

**Coast to Capital – Skills 360 Board Meeting 13**

Thursday 30 September 2021 - 4.00pm – 6.00pm

Virtual Meeting held via Zoom

**Meeting Minutes**

**Board Members:**

Winston Mahaffy (WM) – Chair; Alison Addy (AA); Ana Christie (AC); Christina Dennis (CD); Kevin Delf (KD); Louise Punter (LP); Mark Power (MP); Robert Pye (RP); Ruth Whittaker (RW); Simon Bland (SB); Simon Conway (SC); Simon Pringle (SP); Tim Walder (TW);

**Officers:**

Millie Bew (MB) – Coast to Capital; Lisa Mobbs (LM) - Coast to Capital

**Guests:**

Claire Witz (CW) – Sussex Chamber of Commerce; Marsha Robert (MR) – Coast to Capital

**1. Introduction**

**a) Welcome, apologies and introductions**

WM introduced the thirteenth meeting of the Skills 360 Board. WM announced that due to several members and officers being unwell, the Enterprise Adviser Network and Careers Hub spotlight item would be carried over to a future meeting.

Apologies were noted from Frances Rutter, Jonathan Sharrock, Dawn Redpath, Steve Benwell and Kirsten Trussell. It was noted that Ana Christie and Louise Punter would leave the meeting at 5:00pm.

WM welcomed Simon Conway to the meeting as a new member.

Note: Liane Richardson and Nick Hibberd did not join the meeting.

**b) Minutes from last meeting and Matters Arising**

There were no outstanding actions or matters arising from the last meeting.

**c) Conflict of interest**

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

**d) Member re-election**

WM advised that several of the original Skills 360 Board members are coming to the end of their tenure in January 2022.

WM confirmed that this would be the last meeting for RP, CD and himself, but that they would remain members until January 2022. He thanked RP and CD for their contribution to the Board in the last three years. He advised that a replacement Vice Chair would be elected at the January 2022 meeting.

WM advised that SP would like to be re-elected for a further three years. SP left the meeting whilst the other Board members were asked whether there were any objections to his re-election. There were no objections. SP re-joined the meeting and WM confirmed that he had been re-elected for a further three year tenure.

## **2. Inclusion Moment**

WM introduced TW to lead an inclusion moment, where he shared [this video](#).

## **3. Coast to Capital Economy**

WM introduced MR and MB to present the item.

MR gave a brief overview of UK GDP and house prices, then unemployment in Coast to Capital and insolvencies. MB demonstrated the [data dashboard](#) highlighting:

- Claimant data: highlighting that Crawley and Brighton and Hove have consistently had higher numbers of claimants than the average across England.
- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: showing that uptake in Crawley, Brighton and Hove and Horsham is higher than the national average.
- Job postings: showing that Brighton and Hove, Crawley and Horsham have the highest number of job postings in the region.

CW asked whether the dashboard enabled deeper analysis into job postings, e.g. sectors and roles. MR responded that currently that functionality does not exist, however this is being considered for future updates.

There was a discussion around the economy and the challenges businesses are reporting at the moment, including:

- There are 1.7 million people still on furlough and 1 million job vacancies. Employers are struggling to fill vacancies and employees are negotiating for the most attractive package. (AC)
- A record number of vacancies and jobseekers but the candidates don't fit the vacancies, for example in the digital industry, resulting in significant wage increases to find people with the right skills for in demand jobs, adding further financial strain on employers. (SP)
- Businesses are seeing added operating costs such as VAT and energy price increases. (AC)
- In the construction industry, challenges to fill certain roles, such as bricklayers, will start to impact house building which will, in turn, have a knock on effect on people trying to find homes. This could also have an effect to several other industries. (TW)

## **4. Board Member Updates**

Board members gave updates on different sectors or topics as follows:

Ana Christie – Local Skills Improvement Plan

Sussex Chamber of Commerce has been selected as one of the 8 trailblazers for a Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). A complimentary Strategic Development Fund (SDF) submitted by the FE Colleges in Sussex was also successful, with a focus on green skills for the future.

There has been a delay in initial funding and formal guidance, but the plan must still be developed by the end of February. Key sectors originally identified are –

- Engineering and Manufacturing
- Construction
- Digital
- Visitor and Cultural Industries
- Land-based
- Health and Care

The project will also consider other sectors that come out through consultation with stakeholders and employers. Claire Witz will be leading this project as Skills and Project Director for the Chamber. Nesta will be appointed shortly to develop a more detailed version of the open jobs observatory they are developing with DfE.

Workshops, surveys and polls will be used to engage stakeholders and employers. Other business representative organisations will be engaged to support with data gathering and liaising with employers. A data analyst will be commissioned to collate all research which will then be presented at the workshops for discussion to understand real challenges from employers, and provision needed to address those challenges. The first stakeholder meeting will be held on Wednesday 6 October.

**ACTION:** MB to share invite to stakeholder session with Skills 360 Board members, and share statement of commitment between the Chambers and LEPs.

#### Tim Walder – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

TW updated on the progress of the equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) work to understand how we operate as a board, how we work together and engage with each other, and how we ensure that this is inclusive. Next steps are to bring a proposal to the board for ED&I training at the beginning of 2022, to be presented at the Board meeting in January. MB added that the upcoming recruitment would be undertaken using the inclusive recruitment process that had been developed last year, and this would be an opportunity to further improve and refine the process.

Note: AA left the meeting

#### Simon Bland – Tourism

SB noted that the tourism spotlight work would be more appropriate once the LSIP is published as it is one of the key sectors mentioned, so we should avoid duplication. Businesses in the tourism sector are struggling to recruit staff. Visitor numbers are up but not to pre covid levels, and many operations are struggling to meet demand as they don't have the staff levels to operate effectively. Confidence is still reportedly low in the sector.

Note: AC, LP and CD left the meeting

#### Mark Power - Health and Care

MP reported that Sussex Health and Care Partnership embraces all types of healthcare providers across the county – not just NHS, but also social care, e.g. main hospital providers, commissioning services, social care provision and care homes. The Partnership has a large workforce (well over 100,000). The current workforce is getting tired, with large numbers of staff experiencing traumatic

events during the pandemic, but nevertheless morale is holding up and data shows no spike in turnover (holding steady at 5% which is similar to national average in NHS).

The number of vacancies across staff groups is the same as pre-Covid. At present the workforce is stretched as they are trying to restore services that were put on hold pre-pandemic and there is a huge backlog of elective diagnostic cases to get through, as well as continuation of the vaccine programme, and the beginning of the increased seasonal demand associated with the winter months.

In Sussex there are concerns around an ageing workforce. Clinicians such as nurses are able to retire aged 55 and it is anticipated that there will be a large uptake in resignations through retirement over the next year. In preparation, the Partnership is increasing recruitment activity, focusing on recognising its role as an anchor institution in the region, as well as through its social corporate responsibility to attract young people into the sector, working with local community services and education providers to promote careers in health and care.

Sussex Health and Care Partnership are also utilising Government's Kickstart programme for 16-24 year olds, and have made a commitment in Sussex to create 500 placements for young people – 200 have been filled so far. These placements are offered as a package in Sussex including additional support such as mentoring schemes, and follow on opportunities to start an NHS sponsored apprenticeship.

#### Tim Walder – Construction

The construction sector spotlight research work is ongoing, now that we have a picture of the sector in the area we are looking at the more detailed breakdown of skills and roles in the sector, and how we can model and forecast for upcoming local capital projects. Future employers have been engaged in discussion with the consultants including Gatwick, Network Rail and Highways England, and there is a focus on future of regeneration coming through.

The spotlight work will also include collaborating with the EAN and Careers Hub on activities to engage young people into construction careers.

The construction sector is seeing a lot of skills lost through Brexit, and a lot of money being made by individual and small companies on domestic building, so the industry is under a lot of strain and there is a great need to get trained skilled people into the labour market. Price hikes on materials, particularly steel, are also proving challenging for businesses.

#### Ruth Whittaker - Higher Education

As the higher education representative, RW has been working on an approach to ensure universities in the Coast to Capital area work together and feed into the Skills 360 Board, as well as coordination of different forums and networks. There will be a meeting with the University of Sussex, University of Chichester and University of Creative Arts to agree an approach going forwards, and RW will update at the next meeting in January.

The University of Brighton are involved in a bid coordinated by Sussex Learning Network to the [HE short course trial challenge competition](#), in partnership with the University of Chichester, Chichester College Group, East Sussex College and East Surrey College. The short courses that will be on offer are two in Healthcare and two on the Green Economy.

Research England have recently confirmed an increase in [Higher Education Innovation Funding](#) (HEIF) for knowledge exchange which is a key opportunity to engage with the work linked with Skills 360 Board and LSIP.

The IoT phase 2 bid outcome has been delayed with no new timeline provided yet from

Government.

## **5. Enterprise Adviser Network and Careers Hub Spotlight**

Note: This item was not discussed, and will be carried over to the meeting in January 2022.

## **6. AOB**

SC introduced himself to the Board and gave an overview of the Horticulture sector, Vitacress Herbs and the types of roles and vacancies within the company.

KD informed the Board that Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership are involved in two skills hubs in Leatherhead and Epsom – Leatherhead are getting referrals from DWP for people looking for work (around 40-50 a month) – which is likely to increase when furlough ends. KD will aim to bring any anecdotal findings from job matching attempts through the skills hubs to the next meeting.

MB asked if there were any questions on the Action Plan Delivery paper that was circulated with the agenda. There were no questions or points raised on the paper.

MB confirmed the next meeting would be on 12 January 2022, and that meeting dates for the remainder of 2022 had been confirmed and circulated via e-mail.