



# Warrington Skills Commission

## MINUTES

**Date:** Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2023

**Time:** 3pm – 5pm

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

<b>ATTENDEES:</b>	Steven Broomhead (Chair) (SBH), Steve Park (SP), Eleanor Blackburn (EB), Paula Worthington (PW), Kate Gibbons (KG), Cllr Kath Buckley (KB), Cllr Nathan Sudworth (NS), Cllr Sarah Hall (SH), Nichola Newton (NN), Stephen Fitzsimons (SF), Will Stronge (WS), Pat Jackson (PJ), Kirstie Simpson (KS), Damian Richards-Clarke (DRC), Ehsan Akram (EA), Trevor Langston (TL), Sarah Emes-Young (SEY), Mark Duffy (MD)
<b>APOLOGIES:</b>	Cllr Tom Jennings, Alison Cullen, Richard Bayley, John Patterson, Laurence Pullen, James Gresty, Kate Guise, Gareth Hopkins, Gary Jenkins, Nicki O'Connor, Glen Smith, Andy Moorcroft

MINUTES	ACTIONS
<b>1.0 Welcome &amp; Introduction</b>	
<b>1.1 Apologies of absence</b>	
<b>2.0 Minutes and Actions</b>	
<b>2.1 Matters arising</b>	
- No matters arising.	
<b>2.2 Minutes</b>	
- Agreed as correct	
<b>3.0 Presentation</b>	

### 3.1 Presentation of draft report of findings and recommendations

- **WS** – Introduction of his Autonomy's role and individual's involvement.

Presentation delivered to provide a snapshot of the full report which has been shared.

In addition to this there will also be a summary report with key themes and recommendations.

[Warrington - July 11 report presentation - Autonomy.pdf](#)

### 3.2 Q&A Session - Opportunity for Clarification

- **SF** – I found the breakdown of skills profiles to be really helpful.
- **SP** – I found the graph that shows soft skills very interesting. How do we know providers are aware of that necessity and how this is incorporated into their offer?
- **NN** – This is a huge thing for the college, and we work hard to offer soft skills on all courses.
- **SP** – How easy is it to teach soft skills?
- **NN** – This is not just for post 16, this is life-long learning. With some students it is easier for them than other, but there are no exams to pass for this, but we try and build this into the culture not just in the learning.
- **PJ** – Students performing poorly at school are also struggling with their soft skills. And we need to look at soft skills not just from an employer demand but for all learners to assist with learning at all levels of the curriculum.
- **MF** – We feel this is the responsibility of the employers to support the confidence building of these soft skills within the work shops and the use of mentoring programmes.
- **NN** – It is useful to know how our learners engage with the soft skills. However, it is an individual learner curve.
- **SBH** – The section on the skills body, it would be helpful if we can reference where Warrington is at with their work with government on devolution. If we get devolved funding, I would like to see an allocated pot of funding to address skills needs specifically for Warrington. SP can help with the detail of this for the report.

- **SF** – 10 years ago, did the base and UTC come out as a recommendation?
- **SP** – No they didn't come out as an exact recommendation, but this was our perception of the recommendation.
- **EB** – Connectivity between employers and skills providers came out strong in the last commission as it did not exist in the same way it does now. This report feels like the next phase is to build on the connectivity and build a place-based future for Warrington.
- **SP** – Picking up on the continuous check in points and data capture, the skills body should carry out perpetual skills analysis and data gathering.
- **EB** – In this commission the expectations from employers has come out. For example, ethical employers.
- **SP** – There is a perception vs reality issue which the ongoing data capture can address.
- **NN** – Help employers access apprenticeship levy, alignment of skills to employers, this aligns to the work already happening in the college and we have clearly got a lot to contribute to this, but it would be useful to understand what you mean by a skills body if this is already happening.
- **SBH** – This would be more of a policy making body to support the work that is already happening.
- **NN** – We would welcome this and happy to share the work which is already happening at the college.
- **PJ** – Identify some things we don't know. Census material from 2021 doesn't really show us how things are now post covid. Some people may now work in Manchester and live in Warrington but spend 3-4 days a week working from home.

Working with DWP recently we can see the number of people looking for jobs and the higher salaries have dropped and there has been an increase of around 5,000 inactive people.

**ACTION:** PJ to share the detail of these report to Autonomy.

**PJ**

- **NS** – Is there any work pre devolution which we can do to show how things would look post devolution. Is this the thought around the skills board?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>SBH</b> – It can't be a funding body so we can think about what this skills body would look like.</li> </ul> <p>What are the timescales for the publication of the report as it would be good to take this to the business conference in September.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>EB</b> – We will get something prepared for the business conference in September as Autonomy are looking to get the final report back to us in August.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>4.0 Refreshments Break</b></p>	
<p><b>5.0 Reflection – Breakout session</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does the report reflect the population of Warrington and the reasons why they want to leave? We are finding people are living in the city but are commuting to work in Warrington. One of the reasons behind this is the social and cultural offer the cities offer. Sellafield have found that 85% of their interns are living in either Liverpool or Manchester. We need to ask the question why is this? Some are stating there is nowhere to live in Warrington.</li> <li>- Cheshire &amp; Warrington link is referred to within the report, however we also need to focus on our economic links with Liverpool and Manchester also.</li> <li>- Better communication and raising awareness of the provider offer is needed and could form part of the role of the skills body.</li> <li>- <b>SP</b> – We discussed, what gets measured gets done. How do we measure the soft skills e.g., essential communication skills? How do we know how effective is the teaching of soft skills is and does it translate into the world of work?</li> <li>- <b>NN</b> – How our learners engage in and outside of the classroom goes towards demonstrating their abilities but there are no assessments to complete. Seven areas within the college currently only have live briefs with employers.</li> <li>- <b>SP</b> – It is happening, but does it get measured and what does this look like? What is the result? Is it effective?</li> <li>- <b>NN</b>- A soft skills passport is something we can look at; however, employers are crucial to continuing the development of soft skills within the workplace.</li> </ul>	

- **TL** – This may be assessed at college, but it doesn't apply to those in secondary and university/higher education.
- **NS** – Do we need to have a targeted approach on demographics e.g., more disadvantaged require more attention in building soft skills?
- **PJ** – I think this stems from much earlier on in the education career, primary age or younger with the lack of soft skills. There needs to be a bigger focus on this.
- **EB** – I think it is quite complicated across the various providers. The college is ahead of this; however, it is not necessarily the case across all providers from pre school upwards. There are definitely learnings to be made in this area.
- **SF** – The skills body need to join together some of these things, including D of E, enterprise etc.
- **PW** – Politics around education – schools are struggling with the education framework which is outdated and doesn't meet the needs of our young people.

Families are struggling to bring up their children and we have a cohort of children very anxious and not in a position to learn.

We need to reflect and address the issue that our children are being failed by the system government have in place.

- **NN** – Education has become very competitive which is another obstacle providers are facing.
- **SP** – The skills body could write to government with some of these concerns e.g., outdated framework, fears of OFSTED, etc.
- **NN** – I see real scope in the college joining up with the UTC.
- **MD** – I was in WVR recently and attended a presentation for year 13. There were 3 girls in the presentation, and they all stayed behind to ask, why has nobody ever told us about engineering? I was taken back at this point as the boys were very aware.
- **EB** – If anybody has anything more to feedback into the report, please send it through to KG.

## 6.0 Update on progress so far

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The pledge conference was really useful and a really inspirational session.</li></ul>	
<b>7.0 Marketing &amp; Communications</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Update on comms will be detailed in the next meeting.</li></ul>	
<b>8.0 AOB</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- None</li></ul>	

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