

Employment and Skills Group

Minutes

Friday, 06 September 2013 at 10:00

PRESENT:

Jackie Tinkler (Chair) & Anne Rawstron (JobCentre Plus), Debbi Christophers, Hannah Clay & Nigel Graves (BITC), Sue Cook (ENSFC), Eve Cronin (NCC), Nova Fairbank (Norfolk Chamber of Commerce), Julia Howard (GY College), Ben Sampson (Voluntary Norfolk), Sharif Sharif (Ingeus), Councillor Trevor Wainright, Paul Cheeseman, Miranda Lee, Ellie Marcham, Toby Matthews, Peter Wright & Sarah Davis (GYBC).

1 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Attendees were welcomed to the meeting and apologies for absence were received from Keith Loveys (Nexus), Peter Skoyles (All Trades Training), Jane Ratcliffe and Tracey Jones (GYBC).

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Group was reminded that the last meeting had actually been in June 2013 rather than December 2012 as detailed on the agenda, unfortunately, minutes of that meeting were not available to confirm.

3 Presentation from Great Yarmouth College - Campus Upgrade (Julia Howard)

Julia Howard gave a presentation detailing the alterations taking place at Great Yarmouth College to upgrade the campus facilities as part of a £6m+ project. It was noted that the building works would commence imminently and be completed in phases but had to be finished by the new term in September 2015.

The Group was informed that discussions were also taking place with Norfolk County Council regarding the former Edward Worlledge School site.

4 Community Budgets - Review and Next Steps (Ellie Marcham and Jackie Tinkler)

The Group was informed that most of the Community Budgets Programme had been completed with 585 people participating in 6 projects and 144 finding employment, 93 employed and 54 on training schemes. Details of each project were given and it was noted in particular that Coastal Communities Funding had been secured to continue the Target Opportunities Project, the GYROS Job Club had obtained additional funding and the GY Bike Project was also likely to continue.

The Chairman indicated that she had nominated the programme for a Social Justice Award which was sponsored by the Big Lottery Fund.

Paul Cheeseman reported that CLG had contacted him to discuss the success of Great Yarmouth's approach to Community Budgeting. It was hoped that Great Yarmouth would participate in the planned Our Place programme and that this would enable an expansion across other parts of the Borough. To support this, Jackie Tinkler offered the continued support of JCP and was currently exploring options to secure future funding.

The Chairman stated that JCP would shortly be looking at unemployment rates in seaside towns across the country and it was hoped that if towns buddied up to share good practice, they could also bid for ESF funding. The point was made that a Coastal Communities Alliance already existed and ONS had completed some analysis on seaside/coastal towns. Trevor Wainwright indicated that he was arranging to meet with all five Council Leaders identified in the Turning the Tide report to see what could be done to overturn the negative press each area had received. It was noted that Great Yarmouth was the only coastal town that BITC was involved in and that was due to the successful partnership working in the Borough.

5 Local Support Services Framework (Jackie Tinkler and Anne Rawstron)

The Group received the latest information with regard to a Local Support Services Framework which had been published in February 2013 in the lead up to the introduction of Universal Credit (UC). It was noted that JCP and Borough Council Officers were working together on a number of issues eg budgets for families and access to IT etc. It was agreed that Officers needed to start preparing for the roll out of UC, mapping services that were available and identifying gaps. The Group was reminded that UC was supposed to be in place by 2017 and an information session would be held at a future meeting once detailed information on how the new system worked was received.

Concern was expressed that local advice service providers were already stretched and would probably need additional funding as it was likely the introduction of UC would impact on them heavily. Whilst there was no funding available at present, it was possible that there might be some in the second phase after the analysis on the pilot areas. A suggestion was made that funding from the Flexible Support Fund could be used. It was also suggested that a small group of partners should be formed nearer the time to try to implement UC as easily as possible.

6 Coastal Communities Fund Projects (Paul Cheeseman and Eve Cronin)

The Group received an update on Coastal Communities Funded projects. It was noted in particular that the College was working with the County Council, other training providers and EEEGR on raising students' awareness of opportunities in the energy sector. The project would be finished by May 2015. The second project, which was led by Great Yarmouth Borough Council, included three elements namely Target Opportunities; EnterpriseGY including business start-up support; and specialist support for social enterprises.

The Chairman explained that JobCentre Plus now dealt with clients in a more challenging way and provided targeted support to find them work. A discussion ensued on how few clients in Great Yarmouth were sanctioned and it was agreed that there was a need to look at what partners could do for those people who genuinely found it difficult to find work.

Sharif Sharif reported on the Work Programme performance which he felt was strong in terms of the number of clients getting into work due to support being tailored to individuals. He added that, at the end of the two years, if they were still unemployed, the transition to the new JCP programme was less of a change because both programmes were now much more similar. He also added that staff were working closely with other partners to provide a more holistic support package for clients eg drug and alcohol support.

Concern was expressed that statistical data on the Work Programme was difficult to obtain which meant that it was hard to assess performance at a local level.

There was also some concern noted about the number of long term unemployed people exiting the Work Programme with no sustainable job outcome. Reflecting this, the Target Opportunities project reported that this cohort now represented almost 50% of their client base, although the project was still on course to achieve their job conversion rate of between 20-25%.

7 Economic Development Strategy (Toby Matthews)

The Group received an update in relation to the above and it was noted that delivery partners had been invited to submit updates for the Strategy which detailed the overarching aims for the Borough eg the A12-A143 link road.

With regard to enterpriseGY, it was noted that Coastal Communities Funding was being used to employ business advisors to support start-ups; events were being organised for the global Enterprise Week in November and Officers were attending job fairs and job clubs.

8 County, New Anglia LEP and National Updates

Eve Cronin gave updates on the above and it was noted in particular that the Greater Norwich City Deal which included Growth Hubs was likely to impact on Great Yarmouth due to the expected activity in the Enterprise Zone. Reference was made to the LEP Skills Strategy which would identify LEP wide priorities and also to an opportunity to bid for EU funding for local projects.

Peter Wright reported that the Council had been consulted on the "Strategic Economic Plan" and the LEP would look at this ready for submission by Christmas. Comments on the European Plan were needed by the end of the month for submission in January and the Council had already submitted their comments. The proposals paralleled CCF type activities that required match or existing funding for projects and the single Local Growth Fund could provide funding but would not be available for another year. He added that Waveney had indicated they might be interested in a joint approach on the European funding.

A discussion ensued on the issue of whether the LEP would opt in or out of top slicing some of their budget to pay national agencies to provide management arrangements. It was noted that the draft currently stated they would opt in and it was suggested, therefore, that if partners felt strongly to the contrary they should make representations to the LEP ASAP. The point was made that Great Yarmouth already had a strong infrastructure which could be used to provide more locally responsive management arrangements.

The Group was informed that the LEP was holding a Skills Summit on 23 September at Norwich City FC. It was also noted that for the first time industrial strategies for oil and gas and offshore wind had been produced. The Chairman indicated that the JCP was funding a post, employed by EEEGR but seconded to JCP to work with employers and partners in the oil and gas industries with the aim of bringing vacancies through the JobCentre.

9 Other Employment Related Support News

It was reported that the Chamber of Commerce was looking to meet with employers during November to January and partners were asked to contact Nova Fairbank with any issues they wished to raise with them.

Reference was also made to an Apprenticeship Brokerage Service and it was noted that they currently had 32 vacancies and had 10 new starters. The Chairman stated that the JCP had a team specifically for 18-24 year olds and she suggested that there should be liaison between the two services.

The Chairman also reported that the JCP had received private sector funding for post Work Programme projects within Great Yarmouth but no details were available at present. The Group noted that there was a provider event on Monday at 11am in Lowestoft. Details were reported of a Skills Assessment and Brokerage Scheme for new claimants that provided clients with a day and a half assessment, reference to training providers, individual action planning and CV writing. Partners were also asked to let JCP know if they could provide any Work Experience opportunities for up to 8 weeks. The point was made that BITC also provided Work Placements and therefore there was an opportunity to streamline the process.

Reference was made to the fact that 17 clients that had come through the Rack Training programme which upskilled clients in the marine sector had found work. It was noted that another 12 places had been offered through local companies. This was another Coastal Communities Funded scheme.

10 Any other business

(a) Assisted Area Status

It was hoped that Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft would secure aid in the new round for 2014. A decision would be made early in the new year.

(b) Offshore Europe Exhibition

The Economic Development Officer reported that oil and gas stalls at the above Exhibition had been very busy. The wind industry stands had reported positively despite the fact that the main contracts were still a year off with the planning decision for Offshore 1 being made by Xmas, a financial decision being made in the spring and contracts issued after that so they don't know yet locally who will get the contracts.

(c) EPIS Centre

It was noted that this was still being discussed and would mainly be aimed at employee training but the main issue was acquiring the funding.

The meeting ended at: 11:55