

WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

WARRINGTON BOROUGH SKILLS COMMISSION COMMITTEE

MINUTES & ACTIONS

Date: Tuesday 24 January 2023

Time: 2pm – 4pm

Location: Boardroom A137, Warrington & Vale Royal College

Members:	Professor Steven Broomhead (Chair) (SB), Gareth Hopkins (GH), Cllr Sarah Hall (SH), Cllr Tom Jennings (TJ), Cllr Kath Buckley (KB), Nicki O'Connor (NOC), James Gresty (JG), Nicola Newton (NN), Alison Cullen (AC), Richard Bayley (RB), Glen Smith (GS), Gary Jenkins (GJ), Ehsan Akram (EA), Kirstie Simpson (KS), John Patterson (JS)
Committee Support:	Steve Park (SP), Eleanor Blackburn (EB), Kate Gibbons (KG), Damian Richards-Clarke (DRC)
Apologies:	Joe Manning, Stephen Fitzsimons, Paula Worthington, Kate Guise
Observers:	Hayley Eglin

MINUTES	ACTIONS
<p>1.0 <u>Welcome, Introductions & Apologies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- SB opened the meeting and thanked all attendees for their support and asked for each member to introduce themselves. <p>Apologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Four apologies were received for the meeting:- Paula Worthington, Warrington Borough Council- Kate Guise, Warrington Borough Council- Steven Fitzsimons, Warrington Chamber of Commerce- Joe Manning, Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership/Marketing Cheshire	
<p>2.0 <u>Skills Commission Introduction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- SB introduced the commission, starting with referring back to the 2013 Skills Commission and how information was gathered and pulled into a policy of action document. One of the outcomes from this review resulted in building and opening of UTC, a specialist Science, Engineering and Cyber College in the centre of Warrington.	

- **SB** advised, this commission will follow the same format, however things have changed since then and therefore the need to complete the review again.
- **SB** referred to Rishi Sunak recently released five point plan, which includes 'growing the economy, creating better-paid jobs and opportunity right across the country', and advised, this is what we are looking to do for Warrington.
- **SB** advised that the process will include gathering information to inform a report which will hopefully have impact on providers, the education sector and employers.

3.0 Presentation

- **SP** opened the presentation. He advised this commission will be a public facing partnership and everything completed as part of the process will be published to the public.
- **SP** advised, we don't want to close our eyes to any sector or skill. We have invited members to ensure we have a broad representation across all sectors and industries.
- The commissions desired output will be to draw a report of recommendations and look for learnings from 2013. As part of this we will be gathering evidence and therefore a call for evidence will be put out and presented to the members via sub groups and expert witness presentations.
- **SP** continued through the presentation, detailing the objectives and the why:

Objectives

- Review the progress made against since 2013 recommendations.
- Review the nature of Warrington's economy, now and in the future. Understand what is needed to grow the economy. 2013 identified the growth potential in electric cars, however at the time I don't think we quite understood what skills requirements would be needed. Now we can see that electric car charging point engineers are highly sought after.
- Determine the skills and qualifications required for the jobs needed to grow the economy.

- We need to remain competitive in in the context of increased city living, therefore we need to be offering the right jobs and providing the right skills within Warrington.
- We need to review current relationships and engagement between business and the education/skills sector and look at ways in which this can be improved.
- Determine whether the outputs of the educations and skills sector are meeting the current/future skills requirements of the Warrington economy.

Why

- **SP** advised, Warrington has had very successful economy over the decades and is renowned for its relatively high employment and contrasts favourably with other North West towns.
- Warrington has seen a growing population which became most acute during the 'New town' era.
- Warehousing and logistics sectors have been attracted to Warrington as a base, however these type of jobs lower our productivity scores as measured by the Office of National Statistics (ONS).
- **SP** advised that the full list of 2013 recommendations are detailed within the members pack, however one of the focuses was the connections between education providers and employers to meet the skills needs required to drive the economy. This needs to be a focus again. We need to see if things have improved and is there any sense of co-ordination. 2023 Skills Commission will be a test to see if this recommendation has been actioned and worked.
- **SP** continued, another recommendation was to further develop strong working relationships with Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Warrington & Co. Since then work has been carried out and the Local Enterprise Partnership is changing shape to become more aligned with local authorities.
- **SP** handed over to EB to discuss the process of the commission.

Process

- **EB** advised that we intend to run the commission over five phases, however these may overlap at points slightly. Phase 1 starts today.
- **EB** continued, we are currently in the process of recruiting a consultant whose role will include the gathering, analysis of data and report writing. The advert is currently live on The Chest and will close to applications on 30th January 2023.

- **EB** advised that there will be a press release to the public which we will come to later under communications with Damian.
- **EB** advised, Phase 2 will involve pulling together the evidence via the publication of a public survey, receiving written submissions of evidence, presentations to the board by expert witnesses and facilitating stakeholder workshops.
- **EB** continued, we have started to identify some of the potential stakeholders, however asked Member of the Commission to put forward any suggestions and recommendations that they feel will add value to this commission. This is the same for any expert witnesses that are key to our evidence gathering process. Some people around this table may also wish to take on the role of an expert witness.
- **EB** advised, KG has started to pull together a residents survey, the link will be sent out following the meeting and we would appreciate your views and input over the next few weeks.

Link to the draft survey: [Survey Preview Window \(smartsurvey.co.uk\)](https://smartsurvey.co.uk)

- **EB** confirmed, Phase 3 will merge into phase 2 and we may find the need to go back and forth to ensure we gather all required evidence. This is the phase where we will start to identify the emerging issues, opportunities and recommendations.
- **EB** advised, Phase 4 will focus in on those final findings and we will consult once again with key stakeholders on the findings and recommendations.
- **EB** continued, Phase 5 will be the publication of the report and establishment of the next steps which will be in the format of an action plan. The Commission is a task and finish group, so we don't expect this group to continue beyond this phase, but there may need to be a recommendation of how to ensure future delivery.

Timescale

- **EB** acknowledged that the timescales set out are ambitious. We understand that there will be some slippage and we appreciate we don't have the same levels of capacity to complete the commission as we did in 2013.

All – to review the draft questions and pass all feedback to KG

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KS asked, what is the purpose of the commission? Is it to identify a list of actions to approach government and seek funding or is there a bigger picture? - SB replied, we want the commission to stimulate interest in skills from local employers, promote change with what is offered from our education and skills providers and to navigate policy change. - SP added, we are looking for a good solid evidence base to enable us to formulate a list of desired outcomes. We are surrounded by devolved government, in some cases the devolution deal includes devolved powers and funding for skills projects. We need to set out a clear direction of travel for skills requirements in Warrington which will put us in a good position to potentially lead the way for Cheshire. - KS agreed and added, we need to ensure everyone knows and understands what our intentions are and promote this from the start. - All agreed. - SB added, the Commission will meet in public, but will not be a public meeting. We want to encourage people to attend and engage. 	<p>DRC – to ensure purpose is promoted from the start of the commission</p>
<p>4.0 <u>Formal Appointment of Committee Members</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All agreed to continue as members - EB advised that there are still a couple of places available for business if members have any suggestions please send these over to KG at kate.gibbons@warrington.gov.uk 	<p>All – Send any suggestions of business members to KG</p>
<p>5.0 <u>Evidence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Points covered within EB presentation 	
<p>6.0 <u>Workshops</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EB advised that the workshops will be crucial to phase 2 of the commission as this will enable the committee to hear the views of stakeholders. We will try and theme workshops e.g. with young people directly so their voices are heard, business workshops etc. - EB added, we want to open up the opportunity for Commission members to feed in with what cohorts they would like to communicate with and hear from. 	

- **AC** suggested speaking to Warrington Disability Partnership and Speak Up.
- **NO’C** added it is not just those with disabilities, but those with health conditions which are not necessarily a disability, this will include older population. DWP also have the link to those not working at all.
- **KB** advised we also need to look at our NEETs and other vulnerable groups.
- **KS** asked, is the purpose of the workshops to speak to individuals about their lived experience or to have a mixed group of people with different perspectives who would benefit from hearing the views of others and setting future agenda?
- **EB** advised, it will be a bit of both, however workshops may not work for individuals so we will need to speak to various organisations about how best this can be managed and maybe individual lived experience can be conducted through our expert witness presentation process.
- **NN** advised, we should include the colleges and their young people. NN advised the college undertake labour market analysis and also offered to link the commission up with current business rep steering groups already established at the college.
- **NN** asked, in addition to this Skills Commission there is also the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) how does this commission link to it?
- **SB** advised, this commission will be a complimentary process to the LSIP and not in competition. This is about Warrington’s economy and the LSIP will focus more on the wider Cheshire area.
- **EB** added, it is an increasingly crowded arena with the LSIP, LEP delivery, Multiply, UKSPF on top of existing AEB etc. and it is about finding a way to work in support of each other.
- **GJ** asked **NN**, the labour market data how much depth does that give you?
- **NN** replied, quite a lot.
- **GJ** advised, Check a Trade owner does a lot on capital economics to forward project. When we gather intelligence are we looking at the micro trends and forward planning?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EB replied, we will, however there is a limitation on how far we can go on every sector area. We need to future proof the economy where we can see rapid change we need to include this. - EA advised, his company aims to transition vulnerable adults back into independent living, work and society. It would be helpful for support and care providers to support the commission. - SP advised, we need to consider ‘futurology’. There are people staying at home and attending virtual pubs. Virtual activities are becoming more and more popular. This is a completely new world opening up to us. We need to spend some time on the future economy. To a lot of us there is scepticism which we need to overcome. - EB asked, if anyone has any ideas who we can approach as an expert witness, please put them forward to KG. - SB advised, he would like us to facilitate a workshop based on enterprise. - EA considered the move to hydrogen energy. He can recommend a speaker on this. - GS asked, what data do we have on the economy within Warrington, e.g. number of businesses, scale etc.? - EB replied, we do have some but it is patchy in relation to how up-to-date it is. E.g. export data we have real time, but business size, e.g. micro, medium, large we have data lag. - SB reiterated, anyone who has ideas please send them to KG and we can pay expenses to get them here. 	<p>All – To send suggestions on expert witness to KG</p>
<p>7.0 <u>Marketing & Communications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DRC advised, a press release has been drafted, which is positive and sets the scene for the commission. This will be published tomorrow and will be shared with all members. - DRC continued, the next step is to finalise a communication plan which will bring everything the commission is doing to life. This can include case studies of individuals from our workshops etc. I want to make it real for people, what does it mean for skills providers, learners, employees, employers. Warrington are leading the conversation for the future. 	<p>DRC– To send all members a copy of the press release, communication plan and logo</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DRC advised, in addition to the press release and communications plan, we are having a skills commission logo designed which will represent this is not just Warrington Borough Council commission, this is a shared partnership. 	
<p>8.0 <u>Future Meetings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SB suggested that the committee meets every 4-5 weeks. There will be around 5 meetings with a final meeting for conclusions. Plus a public event to disseminate conclusions. - SB asked for KG to put dates in the diary for all meetings. 	<p>KG – to confirm dates for all meetings and send out invites.</p>
<p>9.0 <u>Election of Committee Chair</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SB advised, we are looking for an independent chair who will bring some gravitas and experience to the commission. If anyone has any ideas please put them forward. 	<p>All – Put forward any ideas for an independent chair to KG</p>
<p>10.0 <u>AOB</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None raised 	