

# Employment and Skills Group

## Minutes

Wednesday, 19 February 2014 at 14:00

### PRESENT:

Jackie Tinkler (Chair & DWP), Paul Cheeseman (Great Yarmouth Borough Council), Julia Howard (Great Yarmouth College), Toby Matthews (Great Yarmouth Borough Council), Jeanna (All Trades Training), Ben Sampson (Voluntary Norfolk), Jo Howes (DIAL), Kasia Beblot (East Norfolk Sixth Form), Sue Cook (East Norfolk Sixth Form)

Apologies for absence were received from Nova Fairbank (Norfolk Chamber of Commerce), Cllr Trevor Wainwright (Great Yarmouth Borough Council), Peter Wright (Great Yarmouth Borough Council), Hannah Clay (Business in the Community, Anne Rawstron (DWP) and Sharif Sharif (Ingeus).

### 1 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 04 December 2013 were confirmed.

It was noted that the minutes contained a number of action points for Eve Cronin. Paul Cheeseman said that he would contact Eve for an update on these.

### 2 EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMMES

Attendees gave an update on a range of employability programmes.

Great Yarmouth College (Julia Howard):

- GYC are currently delivering a free training programme for small to medium sized employers as part of a £2.8m partnership project shared amongst six colleges. The project can provide for training needs analysis and bespoke training packages. The project is being supported by New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, and whilst focussed on key growth sectors, it is accessible to any businesses, including voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations. **Action: Ben Sampson to help promote the**

**project amongst local VCSE employers.**

- As part of National Apprenticeship Week (3rd – 7th March), the college are providing a range of events including an open evening beginning at 4.30pm on Tuesday 4th March. Other events include outreaching to schools and community venues and a breakfast event with employers.
- Both GYC and East Norfolk Sixth Form will be supporting attendance at the forthcoming Jobs Fair, which is being held at Great Yarmouth Racecourse on the 7th March, 10.00-16.00.

Local and Regional Strategies (Toby Matthews):

**Business Growth Programme**

£3.9m of business support across Suffolk and Norfolk.

The activity forms the enterprise element of the Ipswich and Norwich City Deals as was originally going to operate in just Ipswich and Norwich. However, we have worked to persuade civil servants that support should be accessible across Norfolk and Suffolk.

The programme is made up of five areas of activity: -

**Small Grant Scheme**

This is a £1.4m of grants to create jobs in SMEs and sits beneath the Growing Business Fund.

SMEs are eligible for grants between £5,000 and £25,000 at 20% of costs, and in return we ask that they create one full time job for every £10,000 of grant given. The minimum number of jobs created is 1, even if a £5,000 grant is given to the business.

The scheme is open to all types of SMEs (apart from primary agriculture) and has a simple application process, with support for applicants.

The final date for applications is March 2015, as all grants have to be claimed by June 2015.

**Business Start-ups**

£750,000 of funding to increase start-up levels across Norfolk and Suffolk. In-depth start-up support will be provided by provided by MENTA and NWES, including one to one support, advice and training. The programme will link to other business support activity to ensure that those taking part receive the support they require once they have started their business.

**Innovation Voucher Scheme**

£750,000 of support to increase levels of innovation through the provision of specialist support from UCS, UEA and NUA.

The scheme will provide support valued between £5,000 and £20,000, with businesses having to provide match at a 1:1 ratio.

Support will include a wide range of activity, including access to mentors, internships, consultancy, and use of facilities.

### **Innovation Readiness Programme**

Two specialist innovation advisors will be employed to provide advice and guidance to SMEs to sign post them local, national and EU innovation support and schemes, with an aim to double take up of innovation support across Norfolk and Suffolk.

### **Growth Hub**

The Growth Hub will for the umbrella under which all future businesses support will be delivered across Norfolk and Suffolk. The idea of the hub is to provide a framework under which a wide range of public and private business support activity can be easily accessed by business.

By taking a 'No Wrong Door' approach to business support; businesses will be able to access a wide range of business support, whoever they contact, as the Growth Hub will make cross referral between partners easy.

To ensure that businesses have good access to support, wherever they are located, nine Growth Coordinators (including the two innovation advisors) will be based across the whole of Norfolk and Suffolk, with hotdesks located geographically around both counties. The sole aim of the coordinators is to signpost businesses to the wide range of business support, so they receive the support they need quickly and effectively.

There will also be a new Growth Hub website, build on the [www.bizinfoportal.co.uk](http://www.bizinfoportal.co.uk), where businesses can register and gain access to dedicated business support and guidance tailored to their business needs. There will also be access to a national business support telephone line (0300 456 3565), which will link back to the national and local support found on the website.

The Growth Hub will be delivered on behalf of New Anglia by Suffolk Chamber, with a new CMS system on track businesses through the different stages of business support.

Over the next year, the Growth Hub will engage with 3,000 businesses across the LEP area, with Growth Hub activity being rolled out from February and April 2014.

All Trades Training (Jeanna)

Jeanna explained that ATT's pre-employment support offer is increasingly focussing on apprenticeships. They are also offering fully funded 1 day

courses in health and safety and food hygiene.

The group then held a discussion on the current challenges relating to apprenticeships for employers and providers, and how these could be overcome.

Linked to this, the group agreed to set up a working party to take forward a more joined-up approach to help connect young people and their communities to future employment growth and in particular, the growth opportunities presented by the Enterprise Zone, Offshore Energy, and the Greater Norwich City Deal. **Action: Paul to coordinate.**

Target Opportunities and the Coastal Communities Fund (Ben Sampson)

Ben updated the group on the employability element of the Coastal Communities Fund project, which is on course to achieve 150 job outcomes per annum. The job conversion rate of 20-25% appears to be holding up, despite the increase in longer term unemployed people who are now accessing the programme after they have left the Work Programme. This conversion rate was seen as positive news.

Ben also reported that they have seen at least a 100% increase in presentations made by people who are living with their families. A link to welfare reform measures was drawn.

Benefit and Debt Advice (Jo Howes)

Jo provided a summary of the current work being undertaken by DIAL, and in particular, on the advice and benefit work they are providing to people who are being affected by welfare reform measures, including changes to housing benefit. **Action: Jackie to meet with Jo to discuss Job Centre rules on sanctioning, along with other related measures.**

### **3 COMMUNITY BUDGETING**

Paul and Jackie provided an overview of plans to continue with a jobs and enterprise-focussed community budget in South and Central Yarmouth, and to extend this work across other urban areas. Paul explained that to assist this, the council and partners were currently making an application to participate in the government's Our Place programme, which would help to take this work forward by providing some dedicated development support.

### **4 COMMUNITY-LED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT**

Paul gave an overview of this approach, which has been endorsed within the New Anglia LEP's EU Strategic Investment Fund Strategy. As it stands, this provides an opportunity for Great Yarmouth to access up to £1m of funding, to support community-led projects to achieve skills, jobs and business start-up outcomes between 2014 and 2020. Paul explained that Great Yarmouth would

be looking to develop a Local Action Group to help steer this work, comprising representatives from the existing resident-led neighbourhood boards and other relevant partnerships, including the Employment and Skills Group. **Action: Paul to provide the group with regular updates.**

## **5 YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT**

This agenda item was largely covered under item 3. In addition, Jackie reminded the group of the young person's wage incentive, which allows employers to receive up to £2275 if they recruit a Job Centre customer between the age of 18-24 years.

Jackie also referred to a recent Jobs Fair, which was held at the Job Centre on a Saturday and secured attendance from approximately 1800 claimants and many employers. This was so successful, that the Job Centre is now considering holding these on a more regular basis.

## **6 JOB CENTRE PLUS CHANGES** **- ELECTRONIC SIGNING** **- CLAIMANT COMMITMENT** **- WAGE INCENTIVE**

Jackie gave an overview of recent and forthcoming changes including:

- The introduction of electronic systems to support claimants to sign on more efficiently.
- The Claimant Commitment, which will redefine the way advisors interact with claimants, providing for a relationship that encourages claimants to take more responsibility for their job searching.
- This new way of working will be introduced at the end of March 2014, and will result in all claimants having an up-to-date work plan. **Action: Jackie to set up a session between Job Centre Advisors and other employability projects, to explain these changes in more detail.**
- There are also changes ahead for people who have exited the Work Programme but who remain unemployed. These changes will result in more tailored support, and include daily attendance for around one third of people.

## **7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Toby reminded the group of the economic development newsletter, and how this could be used to promote areas like apprenticeship opportunities. The next edition is expected to be published during June and July.

The meeting ended at: 16:00