



Essex LSIP Board Meeting

Tuesday 8th October 2024 at 2pm

Held at Essex and Suffolk Water, Sandon Valley House, Canon Barnes Road, East Hanningfield, Chelmsford, Essex, CM3 8BD

Attendees

Joanne Giles – Essex Chambers of Commerce
Lisa Collins – Essex Chambers of Commerce
Andy Sparks – Essex Chambers of Commerce
Hassan Shami – Essex County Council
Will Allanson – Harlow College
Sarah Hamilton – Chelmsford College
Lauren Phillips – DWP
Paula Hornett – EPN
Kate Kozlova-Boran – Thurrock Council
Cllr Tony Ball – Essex County Council
Hyla Grimwade – Greater Essex Careers Hub
Ann Scott – FSB
Louise Aitken – Essex County Council
Edda Panini-McIver – South Essex College of Further & Higher Education
Elaine Oddie – NSO Associates LLP
Kirstie Cochrane – University of Essex
Justine Addison – Ground Control

2) Welcome – JG

- JG welcomes all Board members to the meeting.

Apologies - JG

Denise Rossiter – Essex Chambers of Commerce
Tom Broome – Constellation Marketing
Alex Brennan – Essex & Suffolk Water
Claire Wright – Rose Builders
Marcella MRaberty – London Stansted Airport
Karen Spencer – Harlow college – Will Allanson attended in place.
David Warnes – Chelmsford College – Sarah Hamilton attended in place.
Nick Brown – Southend City Council
Karris Rowbotham – DP World
Janis Gibson – CAVS
Dave Cope – DWP – Lauren Phillips attended in place



Denise Brown – South Essex College of Further & Higher Education - Edda Panini-McIver attended in place

Justine Addison – Ground Control

3) Minutes of previous meeting 2nd July 2024 – JG

- Approved by Board.

4) Actions arising from previous meeting – JG

- N/A

5) LSIP Stage 2 progress update – JG

- It's been a really busy summer and it looks to be going into a really busy autumn with the work we do within the LSIP and with our colleagues around the county.
- We were able to publish the annual report in September. We have circulated the report and action plan. You will see within the report a huge amount of progress that has been made over 9 months worth of work, but aligned to the LSIF.
- Along with the report we have a 38 page action plan that Andy and I are working on with our colleagues. It's important to say we couldn't do all this without our colleagues around the county. There is such depth in what we are trying to achieve, without collaboration from all those key stakeholder, the report and action plan becomes pointless, so I want to say thank you to all the people that are working closely with us to move the dial on those priorities.
- There is an updated Annex C which the LSIP has committed to updating twice a year. The Annex data holds most of the LMI data for the county and we have published that in time for the report. It will next be updated in January next year. We will notify everybody of the publication.
- Any comments on the report?
- KKB – It looks as though an incredible amount of work has gone into this.
- Stage 2 of our priorities. The Government changes and within it, the new announcements remain the focus of what we are doing, alongside the 38 page report. We know we have a new Skills Minister, Baroness Jacqui Smith, we know she has set out with Skills England their first report a couple of weeks ago, the change that Skills England wants to make and without that the complexity of some of them changes. Baroness Smith is going to be talking at the AELP Conference in November and will hopefully be able to give a bit more detail on what that looks like. We will attend the conference and feedback.
- Two of the biggest changes are the qualification review that is taking place, they have committed that the review and feedback will be completed before the end of the year and feedback will be given to the FE sector before the end of the academic year. Equally, there is a huge reform in the changes within the apprenticeship levy and what is being recommended within the growth and skills levy. That has significant impact to our employers around the county, especially our SME's. Once Skills England are in place in April we are seeking information from all of our employers, levy payers, colleagues around the county to the impact that they will see and some of the changes they would like to see so we can feed into Skills England, because we believe it will impact on other pockets of funding that are available.



- For those that haven't seen the report, Skills England set out their strategy and steps of engagement. There wasn't a huge amount of detail in the report but clearly it set out a direction of travel. What was clear was their engagement with ERB's, LA's, and also the FE and Private Sector were in there. We are pleased to see they will continue to engage with those ERB's and the work that's taking place in the county. They are not able to commit to anything until the spending review.
- To be able support Skills England on the biggest change they are talking about which is changes to the growth and skills levy, we have circulated a survey. The survey is split into 2 parts, it's a levy and non-levy survey. What's important to understand is the conversation at this moment is just around the levy. The Government are talking about changes around the levy pot and there is no mention around what this will look like for SME provision. Whatever is available in the levy, we need flexibility to be available for the SME sector. What we don't want are imposed restrictions that hinder growth and the uptake of apprenticeships. We are concerned that if the flexibility within the levy moves forward and as a result, employers spend more of their levy, there will be less of the levy to be shared between our SME population and therefore, the 5% contribution will be a requirement for the SME's to pay and this, we believe will impact on SME's and uptake on apprenticeships, especially in 16-18 year olds. The more response we are able to achieve from the survey the better the information we can feedback into Skills England.
- We wanted to conduct a gap analysis of what was being delivered within the county to identify what is not being delivered and what employers are telling us they need. We have obtained all of the ILR data for the county, this will tell us what all the learners have learnt in the county and where, learners that have come into the county and what they have learnt and where, it will also tell us learners in our county that have learnt outside, what they have learnt and where. We will be able to present the data at the end of October. We had a meeting with FEDEC a couple of weeks ago and provided an example of the data we are producing. FEDEC have agreed to provide a response to the data towards the latter part of next year because there will be a response from our colleges around the county as to what they will continue to deliver or not, depending on the results of the data. This will tell us what our gap is, based on that what do we need to continue to offer or bring into the county if it's not being delivered. Some of the analysis will be based on funding restrictions.
- One of our key priorities was employability skills within the county. What remains clear in all of the conversation we have with the employer groups we meet across all of the sectors is the employability/soft skills remains the biggest challenge. The conversation we have had with FEDEC and the colleges involved was that it would be great to have a joined up strategy to identify what was being taught in the colleges and what skills that leads too. That will give greater clarity to our employers in the county as to what skills mean what, what learners have been taught. We've only just had this conversation, it's a big piece of work that will not happen overnight, but the LSIP has committed to Louise Aitken starting on that piece of work up to the end of December and if there is further work that needs to continue, we will have further discussions.
- Another identified gap within our county is we have no provision for HGV Mechanics. This is larger than the driver shortage within the sector. We are starting to talk to the Freeport and DP World around the impact that might have and discussing how we might bring a solution to that within the county. We are talking to an independent training provider who has an outstanding Ofsted grade to see whether they would consider coming into the county.
- We have a real issue with regards to Functional Skills with 16-18 year olds. This is impacting on our NEETS within the county. We are exploring how we can address that through our



colleges and independent training providers. This has been exacerbated by the tutor shortage.

- In support of the FE workforce response, all of the LSIPs around the country have worked together to put forward a formal response through the lens of the LSIP in how the shortage of tutors within the FE sector is impacting in all of us moving the dial on our priorities. The letter is draft format, we are hoping for a sign off today, we will then sign it as LSIPs around the county and submitting it to the DfE. Once we have the letter we will circulate to FEDEC.
- Sector based information, the data dashboard will be live end of October this year. Thank you to our colleagues at Essex County Council who have funded the dashboard. We will be embedding live labour market information into our sector based dashboards, so not only will everyone have Annex C data that will measure 6 months to 6 months there will be live labour market information that's relevant to each sector. We think this will impact significantly on information, advice and guidance that can be provided to schools and colleges, but equally when we look at decisions on academic delivery this information will be important when curriculum planning takes place. We will circulate to everyone when it goes live, we are happy to come to you and give a presentation on how to use the data we are happy to do that.
- We have also published some data for Innovate UK which is showcasing what skills will be required over the next 5 years. I have circulated that to some of you for you to be able to use that data, we will publish this data on our website.
- In support of awareness of skills within the county, we are producing a skills supplement which is being funded by Essex County Council and launched at Festival of Business on 13th November. It will be circulated to around 8000 employers around the county and will showcase the college provision within the county. We know employers are still not aware of the richness of the provision we have and what resources they are able to access. This will be a resource we will continue to use and publish on our website.
- The connector tool, Essex County Council are just about to enter a procurement process regarding connector. We believe that will be complete around end of November, once we know who will be building the tool, for us we will reach out to all of our colleagues and we will then be able to continue the build.
- We have been invited to be a Board member on the Essex Education Task Force, we are presenting at Braintree Digital Skills Showcase on Thursday, and we will be attending the All-Party Parliamentary Group which is regarding the future of apprenticeships and hosted by Andrew Parks.

6) Local Authority Update

Essex County Council – Cllr Ball

- Louise Aitken is moving onto other things across all councils, Hassan has now taken Louise's place so welcome to Hassan.
- Following the General Election, Devolution is back on the table. As we speak, the leaders of Essex, Southend & Thurrock Council are meeting the Minister responsible for Devolution. There have been changes, not to the detriment of what we want. It appears the new Government are keen on the mayoral system and are keen to get it done quickly. I have a meeting at 7pm tonight to get feedback on how the meeting went.



- There have been discussions around the recruitment of the Greater Essex Business Board, Cllr McKinlay is looking at how it can progress. We haven't let that delay us in setting up the Skills Board.
- Essex County Council continue to align work with the LSIP.
- The Careers Magazine has been well received, edition 6 will be out soon.
- The Green Skills Hub has been launched, there has been a great response to that.
- We continue to support local businesses, £4.9million of levy funds to be transferred to SME's as well as creating 814 new apprenticeships.

A question asked - what is the time scale with the Business Board?

- The General Election delayed what we wanted to do, there isn't complete clarity of the LEP from Government so we don't have an exact timetable, but it will be as soon as it's practical.

Thurrock Council – KKB

- Essex, Southend and Thurrock are working closely on similar agendas. There is a lot of synergy between the three local authorities. This is a good way forward with Devolution.
- We are still offering our all-age careers service which is funded until March 2025 through the UK Prosperity Fund.
- We still haven't heard about the UKSPF, we should hear 13th October.
- UKSPF were offering delivery of Green Skills, one for professionals and one for residents.

7) Essex County Council LSIF Match Funding Update - HS

- It's very good news. LSIF is around £5.5million, ECC contributed around £650,000, part of our interest is through the delivery of the five KPIs. All the KPIs have been delivered. The first KPI was about six new teaching and learning facilities, the second about delivery new courses at levels 1-4, there was a KPI on newly qualified teachers which has been delivered, the fourth KPI was about Industry and training and CPD for staff and the fifth was about 500 learners taking soft skills. The reports we are getting is all of these have been met and passed. The Net Zero Centre at Colchester Institute which has been launched and is now operational, we have a Digital Skills Growth Hub to come, low carbon lab space, music technology centre and a multi-purpose digital learning immersive which is on course to be delivered by March 2025.
- The KPI on number of new courses designed, our original target was 6 we delivered 7, newly qualified teachers, our target was 18, they've already trained 23, staff undertaking CPD was 300 KPI, already there are 424, the KPI on learners receiving soft skills target was 500, already 800 has been delivered.
- This is all good news and LSIF is a good example of investment that has worked and delivered an investment based on the KPIs.



Discussion

- It was asked what happens next, has anything been picked up from Government on the future?
It feels like we are in a holding pattern at the moment. Until we get the budget and funding review we won't know.
- One of the key successes has been the collaboration between the providers and the funders.

- HS - It's a process we are planning which doesn't increase the funding but does make our approach more strategic. Jonathan wants us to create through our procurement process a skills framework that creates a list of approved training providers. Consultation early next year to ask the provider network if there was additional funding, where would you like to spend it and where is the evidence to back it up.
- Feedback from DfE this morning was that our feedback report has changed and how we have to grade all of our actions moving forward. It was commented that doesn't have any feedback regarding the responses from the LSIF's and how the priorities have been met and what the DfE have committed to is asking if they can share all of that. If we are able to report through public figures, then the collaboration and relationships that have been built and achievements that have been achieved as a result of that that wouldn't otherwise had been done, gives the value of asking for more money.
 - We are unique in Essex in terms of our collaborative approach.
 - Speaking on behalf of the employers, it's great to hear that all of this is happening and has happened and that all the KPIs have been met but from an employer's point of view I don't think we have seen results yet. People are still saying we can't get people to do these jobs so what's gone wrong?
I don't think anything has gone wrong, it's a complex landscape that needs to be navigated. Essex primarily are SMEs. To reach SMEs is really hard. The work being undertaken at the moment is creating either platforms or collateral or joined up information so we can get that to the SMEs, and what we can provide them with is consistent information.
 - We are still not getting young people saying we've got the skills, employ us.
It's important to note the 16–18-year-olds are the folks that were Year 7/8 in lockdown, so their skills, confidence and competency have been severely impacted. As a result of that, some of them are going into full time study programmes, because they weren't able to pass their maths and English, or they are not ready for the world of work because their development level is significantly impacted, these things are really important. The demand is there from employers. It's important to add, the financial crisis we have gone through, if a young person wants to go into an apprenticeship, that person's family will lose all of their benefits, this is a complex space we are in.
 - It's great to hear this is all working well but this appears to be on the supply side, not the end result. Employers are getting lots of applicants, but the applicants do not have the skills.
This is going take time to work this through and a year isn't enough when you consider the challenges the young people have had. If we hadn't of gone through the actions we have, it would be a worse situation now.



8) Greater Essex Careers Hub Update – HG

- We work with secondary schools and colleges across the whole of the Greater Essex Region to try to improve their careers education. Not by delivering activity ourselves but by supporting the schools and colleges to support themselves and to try and help employers to engage with the schools and colleges.
- We have reviewed our last year, and the Greater Essex Careers Hub is progressing faster than the National average which is great news. In some areas in terms of our KPIs it's up to 4 and a half times faster than the National which is great news and shows the schools, colleges and employers, training providers, everyone involved are trying really hard for the young people. We are still not in line with the National average, but we had such a low starting point and was 3 to 4 years behind getting started in Essex. We hope by the end of the current academic year we would have caught up to national average and in some areas exceed it.
- Five priorities for the academic year remain the same as the previous year. Improving the careers education within school settings, Gatsby Benchmarking links into that and we are trying to increase those. There is a lot of employer engagement within that, there is also a piece around apprenticeship and technical education and trying to bring that in line with sections. If you bring that in line with A Level and University routes there is a piece of work, there that links into the employability side of skills. When we have spoken to various stakeholders, the number of apprenticeships remain relatively steady but the amount of take up from that is decreasing. Employers are telling us that the young people do not have the skills set to understand how to apply or how to sell themselves or what skills they have got. There is a couple of projects we are doing this year around that, one is with our key employers around the county, taking their current recruitment process for entry level or apprenticeship type roles and converting that into activities that can be run in a school setting, so it can get them ready and that's focused on soft skills. One of the priorities is supporting and aligning to the LSIP, one is working around supporting young people who face additional barriers or disadvantages that's particularly focusing on geographical areas of economic disadvantage and those with SEN and those attending alternative provisions. The final priority is around experiences of the workplace, what is coming through loud and clear and was also in the Labour manifesto is 2 weeks work experience of the workplace. We are not sure what this will look like, but I will feed it back when we do know.
- We are going to set up a working group to bring some key stakeholders who are invested in this area, and work out what's going on already, what some of the challenges are and what some of our local solutions are so when opportunities come, we can take them fast and start the process as soon as we can.
- The other thing we are starting to do is we are starting to work the Green Lane Teacher Training Providers across Essex, so we start earlier promoting teaching.
- One of our main priorities at the moment is engaging with employers as much as possible but we do not want to duplicate what's already going on around the county. If you are linked into any ERBs or membership organisations, if there are any ways of us communicating through that so we don't bombard employers, please reach out to me.



- CAVS – we work in the community, predominantly around health and wellbeing, we have a membership of just over 500 local organisations. In terms of getting messages out into the community, we are happy to help. On the topic of Covid, we have seen unprecedented levels in terms of how the younger generation have been affected.
We see lots of young people coming in from London, attending the Grammar Schools, but in terms of employment within the county I wonder if that impacts. I know of a company that brings people into work in their office from the outskirts of Essex
It's all connected, we are trying to get people back into the workplace. The more there is joined up thinking, there will be better opportunities. We do a lot of work with Health and Social Care; they are struggling with employment.
- Hyla – Some of the feedback from schools is where they are improving the labour market information that's coming through, the info is going to the parents and the parents are looking at the local employers, in the most deprived areas through the young people, it's influencing the parents to go back into training or employment.
- JG – Going back to the construction sector, we know parents have a real big influence on the young people.
- AS - When we consider the labour market and supply of people, we will look at the people that train in Essex but then go out and work in London. It's an interesting thought that we don't consider is in the Education stats we have around Essex, how many young people are coming out of London to Essex for a better experience.

9) FEDEC Update

- **Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) update - WA**
 - This was a 2-year project, the first year ran from October 23 – March 24, the second year ran from April 24 – March 25. The revenue end of the project ran October 23 – March 24 project and this was focused on colleges and ITPs building capacity to able us to respond to employer needs. Some of the things Hassan has fed back on was around the capacity in the workforce, delivering training programmes to young people and employer responsiveness. That revenue project was delivered fully by the end of March, all KPIs were met. It was a huge help to get the additional funding from ECC as that enabled us to continue activity into April through to July this year. From the end of July through to March all that's left is the capital funding. All of the colleges involved in the capital projects are on track to have all of their capital works completed by March next year. We have delivered programmes and are waiting for more certainty around what the future funding will be.
 - JG I think changes to the levy will impact on all of those different things. SMEs will be able to access non apprenticeship qualification, does that mean it will change the shape of the adult skills budget, would they focus on people who are economical inactive, there is a whole range of impacts. My concern is if too much is removed from apprenticeship provision and it's driven down the delivery of a course, we lose the measurement of skills and behaviours and that's really important. The



implementation of a foundation apprenticeship means there will be larger opportunities for young people to access roles but that will have to be funded and incentivised in the right way for employers to support those individuals.

- **FEDEC – Response to LSIP**

- The particular feedback from members was around the focus on essential skills which came out clear from your reports. It's great to be working with Louise on that and I think will accelerate that piece of work.
- The concern from the FEDEC members, and all FEDEC members are doing this in one shape or form in terms of those essential skills. We all use different framework, so the challenge for Louise and ourselves is how do we navigate that. We invested a lot into what we are doing and recognise the importance of this across Greater Essex and the need to have something more joined up so employers can recognise that as an outcome.
- JG - There are other counties facing the same challenge and they made the decision not to use a universal thing, for all the reasons you have described. They came together to create a passport that brings all of that together. It's a really coherent way to articulate to an employer what these things mean. Through the connector tool, if we have something that is a statement, employers can understand completely what that skill means, and they can make better informed decisions of the skills that individual has as it may not be linked to a qualification.
- DW – Its important to ensure young people know the importance of what they are learning and that other things may be needed. There is a piece of work there, around the collaboration piece with employers to why technical skills are important, but those essential skills are as important.
- JG – Any employer that is telling us they want to engage, they are currently going to Hyla and her team to see which is the right thing they want to engage with so they can be circulated to the right provider/school.
- DW – FEDEC members are working with Unlock which is an organisation that works with young people on this sort of thing. We have a conference for 60 young people on 23rd October that will be facilitated by Unlock for FEDEC members who will be sending their student ambassadors along. Unlock have done this work with lots of colleges, we wanted to bring them in to look specifically at how we get the young people the skills, confidence and to communicate back to other students.

10) EPN Update – PH

- In terms of the work we are doing at the moment, we have written to the three LA Leaders in support of the Chamber of Commerce, we strongly feel it should be a Level 3 Devolution deal. The key In terms of support for growth is more...delivered locally in terms of the adult budget and funding...There is not one Independent Provider in Essex that holds a adult funding contract. In terms of direct funding for study programme, there a few IT that holds contracts. The landscape for IT is not easy in Essex.
- Speaking with our wide network of membership. We are in the process of completing a generic prospectus to make sure everything in Essex is in one place. We are just waiting for a few colleges to update their prospectus. That will be ready to go in time to support the connector.



- With the demise of the LEP, our line of sight at EPN has slightly shifted away from Kent and East Sussex and have moved more to the Easter Region. We have agreed to write to the APGG to reiterate points that were raised in the report that was sent in May this year. As EPN we are strategically working in the background to make sure the growth is at the front of the minds of our young people.

10) AOB

- Add to agenda for next meeting IOT. The notion around the Technical Excellence Colleges, as our sense is they may replace IOTs. Also, the IOT relationship with SEATS. There seems to be confusion with employers over the two and how they come together.
Action – Look at what we could produce on the LSIP pages to be able to articulate how that joins up so the essential point of info that employers can link to and understand how they work together.
- JA – Interested in the Unlock piece. We are going to talk about young people, we should have them here. Could we have ambassadors at a meeting?
- JA We cannot offer work experience in the heavily practical jobs because we can't get insurance. Could we use VR?
- DWP – Curriculum changed so much over last 15 years, its knowledge they want you to know rather than skills focused. Is the DWP movement to work module is of interest to employers? It's been running for 11 years, over 180 employers have been involved in the movement to work, work experience module. The placements targeted at 16–30-year-olds that last between 1 – 12 weeks. I'm keen to speak to people about it and see you would want to report into that. If it's of interest, please reach out.
- EO I think we need something from Essex Chambers that involves members to understand what the LSIP is doing. There is lots on the website, but nobody is actually looking at it and understanding how it is working. We need to help employers understand how they can participate.
JG There is work going on with the CRMs at the Chambers, they talk about the LSIP but we will have further conversation with them to look at how we can strengthen those conversations.
- JG Andy and I would like to see other employers participate in this group. From the work we are doing there are other employers that have suggested they would like to participate. I'd like to table this today and if we were to propose new appointments would the Board be happy with that and how would you like us to approach that – CVs or suggest some invitees to the meeting?
- The Board agreed the more employers the better. Representation across all of the priority areas would be more important.

Future meetings – Tuesday 21st January 2025 2pm – 4pm