



# Warrington Skills Commission

## MINUTES

**Date:** Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2023

**Time:** 11am – 1pm

**Location:** The Chamber, Warrington Town Hall

<b>Members:</b>	Professor Steven Broomhead (Chair) (SB), Gareth Hopkins (GH), Cllr Sarah Hall (SH), Cllr Tom Jennings (TJ), James Gresty (JG), Nichola Newton (NN), Alison Cullen (AC), Richard Bayley (RB), Glen Smith (GS), Ehsan Akram (EA), John Patterson (JS), Stephen Fitzsimons (SF), Hayley Eglin (HE), Diane Appleton (DA)
<b>Committee Support:</b>	Steve Park (SP), Eleanor Blackburn (EB), Kate Gibbons (KG), Laurence Pullan (LP), Paula Worthington (PW), Will Stronge (WS), Lukas Kikuchi (LK)
<b>Apologies:</b>	Joe Manning (JM), Kate Guise (KG), Damian Richards-Clarke (DRC), Cllr Kath Buckley (KB), Nicki O'Connor (NOC), Gary Jenkins (GJ), Kirstie Simpson (KS), Danielle Bennett (DB)
<b>Observers:</b>	Claire Tandy (CT) Sellafield Ltd

MINUTES	ACTIONS
<p><b>1.0 Welcome &amp; Introduction</b></p> <p><b>1.1 New joining members</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Danielle Bennett from Plastic Omnium has agreed to join the commission</li> </ul> <p><b>1.2 Introduction to Autonomy Research Ltd</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>WS</b> - Introduced Autonomy to the members. WS advised, that the company was established 5 years ago and supports organisations with various research programmes and more recently skills review. Autonomy's role will include the delivery of a quantitative data analysis using available data and statistics, including job vacancies, as well as an analysis of the qualitative data via the workshop and key witness sessions which will be held throughout phase 2 of the commission.</li> </ul>	

### **1.3 Apologies of absence**

- Danielle Bennett, Plastic Omnium
- Gary Jenkins, No Brainer Creative Intelligence
- Nicki O'Connor, Department for Work & Pensions
- Cllr Kath Buckley, WBC, Opposition Member
- Joe Manning, MIDAS, CEO
- Kirstie Simpson, University of Chester,
- Eunice Simmons, University of Chester
- Damian Richards-Clarke, WBC, Senior Communications Officer
- Cllr Sarah Hall, WBC, Cabinet Member

### **2.0 Minutes and Actions**

**SB** – advised, Rishi Sunak has recently announced the government’s five missions. RB was there to hear this first hand and SB asked if he has any feedback.

**RB** – confirmed that he was there to hear the announcement first hand. One of their five missions is to work closer to sectors such as the NHS, Care and Education sectors. The speech clearly positions them to start transactions post-election.

The next election will cover a period of two terms, therefore, everything announced covered the next 10 year period.

**RB** – added, Atkins are currently carrying out some research around the levelling up programme, where they have commissioned a company called Trajectory to carry out a piece of research with 16-21 year olds.

This commission will deliver a quantitative analysis report which will be available by the end of May. RB advised that he wants to share the findings with members of the Skills Commission and consultants Autonomy to gather their views and feedback.

**RB** – continued, Atkins will also be attending UKREiiF in May, where we will have representative on the panel.

**SB** – asked RB to confirm for the members what UKREiiF is.

**RB** – advised, it is the UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum. The UK’s version of MIPIM in Cannes. It enables the public sector and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector to hold a conference on property and investment opportunities and issues within the UK. RB advised members if anyone would like to attend, please make him aware and he is happy to pass on some contact details. Under 25’s are free of charge to attend.

<p><b>SP</b> – confirmed, Warrington Borough Council are joining up with Cheshire East and Cheshire West and will be in attendance at UKREiiF. The Skills Commission will be part of the message being delivered at the event.</p> <p><b>EB</b> – advised, we do have a clash with this event and the date for your commission meeting in May. We will need to look at rearrange the meeting and KG will be in contact with a new date.</p> <p><b>SB</b> – raised, I am still in the role of Chair and we have not made any further progress on anyone being put forward to take over this role. I am waiting to hear back from a colleague on this and will update you at the next meeting.</p>	<p><b>KG</b></p>
<p><b>3.0 Presentation</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><del>3.1 Cheshire &amp; Warrington’s economy – a presentation from Metro Dynamics</del></b></p> <p><b>SP</b> - explained that Metro Dynamics are currently working with the LEP around Cheshire &amp; Warrington’s economy, however, unfortunately they have had to cancel last minute.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>3.2 Presentation of Warrington’s future employment growth &amp; opportunities</b></p> <p><b>SP</b> – advised, I have pulled together a thought piece which will hopefully start to feature in our workshops going forward. When we think about sectors, we think about skills, however, there are cross cutting skills that we needs to consider.</p> <p>The presentation looks at where we think growth opportunities will exist for Warrington, knowing Warrington’s economic legacy and history:</p> <p><b>Net Zero</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Net Zero will sit at the centre of Warrington, I would like to see a presentation from Hynet in a later meeting. They have some interesting statistics on electricity need over the coming years. Our ability to achieve Net Zero for Warrington, hydrogen will be needed to decarbonise industry, however it is not the same answer on a domestic level, nuclear will have to feature, however we don’t know if the government can support the levels required. For Warrington we are confident it will rely on Net Zero.</li> </ul> <p><b>Health &amp; Social Care</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We can’t continue to rely on foreign labour to deliver our services in NHS. This is a weakness and an area for skills investment. Digital skills are getting ever steeper, there are a very few number of organisations who know how to exploit the data. We need to understand technology more in health care, and how we can stay</li> </ul>	

healthy at home, using technology to prevent having to go to the GP and out of hour's services.

**Digital/Data Science**

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be in all of our lives. It is alien to some of us now, however for our young people it is dominating their lives.
- Augmented Reality – in the future we can be looking at meetings taking place in an online 3D community. Moving from one location to another.
- Digital security will be required to change and continually update as the digital sector evolves.
- Digital Marketing, we can already see how consumer messaging and consumer retail is changing as a result of digital marketing.

**SP** – concluded, before I move onto the personal skills required, SP advised, for me, there are three main areas of economic growth and skills development for Warrington which we can build on our current strengths:

- Net Zero
- Health & Social Care
- Digital/Data Science

**SF** – advised, he would like to reinforce the issue with a digital skills shortage, businesses can't fill vacancies today, never mind tomorrow.

**NN** – advised, the college can look to host a boot camp to support upskilling and recruitment.

**RB** – advised, Net Zero will require a heavy infrastructure to bring this into the area.

**GS** – advised, going back to the data security assumption, data security is already an issue with some Warrington businesses paying ransoms to get data back.

**EA** – advised, he feels Hydrogen is more of a medium to long term, where data is more the here and now.

**GS** – raised the topic of manufacturing automation.

**EB** – advised, we have a short video to play after this which will feature automation and detail the pros and cons of this for the economy

**SB** – advised, the shop Home Bargains have a base on the Omega site, just in the borough of St Helens – It is a huge site of automated services but there is still the requirement to maintain and service equipment.

We are used to seeing people react to the short term view with an immediate reaction.

**GH** – added, the defences spending by government is going up and up. This is also linked to digital security. The defences was once an industry subject to cuts, now it is exploding and will continue to do so for a while.

**NN** – Asked more on digital within Health & Social Care

**SP** – confirmed this is evolution of using technology in health & social care. It's will be the same for the government defences and housing trusts.

**SP** – continued, and moved on to discuss the life skills all employers will be looking for. I am not talking about just the 16-18 year olds, this will also apply to older people looking to change their career:

- **Technology literate** – being able to use technology and software packages
- **Digital literacy** – understanding what data means, what you can extract from it, not being scared of it, have the ability to build a picture of intelligence to be used productively
- **Critical thinking** – we are flooded with information hourly, we need people to have the ability to cut through what does and doesn't matter, this skill will be critical going forward
- **Emotional intelligence** – having self-awareness and the ability to show empathy is required to work as part of a team and to work in collaboration with other. The world of hybrid working is a new thing for most of us, however we need to have the ability to work and collaborate effectively with people in this way of working
- **Flexibility** – a workforce needs the ability to flex and embrace change as things are moving and changing much faster than before. The key to this is the mental resilience of people to be able to manage and deal with this within your workforce
- **Leadership skills** – exists at all levels within an organisation, taking on accountability and responsibility and looking for improvement is leadership, no matter what level you are working at
- **Time management** – we need to have the ability to flex in work. Having the awareness of time management will enable you to focus on what needs to be achieved. There are so many apps and tools available to help people to manage this, however people are also struggling with managing their own personal time, juggling work and families etc.
- **Curiosity and continuous learning** – this is the only way for us to grow and to continue to evolve. We need to encourage curiosity and inspire continuous learning.

We need to consider over the commission do we have everything we believe is needed in this list, and where we believe these personal skills would fit best.

**CT** – asked, can I check communication is part of leadership as this is important for us

**SP** – yes, this is included within the Leadership skills

**GS** – advised, project management as well and time management is needed

**PW** – added, thinking about our SEN children. We have recently completed our SEN Inspection and were asked about the skills agenda and how are we being flexible and adapting. People are asking where the practical skills and needs of our SEN children are welcomed. We are delivering work on mental health in schools, covering emotional resilience and preparing for the work place. We have spoken to the Youth Council at Priestly, talking about young people’s ambitions and aspirations – what is their pipeline for the future and what’s available for them is important and we need to think how we communicate that. It would be interesting to engaging with young people as part of this commission.

**SP** – asked PW, how do we do this?

**PW** – advised, the Youth Council at Priestly was powerful, children are unfiltered when we asked them can you see a place in this borough for yourself, if not why, where can you see yourself and what do you know about Warrington

**SF** – added, we also have the youth cabinet.

**SP** – advised, I am interested in the unfiltered comment. Looking at some of the information from the LEP, the young people have fixed views of what they want from employment and the work place as they see it. They consume information differently. I would like to explore the filtering and see if there are any preconceived ideas of employment we need to tackle.

**AC** – advised, I really liked the presentation and found it interesting. Can the slides be shared as I would like to share this with my team as this would also apply to a 40 year old looking to change career path.

**SB** – asked, if we agree these are the skills needed, how do we teach these? Can you teach time management and curiosity?

**NN** – advised, the teaching of time management and curiosity for example is through the pedagogy and how this is integrated in the curriculum. The

**KG**

way they learn and observe others etc. is built in with the curriculum which sparks curiosity.

**DA** – agreed with NN and advised, I find this at the university, but it's the link between them understanding what they are doing and the skills they are developing. They need the time to reflect on what has been learnt.

Social capital is also another area to look at. We recognise a lot of students use words but don't have understanding or network as well as these core skills.

**RB** – added the sharp end of this is the job application. These skills are competencies based, is there a system where we can identify those who are technically brilliant but their competencies need to improve. The system could signpost them to a service to help.

**SP** – advised, this is something the DwP funding and programmes for the future can really help with this

**HE** – advised DwP already have this for our employees – there is a course they can attend on how to complete application and ensure you can meet the competencies.

**NN** – added, providing really good meaningful employment placements will support this.

**RB** – advised, we need to agree a local approach to manage this and focus on outcomes from the commission.

**JP** – advised, measurements and reflection needs to be a part of the apprenticeship standards.

**SP** – advised, we have a 12 minute video to now show which will tie up these conversations together.

### ***3.3 Upskilling – Bridging the digital divide***

<https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/upskilling.html>

**SP** – advised, what I found interesting is not about protecting our future economy it is protecting people. We need to keep this in the centre of our minds and protecting communities in Warrington. Thinking about when the Coal mines closed and the lack of strategy to support people at the time resulted in people still feeling the effects of that today.

<p><b>SB</b> – Simultaneously we are looking at upskilling and reskilling’s. This commission needs to think about the capacity and the how are we going to do that.</p> <p>Going forward, when we meet, can we see some of these sectors/industries in action? Amazon and ASDA offer visits. The future of call centres, this was a priority at one point, what is the future of these now, maybe include a car manufacture – Land Rover/Bentley.</p> <p><b>SP</b> – confirmed this is a really important point made – SF can support with making these connections. We need to learn what else is out there, for example automation in health care.</p>	<p><b>SF</b></p>
<p><b>4.0 Update on Commission progress so far</b></p> <p><b>EB</b> – provided an update as to where we are at with the commission itself:</p> <p><b>Phase 2</b> is the current phase, there are a number of elements to work through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Desktop review</i> – Autonomy Research Ltd are pulling this together</li> <li>- <i>Local &amp; National Skills Policy</i> - we are looking for someone to present</li> <li>- <i>Current intelligence and networks</i> – if you have these please connect with us and we will link you with Autonomy</li> <li>- <i>Public consultation</i> – thank you for comments received from members. The final version is being pulled together by our business colleagues, with the target to launch on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> March for four weeks. There will be the option to extend these time should we feel the need to and we will keep an eye out on responses and carry out direct marketing if required. A note to all members to please help to circulate the survey via your networks</li> <li>- <i>Workshops</i> – we have met with some colleagues already to discuss how we can facilitate some of these workshops. We are thinking of running five main workshops:</li> </ul> <p>Barriers to employment/skills dev – vulnerable</p> <p>Enterprise – LSIP have held sub regional focus groups which Autonomy have attended, however we still feel the need to hold a Warrington dedicated workshop</p>	<p><b>All</b></p>



<p>Education/skills providers – employability skills  Young People – series of sessions with schools  General stakeholder  Smaller supplementary online workshops – future economy, digital, Health &amp; Social Care</p> <p><b>SF</b> – asked, can we link with companies such as Sellafield and United Utilities to get feedback from their apprentices?</p> <p><b>EB</b> – confirmed yes, they can be involved.</p> <p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We will be reaching out to you, but we want also want to hear from you on which workshops you are interested in attending and supporting. Dates will be set soon, therefore if you can communicate with KG, we will try and work around diaries.</li> <li>- Open call for evidence and presentation from expert witness. We are looking for member’s guidance on who you want to hear from or visit, themes of what you want to hear about and any suggestions of people will give us guidance on who to approach.</li> </ul> <p><b>EB</b> – asked the members, do we want to send out through our networks and open invite for people wanting to present or send in written submission?</p> <p><b>SF</b> – advised, I think it needs to be as open as possible as long as we make sure we have criteria to support anyone we may need to decline.</p> <p><b>SB</b> – added, an open approach works well</p> <p><b>EB</b> – continued, we need to carry out a deep dive analysis in a skills SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), this will continue throughout commission.</p> <p><b>Time Scales</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Phase 2 was due to be completed by the end of March. We knew this was a challenge, therefore we have extended this to the end of April/ beginning of May which has pushed the commission end date towards the end of July. We will therefore add an additional meeting in July.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>All</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>KG</b></p>
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**SB** – advised, it would be good to have one of the sessions focused on the qualifications framework. What they are and what the difference is, what we have on offer currently and what it will be on offer in five years’ time.

**NN** – advised, yes we can do that, it is a complicated picture especially with the T-levels. There are many routes available and it becomes hugely complex when you bring in the adult element.

**JG** – confirmed, I am also happy to help and contribute to what the picture is.

We are looking at skills for the future and how we can up skill, however we are still in a very Victorian education system which doesn’t align with the world of work now with the flexibility and possible four day working week. We won’t be able to resolve this however, maybe the workshop group can explore further how Warrington can lead the way with a new approach. We are currently shoehorning education in and the problems are becoming clear and showing with attendance and parental engagement etc. The look of education needs to be looked into.

**NN** – advised, the college are also looking at this and advised, you are right we need to look at the way we are teaching.

**PW** – added, what we are seeing in Warrington is a growing number of elected educated at home or other than school. Parents/carers philosophical approach on the education system is driving these decisions and it will ultimately have an impact on the skills gap agenda. We need to have a conversation now to see how we can bridge the gap.

**NN**- advised, the future of work and how we work at the college needs to be focused on. If we decide to move to a digital solution we need to be moving to digital model that will enrich the traditional offer.

## **5.0 Marketing & Communications**

**LP** – provided communication update:

- Press release of the commission has gone out following the last meeting
- Wrap around promotion of the commission to be agreed
- The next priority is the communication to support the resident survey. This will be achieved with a tool kit which will be sent out to members before next meeting
- Inform future approach for future communication and the action plan of engagement.

**SF** – asked, can we have an article for the insight magazine?

<p><b>LP</b> – advised, yes he will get something sent over.</p> <p>We can also link up with other members and their organisations and push out content to be used by their communications team should this be available.</p> <p><b>GS</b> – asked, can we run an incentive for people to complete and pass on the survey?</p> <p><b>LP</b> – advised, yes we can look into this</p> <p><b>EB</b> – added, thank you to the comms teams for our Skills Commission logo.</p>	<p><b>LP/DRC</b></p> <p><b>ALL</b></p>
<p><b>6.0 AOB</b></p> <p>None</p>	