

Coast to Capital – Skills 360 Board Meeting 5
Wednesday 20 November 4.00pm – 6.00pm
WDR Ltd, Park Lodge, 60 London Road, Horsham RH12 1AY

Meeting Minutes

Board Members:

Frances Rutter (FR) - Chair; Andy Brown (AB); Andrew Currie (Deputy) (AC); Jenny Andersson (JA); Jonathan Sharrock (JS); Kevin Delf (KD); Liane Richardson (LR); Robert Pye (RP); Simon Pringle (SP); Winston Mahaffy (WM); Zoe Wright (ZW)

Attendees:

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 fifth meeting of the Skills 360 Board, the Skills Advisory Panel for the Coast to Capital area.

Apologies were noted from Debra Humphris, Nick Juba and Tim Walder, who is a new member. It was noted that Christina Dennis was running late and may not make the meeting.

FR thanked WDR Ltd for hosting the meeting. Members and attendees introduced themselves, and FR welcomed new board members Jenny Andersson, Liane Richardson, Andy Brown and Andrew Currie (deputising for Alison Addy, interim representative for Gatwick Airport).

FR informed the board that Zoe Wright would be stepping down after this meeting.

b) Minutes from last meeting and Matters Arising

Minutes confirmed as accurate.

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) Appointment of Vice Chair

KT informed the group that two nominations for Vice Chair had been received via e-mail before the meeting, from WM and TW (who was happy to stand if no other nominations were received). FR asked if there were any further nominations, which there were not.

WM left the room.

ZW and SP seconded the nomination for WM. Board members agreed that WM would be the new Vice Chair for the Skills 360 Board.

WM re-entered the room.

e) Updated Terms of Reference

FR asked members if they were happy with the updated Terms of Reference. MB informed the group that the change was minimal and related to the structure of the Board as the proportion of private and public sector business representatives had recently changed. Board members agreed with the new Terms of Reference.

Action: MB to update Terms of Reference for Skills 360 Board on Coast to Capital website.

2. Local Industrial Strategy update

FR introduced the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) update agenda item.

JS gave an update on the recent activities relating to the LIS including:

- Potential impacts of the upcoming General Election
- Updated LIS timeline and information on the success of the consultation in October (almost 100 responses), and ongoing engagement that will continue throughout November
- Transformational project ideas and interventions emerging

JS answered questions about the Local Industrial Strategy.

WM asked how developed project ideas will need to be in order to present them to Government in January / February as per the LIS timeline – JS responded that we don't know, so the aim will be to have project ideas as far along as possible by that time. Coast to Capital will also aim to present a variety of projects, some of which will need minimal funding, or can be adapted from existing services.

FR asked what the expert panel would be reviewing. JS informed the group that they would review the evidence base Coast to Capital have put together to inform the LIS, the consultation responses, and logic chains that have been drawn from the evidence.

3. Skills 360 Board Priorities and Action Plan

FR introduced KT to present this agenda item.

KT gave an introduction to the item, explaining that the associated paper was a distilled summary of the Skills 360 Board group discussions that had previously taken place relating to key challenges identified for LIS.

KT started by introducing a discussion around the problems we are trying to fix in terms of skills and employment through the LIS and the work of the Skills 360 Board – These fell into three categories; systemic, specific to Coast to Capital, and experienced nationally.

The group discussed various topics including:

- Recruitment challenges relating to the missing 20 – 40 population in Coast to Capital, which sectors these skills gaps are most prominent in, and the challenge facing businesses to prepare for the larger skills gap projected for 2030.
- The root causes of skills gaps, for example an ageing population, and how we can think behind the scenes of the issues past focusing on skills / symptoms.
- Digital skills and the time and funding restraints of training provision that could be widening the digital skills gap further. Employers can train staff but unemployed people do not have access to the right kind of training to develop digital skills needed.

KT continued the presentation, providing ideas to stimulate discussion for transformational change through the LIS. The first was a Coast to Capital brand which showcases the area and its talent, and the second was 'Coast to Capital Business Champions' based on the existing Growth champions working with the Coast to Capital Growth Hub.

Discussion followed including:

- A business network to facilitate collaboration across sectors to share best practice and support new businesses in the area. A desire to collaborate was identified through Coast to Capital's research and anecdotal feedback, but there is a lack of existing infrastructure to support this at present
- Existing networks and models e.g. BIDs, EAN and the Escalator Programme that could be built on, adapted or developed
- More effective use of the apprenticeship levy across the area, what this could look like, and how this could be implemented to work for levy payers and their supply chains.

Action: WM to discuss innovative ways to maximise the use of the Apprenticeship Levy in the area with colleagues at Thales and feed back

- A strong vision and unique selling point for Coast to Capital, due to the natural capital and Gatwick Airport at the centre of the LEP, could focus on climate change. This was linked to development in other areas including technology, digital skills, flexible working and wellbeing.
- Provision of training and retraining for older workers including the potential to use the apprenticeship levy to sponsor older workers to participate in training courses.
- The importance of highlighting innovative work of local employers that could attract residents to work in the area, raising the profile of the area and creating a brand that identifies the excellences demonstrated in different areas of the LEP e.g. digital excellence in Crawley/Gatwick.
- The current education provision and the difficulty and time challenge involved in creating new qualifications, especially for college students who would lean towards a more established qualification. It was suggested that these opportunities could be offered to older workers looking to change career.

The next idea KT presented was roving learning and employment contracts, where employees would rotate through different roles in an organisation, and may include a period of sabbatical leave. This would allow both employer and employee to get to know each other and the employer to identify future career potential for the individual within the business.

There was a discussion around similar existing schemes, the importance of flexible working the

younger generation, and how programmes like this could attract young people to stay and work in the area, especially allowing the opportunity for extended travel.

The third idea KT presented was around a 'Gatwick Academy' – This idea was discussed, and AC suggested that an academy would not need to be a physical building, but could be online. AC confirmed that this idea would fit with Gatwick's master plan. LR commented that Thakeham Homes provide an uncredited programme similar to an apprenticeship for all of their site managers to ensure they have the right skills for the job, and suggested a similar approach could be used for the Gatwick Academy. SP commented that although his organisation is smaller they also have an academy type programme to ensure people have the right skills quickly for the roles, as there is a challenge around recruiting people with the right skills.

A discussion followed around population increase in the areas surrounding Gatwick as a result of housing development, and a need to attract these people to work in the area rather than commute to London. JA suggested employers could offer a payment at the end of a contract of employment that could be used as a deposit on a house in the area, to address the housing affordability issue.

JS presented the last idea in the section of the presentation which was a potential Jobs Brokerage Agency. Discussions followed including:

- The role the job brokerage agency would play in filling the skills gap many employers are currently facing
- The importance of creating a feeling of opportunity for people so that they are willing to engage with a jobs brokerage agency, especially unemployed people
- Flexibility required in the labour market to meet people's needs at all ages and career stages to ensure they remain in employment in the area
- Challenging decisions and selection processes to ensure employers are considering transferrable skills when recruiting for certain positions

Action: MB to distribute slide pack used for this item to Skills 360 Board members.

4. Coast to Capital Skills Programmes

FR Introduced the Coast to Capital Skills Programmes agenda item and invited CW to talk through the two papers.

CW gave an overview of the papers which gave information on the Enterprise Adviser Network and the European Social Fund programmes operating in Coast to Capital.

5. Any other business

There were no further items raised for discussion

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