Government have issued new guidance today on how the approach outlined in the White Paper will work. The guidance confirmed that LEPs won't be leading on these initiatives, but employer led organisations will.

FR asked board members for their thoughts. JS asked if we know the reason that LEPs have not been chosen to lead on these initiatives. FR responded that LEPs differ in effectiveness across the country and other SAPs may not be as far ahead as the Skills 360 Board, therefore may not be best placed.

LP raised a question that is unanswered in the guidance about geography and how this will be split for delivery. If split by LEP area then the Skills 360 Board has already brought together people that represent the groups that would need to collaborate to deliver initiatives in the White Paper. AC agreed, and said that it is likely the trailblazer organisations could be from any level of geography to see what works best.

SP asked what the next steps are in light of the guidance. FR confirmed that the Skills 360 Board should carry on as is and move forward with its priorities. Once the guidance is fully understood the Skills 360 Board may submit a proposal to become a trailblazer.

ACTION: MB circulate summary of Skills Accelerator guidance

3. Coast to Capital Update

FR introduced JS to present the item.

JS gave an update on Coast to Capital and its plan for the year ahead. The next Coast to Capital Board meeting (29 April) will be reviewing the following topics:

- Ministers have decided to administer funds not through LEPs e.g. levelling up fund which asks for local authorities or MPs to put forward one project to consider for funding
- Government is running a LEP review which has just started and should conclude by summer recess. This will review how LEPs add value to regional structure. LEPs may become more business focused. There may be changes to LEP boundaries.

In response to the above, the Coast to Capital Board has requested the team to identify a pipeline of 6 – 12 'regional projects' to draw Governments attention to the region. Coast to Capital have gone out to partners to gauge interest and have received over 40 responses from across the region to this call from a range of partners. The LEP will need to understand what the skills needs are to drive these projects forward, and this will likely form the basis of what we bring to future Skills 360 Board meetings. There is currently no change to the Skills 360 Board in Coast to Capital's governance structure.

Coast to Capital are part of a group called Catalyst South, a LEP led vehicle. There are two priorities that Catalyst South will be working on:

1. Future of airport towns
2. Development of London commuter market and impact of the London economy on the South East

JS is leading on the future of airport towns piece on behalf of Catalyst South.

SP asked for more detail on the London commuter market priority. JS responded that this work is being led by the GLA, COVID-19 has had an impact on commuting and there is potential opportunity to attract businesses into the area by working closely with the Mayor on this over the next five years.

4. Digital Sector Spotlight

FR introduced SP to present the item.

SP gave a presentation (available [here](#)) on developments in the Digital sector due to COVID-19 and the impact on skills gaps.

Note: Mark Power joined the meeting.

FR added that she had had conversations with SP about potential collaborations between education and digital sector.

LP mentioned that a similar issue had been raised previously and asked what the solution might be. SP responded that demand has increased rapidly, and routes to get people into Digital careers have not kept up. Potentially need to intervene at a younger age to engage young people and encourage them to follow a Digital career path. Short courses are accessible at different times of life and could be a good solution. Demand has driven wage inflation which could become unsustainable for businesses.

LM added that Computing is an optional subject at year 8 and 9, so risk losing young people at this early stage making it difficult to re-engage them at A Level/BTEC or degree level.

KD asked what kind of people are in demand for these roles, and whether they need to be fully trained or just need to have an aptitude for a digital career. SP responded that it could be either, but to recruit skilled people generally you need to recruit from further afield. It's possible to recruit people and train them.

CD asked about the complexity of the digital landscape, the presentation focused on software development but there is a wide range of digital areas that may need to be approached differently. It would be good to understand the different strands and how they might need to be addressed individually.

AC added that Digital should also feature in any LSIP bid given the challenges and key changes needed to make technical skills more responsive to business needs.

VF said that the digital sector has very blurred edges and demand has risen all around. The University of Brighton has very strong employability statistics for IT graduates - but they don't all go into the traditional digital sector jobs.

FR summarised that the sector is varied but perhaps we need to start small and work up. Software and coding, and soft skills such as project management and design are priorities.

AC suggested that there is still a need to lobby around changing the curriculum at school which is not fit for current demand. Computer science should be a core subject. SP added that computing curriculum is often uninspiring and doesn't reflect real life issues in the sector.

JA asked if there are any examples of other areas that have successfully addressed these kinds of skills gaps. SP responded that in Romania the Government waived income tax for anyone entering the software development industry.

KT asked education providers whether the funding ecosystem as it stands supports what SP is trying to achieve. FR responded that it does not, what SP is suggesting would be a non-standard qualification so there would need to be conversations about what can be done outside of the standard awarding bodies however, this concept fits well with co-design and co-delivery that Government are talking about in the White Paper.

SP added that short courses exist but costs to learners are high so people have to be very motivated to come into the industry. BTEC or qualifications are not essential for employers as long as candidates have the right experience gained through a course.

VF added that for older learners, whilst the courses do exist, it's a lot of money to spend up front in the hope that you can change your career. This can be quite limiting, especially for more mature people who are out of work and looking for a career change. The University of Brighton has seen a drop off of self funded short courses where student loans aren't available. Funding is not available to people who already have a qualification at the same level so this further limits opportunities for those wanting to change their career path. The education system is not structurally set up for people to access these short courses easily.

KT asked whether this could be an opportunity for sector based work academies. SD confirmed it is something that could be explored if there is a vacancy/employer guaranteed at the end of it.

CW informed that as part of the Catalyst South skills group – digital skills a national issue – how can we work more collaboratively across the South East, including Digital Skills Partnerships and other collaborative opportunities – CW and FR to ask at next meeting whether there is a pilot opportunity with Catalyst South.

5. Board Champions

Board champions gave updates as follows:

Simon Bland – It is not timely to look at Skills in the Tourism sector – as businesses have been restricted by lockdown for a long time skills is not the focus at the moment. There are some reports in media of strong demand in tourism but the data doesn't support it. More than half of UK residents still report they would feel uncomfortable going on holiday within the UK. We will reconsider whether it is the right time to take a Tourism sector spotlight forward towards the end of the year.

Tim and Liane – The construction sector spotlight project is moving forward and a series of events and roundtables have recently been launched (detail can be found here).

AC emphasised the importance of incorporating climate challenge skills for net zero in the roundtables. TW responded that the Home Decarbonisation Academy project has a focus on net zero skills, and this is also considered through green methods of construction. AC added that the British Chambers are piloting website to help businesses to calculate carbon footprint which will be launched globally.

Jenny Andersson – Following the publication of communication strategy Jenny will be available for a series of one to one conversations to see how she can support board members to identify opportunities to develop champion roles and objectives. We are aiming to have the first question time in June, probably by geography but given the earlier discussion around the Skills Accelerator feedback is welcome on how these should be split.

ACTION: Board Champions to e-mail Jenny if they would like a conversation about Stakeholder

Conversations in the context of their Champion role.

ACTION: Board members to feed back any views on Question Times being split by geography.

Inclusion moment – Tim walder led an inclusion moment in which he shared [this video](#).

6. Action Plan Delivery

FR introduced CW to update on various projects in the paper.

CW gave an update on project progress for the Home Decarbonisation Academy project. CW is working closely with the energy lead at Coast to Capital and New Anglia LEP. Greater South East Energy Hub are supporting with looking at housing stock and data around what could be included in the pilot, analysing data and establishing what workforce and skills will be needed to take the pilot forward. There will be discussions with local authority partners Brighton and Hove and Crawley. Upcoming meetings for the project include a joint meeting at the end of April with New Anglia LEP on progress, and a meeting of the National consortia which will bring all of pilot areas together in May.

CW went on to update on the Curriculum Planning pilot – CW has joined various planning meetings with NESOT and GBMET, providing data and supporting with planning strategy.

MB updated that the Local Skills Report was published on schedule at the end of March 2021, and the next report will be published in November.

7. Close

MB informed the Board that the recruitment for the Horticulture or Viticulture business representative vacancy had been launched.