

Employment and Skills Group

Minutes

Wednesday, 04 December 2013 at 10:00

PRESENT:

Jackie Tinkler (Chair) & Tim Inger (JobCentre Plus), Kasia Beblot (East Norfolk Sixth Form College), Hannah Clay (BITC), Eve Cronin (NCC), Nova Fairbank (Norfolk Chamber of Commerce), Julia Howard (GY College), Ben Sampson (Voluntary Norfolk), Sharif Sharif (Ingeus), Councillor Trevor Wainwright, Toby Matthews, Holly Notcutt and Sarah Davis (GYBC).

1 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Attendees were welcomed to the meeting and apologies for absence were received from Penny Wycherley (GY College), Sue Cook (ENSFC), Anne Rawstron (JobCentre Plus) and Peter Wright (GYBC).

2 Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 6 September 2013 were confirmed.

With regard to item 4, the Chairman reported that the Community Budgets Programme had come third out of 170 applications for a Social Justice Award.

3 New Anglia LEP Skills Strategy

The Chairman reported that the Energy Sub-Group had recently met; interim dates were currently being discussed with EEEGR; and recruitment for a Skills Advisor to work from Leiston to Cromer was starting and they would hopefully be appointed by mid January.

It was noted that the LEP had launched a Skills Manifesto last week which was a generic high level document that identified priorities for Norfolk and Suffolk. Eve Cronin reported on the four key themes of the document. She added that the Strategy had been drafted using the manifesto as a template and would link all the sectors together. The Skills Plan would be considered by the LEP Board at the end of December and the Norfolk and Suffolk Growth Board was meeting to identify the priorities. She agreed to circulate a draft by 19 December 2013.

A discussion ensued on the need for school and college students to receive more career advice and it was agreed that partners needed to be creative about ways to provide local job information. It was noted that GYC was looking at a Career Software Programme and they held skills shows, whilst the ENSFC was introducing an Engineering Course. The point was also made that the new Energy Sector Seconded would visit schools as part of their remit. Reference was made to Lowestoft's Tomorrow People Charity that helped people into work and it was hoped that they would be able to do some similar work in Great Yarmouth. A suggestion was made that consideration could be given to using the Partnership Budget to employ someone to visit schools, however, concern was expressed that until careers was part of the curriculum it was difficult for schools to devote any time to the subject. Eve Cronin reported that it was likely that an Energy Sector Local Skills event would take place in Great Yarmouth, tenders would go out shortly.

Reference was made to the fact that jobs were also available in other sectors and reference was made to the fact that GP's had a large number of vacancies that they could not recruit to locally. The point was made that there could be an opportunity through the Community Led Development Funding Project around business growth and investing in people. Clarification was sought as to whether there was a separate group looking at the ESF funding and it was agreed that Eve Cronin would ask if anyone from this Group could get involved.

4 EU Structural and Investment Fund Strategy

It was reported that a bid for European funding was currently being drawn up with Waveney District and Norwich City Councils based on a Community Led Local Development model.

RESOLVED:

That an update on the bid be given to the next meeting.

5 Great Yarmouth College - Traineeships

Julia Howard reported on a Government initiative to get young people aged 16-24 into working situations that lasted about six months eg work placements with training support rather than formal paid apprenticeships. She indicated that GYC was the only college in the area that could offer them as colleges had to have an OFSTED "good" or "outstanding" rating. The aim was to encourage a number of employers to work with the College to ensure that it was an employer-led opportunity, targeting the engineering, tourism and social care sectors and also possibly professional areas eg solicitors and accountants. She clarified that participants were classed as college students and not employed by the employer but could move to a formal apprenticeship once the placement was ended.

The Chairman indicated that there might be the possibility of putting together a package with the JCP for participants and it could be ideal for people with learning difficulties as it was shorter than a formal apprenticeship. It was also pointed out that the Chamber had an Apprenticeship Brokerage Service and it could link in with Ingeus' work.

6 Project and Funding Updates

(a) Job Clubs

The Group was informed that there were six job clubs held locally with many very successful at getting clients into work. Ben Sampson agreed to email statistics on the number of clients employed to Councillor Wainwright.

(b) Talent Match

The Chairman reported on the above and it was noted that predominantly this was aimed at people who had complex needs.

Eve Cronin suggested that a pilot Talent Match Academy for the energy/engineering sector be created in Great Yarmouth as part of the skills element of the City Deal project and she agreed to set up a working group to produce a bid.

(c) Target Opportunities

It was reported that this CCF Programme was now coming towards the end of the third quarter and each partner had over-achieved on their targets. With regard to Target Opportunities, 441 people had engaged with 80 obtaining sustained employment and 58 volunteers. It was agreed that details of outputs would be circulated.

(d) enterpriseGY

It was reported that there had been 63 business start ups since 1 April 2013 with 249 business advisory sessions being held. A new software package had been purchased that would report on the number of new business bank accounts that had been started and Officers were looking at ways in which to improve data capture. The recent Enterprise Week had been held with a number of events proving very successful. The eGY Board was also looking at ways to fund the programme post 2015.

The Chairman reported that the JCP was thinking of promoting self-employment aimed in particular at those that worked seasonally during a fortnight in February and it was agreed that the eGY Employment Advisors would contact her to see if there was an opportunity to work together.

(e) Social Enterprise

Hannah Clay reported on a project to offer support for people interested in starting Social Enterprise businesses. It was noted that the target was to support 12 SE's and BITC already had 13 referrals, with 8 people actively engaged. She added that she also wanted to recruit business mentors to match them with.

The Chairman indicated that one of the DWP directors would be visiting shortly and suggested that a programme be put together to showcase what was happening in Great Yarmouth.

7 Economic Development Strategy

It was noted that the unemployment statistics had shown a reduction in October which

was very encouraging.

The Group was reminded that the Economic Development Strategy was an overarching Strategy for the Borough and updates throughout the year would be used to create a progress sheet that would then be distributed next year.

Eve Cronin reported that recent figures showed that Great Yarmouth had the lowest take-up in the County for apprentices and she suggested, therefore, that there was a need to understand what the reasons were to try to break down the barriers.

Reference was also made to the Core Strategy which was currently out to consultation and the recent launch of the South Denes Energy Park. It was concluded that an annual report on the Strategy would be published in the spring.

The Chairman reported that the Great Yarmouth JCP was meeting its target for getting people back into work within a year and she thought this was due to partnership working.

8 Other Employment Related Support News

The Chairman reported on the Claimant Commitment which would go live in March 2014 and required customers to be more proactive in searching for jobs with advisors becoming more like "coaches" that identified what they need to get employment rather than the focus being on how many interviews they attend. She indicated that customers needed to be more responsible for themselves when Universal Credit was introduced which meant that there was a need to ensure that claimants were digitally upskilled. Tim Inger reported on various courses that would help claimants obtain the necessary skills including courses supported by the Salvation Army and at the Library. It was noted that JCP also had young people on work experience showing customers how to use IT, with most of the youngsters going on to find regular employment because they had the work experience on their CV. The Chairman added that many organisations were offering IT support but this was disparate and Tim was working to bring them all together.

The point was made that employers wanted young people to have experience of working practices etc but unfortunately many students did not have even a basic understanding.

9 Any Other Business

Sharif Sharif reported that Ingeus had accessed training for clients to help them get into the Care industry and were increasing their drug and alcohol support. He added that the promotion of Wage incentives had also been stepped-up and he was keen to link in with other projects eg Target Opportunities. He also reported that six more advisers had been recruited in Great Yarmouth.

Reference was made to the work that DIAL were currently undertaking and it was agreed that a representative would be invited to attend this group.

Ben Sampson indicated that Target Opportunities were struggling with how to support the large uptake of people with severe learning difficulties and it was agreed that the College and JCP might be able to help.

Holly Nottcutt reported on a pilot in the Southtown, Cobholm and Halfway House area which would start in January under the Troubled Families banner. The project supported people to get their lives together and build their confidence using Community Connectors rather than front line workers.

The Group considered and agreed to support a GYC bid for funding towards a project that used technology eg tablets to break down barriers and deliver advice and support out in the community through facetime/Skype etc as well as enabling advisers to talk to students face to face at the college.

Concern was expressed at the impact of welfare reforms on service providers and the number of sanctions imposed by JCP on clients in Great Yarmouth. Councillor Wainwright added that there was a lot of business investment in the town at the moment, however, there was a huge challenge for the Council in terms of the proposed funding cuts.

The meeting ended at: 12:00