



## MINUTES

**Date:** Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023

**Time:** 12 – 2pm

**Location:** University of Chester, Time Square, Warrington

<b>Members:</b>	Professor Steven Broomhead (Chair) (SB), Cllr Sarah Hall (SH), Nichola Newton (NN), Richard Bayley (RB), Glen Smith (GS), John Patterson (JS), Stephen Fitzsimons (SF), Cllr Kath Buckley (KB), Nicki O’Connor (NOC), Kirstie Simpson (KS), Cllr Nathan Sudworth (NS)
<b>Committee Support:</b>	Steve Park (SP), Eleanor Blackburn (EB), Kate Gibbons (KG), Laurence Pullan (LP), India Burgess (IB), Lukas Kikuchi (LK)
<b>Apologies:</b>	Joe Manning (JM), Kate Guise (KG), Damian Richards-Clarke (DRC), Gary Jenkins (GJ), Danielle Bennett (DB), Gareth Hopkins (GH), Cllr Tom Jennings (TJ), James Gresty (JG), Alison Cullen (AC), Ehsan Akram (EA), Paula Worthington (PW),
<b>Observers:</b>	
<b>Expert Witnesses:</b>	Dave Thompson (DT), Pat Jackson (PJ)

MINUTES	ACTIONS
<b>1.0 Welcome &amp; Introduction</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1.1 Apologies of absence</b></p> <p>As above</p>	
<b>2.0 Minutes and Actions</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2.1 Matters arising</b></p> <p><b>SB</b> – asked KS to introduce the building and the University of Chester that we are using the facilities of today.</p>	

**KS** – provided an overview of University of Chester. Local higher education provider offering public services based skills and education courses e.g. policing, health & social care.

This site has a CPD offering and is used to engage with local business & the community. Facilities can be booked here as they have been done today and Brendan O’Sullivan is the first point of contact to do that.

The Time Square campus has been open to students, delivering their education journey since September 2022. The move from Padgate has enabled us to be more visible in the town.

**SB** – thanked KS and asked members are there any matters arising?

**RB** – advised Atkins have completed their research which was mentioned in the last meeting. This has produced some interesting facts and figures and he will share this with Autonomy for the use of the commission.

**All** – agreed to the minutes from our last meeting.

**3.0 Presentation**

**3.1 Data & Intelligence Update (10-15 minutes)**

**Autonomy’s Presentation of evidence gathering and feedback from workshops**

**LK** - updated members on Autonomy’s research and findings to date on quantitative data:

Current focus has been on the skills landscape and the skills composition of Warrington’s current labour market, using ONS job data

4 initial groups have been identified within the competency profiling

Group 1 – Analytical – Leadership Technical (ALT)

Group 2 – Manual – Craftsmanship- Practice (MCP)

Group 3 – Strategic – Interpersonal – Knowledge (SIK)

Group 4 – Customer – Centric – Communication (CCC)

Initial findings have shown that Warrington have a higher occupation participation in ALT & SIK.

This data has been based on the current supply data on people working in Warrington. The next piece of work for Autonomy will be to focus on the vacancies within Warrington and from there, identify the skills shortages within the competency profiles.

**IB** - discussed the qualitative data outcomes currently identified via data analysis and the conversation and information captured from our recent workshops:

There were 5 main themes of discussion which were raised across all workshops:

- **Impact of the pandemic**  
A less resilient workforce  
Loss of interpersonal skills  
Renewed calls for disability inclusivity
  
- **Mismatch of aspirations and available jobs**  
Most young people we spoke to want to leave Warrington  
Big range of ideal careers  
Job seekers' market
  
- **Need for more cohesion**  
Positive collaboration between employers and education providers  
Lack of one source of information on training and employment  
Introduction of education provider network
  
- **Funding challenges**  
National funding landscape is very challenge  
Organisations are competing for similar pots of money in an uncoordinated way  
Apprenticeship levy is too rigid
  
- **Place-based future**  
Warrington has a mixed economy  
Prioritising local providers in service delivery  
Improving local transport links between suburbs

**DT** – asked how much involvement have Autonomy had with the 4 NHS providers in Warrington as part of this initial research?

**IB** – confirmed, currently there has been no involvement from the NHS, however this is something we need to look into further

**ACTION:** Arrange engagement with NHS providers

**SP** – raised, there was a strong line within the presentation 'most young people in Warrington want to leave'. Is this for work or for lifestyle purposes?

**IB** – advised, when speaking to the young people, the majority wanted to leave for work and for further education e.g. university. They felt the jobs they were considering, engineering, digital designer etc., they would need to look at places such as Liverpool, Manchester & London

**KG**

**NN & KS** – Both advised, if you were to speak to our cohort of students you would not necessarily get a comparable response. Most students in Chester Uni, for example, are Health & Social Care students, who have families here and vacancies in Warrington available for them. Both suggested the need to get wider involvement from students for a realistic view on this.

**PJ** – advised, we have data that can be shared on why people are leaving. In the main it shows they don't know the next career step and opportunities available to them.

**RB** – advised, the findings you have presented are very similar to the findings from the recent research by Atkins.

**KS** – asked, do we know what % of students leave for which university?

**PJ** – advised, destination data is not currently very good.

**RB** – suggested, we could go back to cohorts of students and ask where they are considering for university.

**DT** – added, some young people select a university based on university experience not just courses or the quality of the courses available.

[Autonomy Presentation 19.04.23](#)

### **3.2 Presentation of Cheshire & Warrington's Sub-Regional Skills Setup & local context by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) (10-15 minutes)**

**PJ** – advised, all data and labour market analysis is available on the LEP's website

- **Data and Intelligence looks at:**
  - Historical trends
  - Current position
  - Forecast
- LEP and stakeholders have created a Job Portal which provides live information. There are currently 20,000+ vacancies in Cheshire & Warrington which is updated every 30 minutes.

Further developments are taking place on the portal so it was interesting to hear about the recommendation from the workshops around a central portal for vacancies and skills development.

- **Key Challenges**
  - Information failures

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The gaps in attainment and progression rate of young people eligible for free school meals</li> <li>- Where young people live</li> <li>- Impact of Covid</li> <li>- Strong and increasing demand for Level 3+ skills – the proportion of the working age population with Level 4+ skills is comparable with England</li> <li>- The gender gap</li> <li>- Employers more likely to have skills vacancies and shortages</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Recent Report</b>  Digital Skills 2022  Adult Workforce and Skills 2022  Young people, learning and skills report 2022/23  Labour Market Assessment</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>What are ‘We’ doing?</b>  Addressing information failures   Reducing the numbers of unemployed and economically inactive, encouraging progression in work   Halting the decline in numbers of people with higher level technical and digital skills   Reducing the 16 year old gap in attainment rate for young people on free school meals and in certain geographical areas</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Next steps</b>  Views on next steps from employers and partners include:  Data and labour market intelligence  Partnership working  Employers working with schools and colleges  Communication   Future focus of skills, education and employment around 3 key themes that will facilitate collaboration, inform and influence national and local strategies: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The gaps in attainment and progression between young people in disadvantaged communities and their more affluent peers</li> <li>2. Long-term unemployment, economic inactivity (in particular 50+), progression in work, self-employment – tackling barriers</li> <li>3. Higher level skills challenge (stop L4+ levels converging with the national average), more apprenticeships and T-levels</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	
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**SH** – advised, there needs to be a deeper dive into those living in poverty who may not be receiving universal credit to ensure they are supported

The number of children who don't have access to technology, is there some work we can do on this as it is crucial they have this?

**PJ** – replied, there has been a piece of work carried out by Liverpool on this and we have asked the same questions across Cheshire & Warrington. We are finding people access internet via mobile, which poses a challenge for families and those with multiple children.

Electricity price increase is also a problem for some families using technology, with one child bringing his computer back as it costs too much to charge.

**SH** – asked, about career development and advisors in school. Is this a standard in schools now?

**PJ** – advised, no it is not in place the same now. We have targeted 21 of the most hard to reach schools where we have found teachers have been doing this in their spare time. We are continuing to deliver this work this year.

**KB** – advised, there is a key themes across these 2 presentations – lack of communication, lack of aspiration and lack of opportunity.

**NS** – asked, do we have a way that we collate skills of job seekers at DWP?

**NO'C** – advised, it is coming but not there yet as there is difficulty around National policy.

**NS** – asked, do we collect skills data on the jobs portal?

**PJ** – advised, on the slides there is an analysis of the skills being specified by employers in Warrington over the past 2 years. E.g. Excel. This is delivered in schools and colleges but not necessarily highlighted as a specific skills to students.

**DT** – advised, I didn't know about the job portal and we can help with the communication of this to Warrington Disability Networks. I am disappointed to not see any data on the gap for people with a disability.

**PJ** – advised, there is data available, however within the presentation which we have not had time to include, however I am happy to share further info.

**DT** – advised, employers need to be more disability confident and we need to start to build on this.

**PJ** – offered for DT to provide some information for employers to update the portal

[Local Enterprise Partnership Presentation – 19.04.23](#)

### **3.3 Skills Funding, Policy & Delivery (10-15 minutes)**

**NN** – advised, funding is extremely complicated, therefore I have broken it down into 16-18 funding & 19-25 funding (for those with an EHCP) and adult funding.

- **16 – 18 funding & 19-25 (for those with an EHCP)** - Funding is received in one lump sum at the beginning of each academic year. Should the college over recruit for that year, there are no in year adjustments to the funding unless the college have gone over by 100-150 pupils. Usually the college will have to wait until the following year to see any uplift to funding.

Funding levels are poor in comparison to that for school aged pupils - £4,500 (cash value) v £7,460.

There are concerns around the pace providers are working towards delivering T Levels and phasing out of BTEC qualification due to concerns around defunding.

- **Adult Funding** – is incredibly complicated, therefore we will welcome the flexibility going forward. Funding covers many aspects of adult education, including apprenticeships from age 16.

The government say they are investing in funding, but that isn't coming in at base level, it is coming in via various pots which are given to priority areas or accessed through a bid process.

**KS** – advised, this was a really useful presentation. It is worth over emphasising the complexity. Further education is a key stakeholder in enabling young people to remain in education. The lifelong learning initiative was aimed at continuing ongoing upskilling, however we are finding people don't want to do it.

**NN** – advised, we are also finding the same. Due to the current cost of living crisis, more people are not willing to take on more debit.

**KS** – added, this funding should go back to the employer to allow more access to it.

**NN**- added, yes there are changes to the levy to enable more flexibility and access by smaller companies so this may address some of these difficulties.

I understand we have accountability on public money and procurement processes but we need to be looking at commissioning local providers.

[Education & Skills Funding Presentation](#)

**3.4 Warrington Disability Partnership (10-15 minutes)**

**DT** – advised, there are still myths, misconceptions and a lack of understanding around those with disabilities and we need to break this.

- **Facts & Figures**

10.8 million disabled people in the UK, 83% acquired their disability during their working life.

Total Warrington population is 210,900, of which 17.8% of residents are disabled, 37,000. 4,781 (14.6%) children and young people with special educational needs attend Warrington schools.

- **Barriers & Impact**

Disproportionate impact of Covid pandemic and cost of living crisis and there is a lack of support to rebuild confidence and skills.

Employer's attitudes. Until recently, only 2 of Warrington's employers were registered as Disability Confident Leaders.

- **What do we need to do locally?**

A local agreed plan on employment and training for disabled people, supported by long-term investment, not just UKSPF.

Support for younger disabled people, those furthest from the job market and employers.

Support to increase the number of Disability Confident Leaders in Warrington.

**SF** – advised, there is an opportunity here for WDP to work with the Chamber to link with more local companies and support them to gain Disability Confidence.

**DT** – advised, SF I am happy to support this.

**KB** – asked, can I pick up on skills gap and what has been raised about autism and their natural skills and their ability to potential fill skills gaps?

**DT** – advised, disability comes in many ways which means employers need to be more flexible and understand reasonable adjustments also come in different forms which need to meet their individual needs.



**SB** – added, there are 2 key points from the presentation which we are happy to support - Disability skills plan and to support employers to gain Disability confidence status.

[Warrington Disability Partnership Presentation](#)

#### **4.0 Update on progress so far**

**EB** provided an update on progress so far:

- Our public survey closed on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2023. We received 508 returns of which some were partially completed. This has been shared with Autonomy who has started their analysis. Those completed included a broad range of ages, occupations and geography.
- 4 of the workshops have taken place successfully and we have more planned e.g. general stakeholders on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023. We have an intern Dylan conducting more workshops in schools to get a broader insight across a wider geographical area.
- **Visits**  
Amazon visit took place on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023. The tour was really interesting and informative.

We have a visit planned for the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023 at Warrington & Vale Royal College to view their Health & Social Care Academy, Advanced Creative Digital Skills Centre and Advance Manufacturing & Engineering Training Centre.

Our next meeting is on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023. The proposed agenda we have includes presentations from:

CLES – Centre for Local Economic Strategies  
Hynet - The future of Green Skills  
Warrington PLEDGE

The meeting will also be used for reflection and discussion on what we've seen and to provide an opportunity for members to suggest priority areas and recommendations for the report.

#### **5.0 Marketing & Communications**

**LP** – advised members, comms have been focused on supporting the promotion of the public survey and I am happy to hear we got good returns. In addition to

<p>this we have put out a press release on the commission and provided toolkit to all members to use via their own social media channels and networks.</p> <p><b>KS</b> – asked, the overall response rate on the survey is this comparable of the population?</p> <p><b>EB</b> – Unfortunately not as the number of responses are too small to have any statistical significance, however it gives us more of an insight on trends of the population.</p> <p><b>SB</b> – requested, next time can we have a report on the analysis of the survey results?</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Report to be prepared for next meeting</p>	<p><b>KG</b></p>
<p><b>6.0 AOB</b></p>	