

REPORT TO: PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting: 8 September 2016
Report of: Employment & Skills Board Partnerships and Projects Manager
Title: Update on the Exeter & the Heart of Devon Employment and Skills Board

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

No function is being exercised. This report is for information only.

1 What is the report about?

- 1.1 To update Members on the activities and progress of the Exeter & the Heart of Devon Employment and Skills Board (ESB) in promoting the value of skills development, supporting business growth and getting local people into work.
- 1.2 The report explores some of the skill issues affecting the local economy, sets out the ESB's priorities and plans, and provides examples of where the Board has made a difference over the last 12 months.

2 Recommendations:

- 2.1 That Place Scrutiny Committee note the report, comment on the progress made and priorities set by the Employment and Skills Board (ESB) in prioritising, planning and implementing interventions designed to better skill a more productive workforce in support of a sustainable and thriving economy; and
- 2.2 Exeter City Council's financial contribution for the post of ESB Partnerships and Projects Manager's role is extended for a further 12 months.

3 Reasons for the recommendation:

- 3.1 To inform members of progress made in the last 12 months and to ensure the valuable work undertaken by the ESB continues.

4 What are the resource implications including non financial resources:

- 4.1 Exeter City Council and East Devon District Council co-fund the Partnerships and Projects Manager's role each contributing £15,000 per year to coordinate and deliver ESB activity, across the Exeter and the Heart of Devon area. This post is employed by East Devon District Council.

5 Section 151 Officer comments:

- 5.1 There are no financial implications contained in this report.

6 What are the legal aspects?

- 6.1 None identified

7 Monitoring officer Comments:

- 7.1 This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Background

- 8.1 The purpose of the ESB is to develop '**a local world-class workforce where every individual matters**' which is worked towards through our 'inform, influence and implement' mechanisms. Their values underpin everything the ESB does.
- 8.2 The ESB is an employer-led group with representation from businesses in key economic sectors which works in partnership with facilitators, funders and training providers. EHOD ESB are widely recognised and respected for their employer-led impartial approach.
- 8.3 Between September 2013, when Gill Bishop the previous Partnerships and Projects Manager left and May 2014 when the current post holder Oenone Thomas was recruited, the ESB was inactive. The post is now permanent. Significant progress and success has been made by the ESB since May 2014 with a stable, engaged and motivated 'team'.
- 8.4 The Chair of the ESB, Mark Shepherd from Waitrose/John Lewis sits on the HotSW LEP People Group which is one of the key groups advising the LEP Board focusing on employment and skills. Mark is well connected and highly respected in the business world. His contribution to the ESB routinely equates to 1.5 days a week and often exceeds this. Mark brings a wealth of leadership experience and knowledge about operating in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world. Employer in-kind contribution from key sectors across the partnership area broadly covering the increasingly large Travel to Work area of Exeter, is significant.
- 8.5 The ESB has a web presence where up-to-date information about their direction and achievements can be found. The ESB encourage an interactive approach through <http://GreaterExeterSkills.com> and @ExeterSkills.
- 8.6 The ESB actively participate in discussions about devolution, Further Education Area Reviews, Innovation Exeter, the EHOD Shared Growth Strategy, European Funding for Skills and Employment and other funding routes.
- 8.7 The ESB are looking to address underlying issues in order to improve opportunities for local people and help them to benefit from employment growth and to help businesses in a period of near full-employment. It is informed by reports and research and most recently the Exeter & the Heart of Devon Skills Plan Evidence Base (July 2015) researched and written by Ben Neild of the Marchmont Observatory, University of Exeter which identifies some possible skills priorities.

9 The Exeter & the Heart of Devon Skills Plan Evidence Base

- 9.1 The University of Exeter and the ESB have a good collaborative working relationship. As a result of this the University offered Ben Neild's (Marchmont Laboratory) time and expertise to write the Exeter & the Heart of Devon Skills Plan Evidence Base. The purpose of the report was to provide an evidence base for ESB's priority setting. A copy of the University of Exeter research can be viewed on <http://greaterexeterskills.com/world-class-workforce/> Updated intelligence and intelligence briefings for our events, including those of the public sector, are leveraged through this symbiotic relationship. The content of the Exeter & the Heart of Devon Skills Plan Evidence Base is used by other agencies including Exeter City Council.
- 9.2 The priorities within the report complement those identified by members of the board and work areas for the last twelve months, which are highlighted below.

9.2.1 Improving information advice and guidance.

This is fundamental for the ESB which:

- Is continuing to promote the need for independent and relevant Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) for young people and those returning to the workplace. For the ESB CEIAG encompasses a range of first-hand employer/education engagements which include – Work Experience (no longer mandatory for young people although the EHOD ESB believe it is essential), mock interviews, work place shadowing, business open days, careers advice, Stem and Construction Ambassadors and so on.
- Are still working with Industrial Cadets and Education Business Partnership South West to pilot accredited one week World Class Work Experience Placements at Silver Level (30 hours) with un-paralleled opportunities for a group of pilot schools. This pilot will be evaluated by all stakeholders.
- Is continuing to help young people who have experienced difficulty finding their way with work or training by supporting a new charity BEEP (Business Empowering Employment Programme). BEEP is a legacy of REEP (Rugby Empowering Employment Programme) which BBC Spotlight featured and in which HRH Prince Harry was interested.
- Are working with the University of Exeter on a number of initiatives (Global Challenges, Exeter Award, Careers Zone, Employer Engagement) to improve CEIAG and improve the retention of graduates.

9.2.2 Linking local people to local job creation

The ESB has been active. Some examples are:

- Used funding from DCC to run a free 'Untapped Talent Business Breakfast' encouraging employers to see the benefits and allaying the fears of employing people with Learning Disabilities (LD) or Autism. This successful collaborative event will be replicated across 3 other locations in EHOD. Only 6.7% of people with LD are in employment whilst most would like to be. Torbay and South Devon Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust lead with their inspiring Project Search (an international initiative) to fill a variety of posts across the hospital including in sterilisation of theatre equipment and in IT. Paul Maynard MP's Taskforce is very interested in this work. <https://greaterexeterskills.com/tag/work-readiness/>
- Is in the initial stages of a collaborative plan with DWP, Growth Point, care providers and Lidl to help recruit a range of employees for their planned distribution site which has received permission from EDDC. This initiative will include joined-up care for children of working parents, flexible working and career opportunities which given near full employment is beneficial to Lidl and local residents.
- Continues to help young people who have experienced difficulty finding their way with work or training through REEP (and now BEEP) which receive referrals from JobCentre Plus, Careers South West, St Loyes and other organisations. REEP exemplified collaborative working and has made a positive difference to the lives of participants who are linked with local jobs.
- Participated in some discussions with ECC, Crown Estates and Princesshay to provide a work place coordinator focusing on retail/hospitality employment from the unemployed pool. This project was regrettably awarded to a learning provider from Somerset without our fully understanding the mechanism of the appointment. Nevertheless we have invited the provider to join our next EHOD ESB Facilitator, Funder and Provider meeting.
- Has focused on employment and skills development around construction by contributing to the HotSW LEP Construction CEIAG group and in 2015

achieving a concordat of all EHOD Council leaders to adopt a shared approach to the Construction Industries Training Board (CITB) Client Based Approach (CBA) this has yet to be implemented by the councils.

- Was consulted about a plan to combat the recruitment challenges of the new Queen Street Dining quarter. Our ESB Hospitality Sector representative gave valuable time and experience to this project which is now being coordinated through Exeter College.

9.2.3 **Growing the number of apprenticeships.**

The ESB:

- Organised and ran a successful 'Tap into Top Talent' free employer business breakfast at Santander with funding won from the National Apprenticeship Service focusing on STEM and Higher and the new Degree level Digital Solutions apprenticeship launched by the University of Exeter. The event was part of the National Apprenticeship Week 2016 which was included in the national route for the Apprenticeship Torch.
- Organised and ran a successful 'Are you Ready for the Levy and Apprenticeships Target' free event for Public Sector organisations at the Met Office which focused on the importance of the Public Sector to the local economy, the changes to Apprenticeships from 2017 including the employer levy and the mandatory targets, and planning for possible collaborative work to implement them.
- Promoted opportunities, initiatives and local success stories through social media such as the local National Apprenticeship Week winners and Vocational Employer Awards, and apprenticeship vacancies. We worked with DCC on an Express & Echo campaign for the end of 2015/early 2016.
- Worked with Exeter to College to promote the highly successful Apprenticeship Expo held on 15 March.
- Is working with the Creative Industries through the Exeter Cultural Partnership and with the City Arts and Events Manager on a number of initiatives including exploiting the opportunities of the new Apprenticeships (post April 2017) within the Creative Industries and building on the legacy of the Big Weekend with the BBC for an event in the autumn.
- Pursuing the pilot of a 'carousel approach' Level 2 or 3 in Digital Marketing Apprenticeship. Lead by Cosmic apprentices will experience work with a range of host employers. The hypothesis is that this model will appeal to smaller businesses who do not wish or cannot provide a full-time apprenticeship and advantage the apprentices who will have experience in a number of sectors with a range of employers.
- Promoting, wherever possible, South West Apprenticeships, which employs construction apprentices who then work for a number of contractors in a similar way to the carousel approach pilot model. Construction is a particularly important sector for EHOD

9.2.4 **Addressing low levels of progression into Higher Education.**

The ESB:

- Works with organisations like Education Business Partnership South West, Careers South West, and the University of Exeter which reach out to bridge the gap and fly the flag for greater progression to Higher Education. We promote and where possible contribute to these important endeavours

- Our mantra of creating a “local World Class Workforce where every individual matters” raises the aspirations of our employer, provider, funder and facilitator members and the young people that they influence
- Works with Industrial Cadets and Education Business Partnership South West to pilot accredited one week World Class Work Experience Placements at Silver Level (30 hours) with un-paralleled opportunities will, we hope, raise aspirations and encourage students to stretch their horizons and possibly consider progression to Higher Education
- Were instrumental in retaining Big Bang South West event at the University of Exeter for 2016 and 2017 in which over a thousand young people are engaged and have the opportunity to meet teams from the university and experience the environment. This year we were pleased to be involved with Noreen Medland’s active research activity gaining insights to the planned post-school destinations of Young People.
- Participated in the ECC University Task and Finish Group.

9.2.4 **Graduate Retention.**

The ESB:

- Continued to promote the University of Exeter’s ‘Careers in the South West Campaign’ through social media and by encouraging our local employers to contribute to events held at the University of Exeter or involving their students.
- Promoted the University of Exeter’s ‘Work Shadow Scheme’ through Social Media
- Engaged with undergraduates at the ‘Grand Challenges’ event to talk about their plans, the factors which influence them, local opportunities and the benefits of getting to know employers.
- Continues to contribute to and promote initiatives like Innovation Exeter, ExeterStartUp, ExIST and the Impact Lab.

9.2.5 **Higher level and technical skills to support smart specialisation.**

This is vital to EHOD and the ESB:

- Contributes and supports the development of a ‘Data Analytics Skills Escalator’
- Focused on ‘Tap into Top Talent’ – See ‘9.2.3 Growing the Number of Apprenticeships’
- Continues to contribute to the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership’s Digital Skills, SW Digital Forum, Impact Lab, and Open Data Institute Devon initiatives
- Promoted events and news related to higher level and technical skills supporting smart specialisations using social media

10 Exeter & the Heart of Devon Employment & Skills Board

- 10.1 The ESB’s primary objective is to understand, facilitate and promote the skills needs of businesses within Exeter & the Heart of Devon economic area and to improve the skills of the workforce. The ESB’s mission is vital to the prosperity of the area and to the prospects of individuals and families. Simply put, the ESB’s mission is a “local world-class workforce where every individual matters”.
- 10.2 In the last year successful funding applications have secured circa £15,400 to fund numerous opportunities supplemented by significant amounts of in-kind support which is vital as funding becomes more scarce.

10.4 The ESB informs and influences, but the ability to address priority areas is largely dependent on the ESB's ability to attract funding and in-kind support. Without an ongoing revenue budget the ESB may not be as successful in achieving the priorities listed. Funding opportunities will be pursued and priority given to those which offer the best fit to enable the delivery of priority areas listed in section 9. In order to simplify the bidding process the ESB has resurrected EHOD ESB Co Ltd and has opened a bank account. Michelmores generously provides essential pro bono legal and professional advice to the ESB. Sources of funding are diminishing. Individual employer members have a part to play in working within their own sectors and as a collective EHOD ESB leads by example.

10.5 In the previous 12 months the ESB has:

- **REEP to BEEP (Rugby/Business Empowering Employment Programme)**
 - BBC Inside Out and Archant publications featured REEP in September
 - Darts Farm & Midas sponsored a celebration on 29/9 with RWC 2015 tickets
 - Young People had an audience with HRH Prince Harry on 7 October
 - The Great BEEP Launch 1 October at the Innovation Centre well attended
 - Three Young People were the 'stars of the show'
 - Businesses were keen to meet the young people in person and were impressed by their efforts and achievements
 - BEEP is going through charity registration.
 - High profile BEEP ambassadors, mentors and trustees have been recruited
 - Some funding has already been received from businesses, the sale of RWC memorabilia and the Exeter PA network has adopted BEEP as their charity of the year
 - A first BEEP programme has been scheduled for the autumn.

- **Innovation Exeter**
 - The Employment and Skills agenda is quite rightly 'ascending' across all sectors and at all levels but in STEM particularly
 - ESB was delighted to be part of Innovation Exeter from the outset and to continue to support the strategy
 - Links well with our Science Technology Engineering Mathematics theme which underpins many priorities
 - ESB instrumental in saving Big Bang SW (2,000 young people in one day) for Exeter in 2016 and 2017
 - EHOD Skills Plan Evidence Base is a useful for resource

- **National Apprenticeship Week (NAW)**
 - Tap into Top Talent Business Breakfast event
 - Are you Ready for the Levy – Public Sector event
 - Promotion of the Apprenticeship Expo at Exeter College
 - Disseminated updates about the Employer Levy, the Digital Account, the new Apprenticeship Standards which replace Frameworks
 - Subsequent connections made to Creative Industries through the Cultural Partnership

- **Local Employment & Skills in Construction**
 - Turbulent environment effected by uncertainty about Hinkley Point C, The EU Referendum and market conditions but the imperative to have sufficient skilled trades and professionals for the future is huge. It is a long slow progress
 - Concordat between councils to adopt same approach and councils asked to co-fund post to facilitate and enforce which has yet to happen
 - Interim measures being adopted on piece-meal basis, led by EDDC

- ESB well connected to CITB, Constructing Excellence and the HotSW LEP Construction Group especially in the area of Careers Information Advice and Guidance
- **Digital**
 - Piloting a Carousel ESB Digital Apprenticeship
 - Promoting the University of Exeter's Graduate Apprenticeship in Digital Solutions to potential students and employers
 - Proponent and supporter of the Data Analytics Skills Escalator
 - Piloting 'You Rock' a professional networking tool for younger people
- **Untapped Talent**
 - Secured funding for 4 business events to promote the business benefits for employing people with Learning Disabilities or Difficulties and Autism
 - Successfully ran the first event in the Teignbridge area and others will be planned to de-conflict with other similar events across EHOD.
 - This is theme is fundamental to our mantra "every individual matters"
- **World-class Work Experience**
 - Piloting of World-class Work Experience a quality assured and accredited scheme with:
 - Industrial Cadets (Duke of Edinburgh Award for Work Experience)
 - Education Business Partnership SW (legal and insurance assurance)
 - To accredit Work Experience at Silver Level 30 hours
 - Possibilities to extend to undergraduates and returners to workforce
- **GreaterExeterSkills.com**
 - Blog main communications mechanism and reduction of duplication
 - Link from www.exeter.gov.uk
 - GreaterExeterSkills works well and can link to reports and to twitter feed
 - More work on branding happening so that ESB work is rightly recognised
- **Information and Influence**
 - Maximising our limited resources to inform, influence and implement
 - Providing pertinent information to our members and the wider audience
 - Collecting and collating evidence to inform and influence eg EHOD Leaders, HotSW LEP, DWP and MP select committees

11 Regional context

- 11.1 The landscape in which we operate is more volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous than last year. Swinging cuts and re-prioritisation of funds for Adult Learning, the introduction of the Employer Levy to fund apprenticeships for larger organisation, the Higher Education White Paper lifting the cap of £9000 tuition fees for some HE institutions, the decision to remove the exception of tuition fees for students NHS related degrees which were previously exempted and the decision to leave the EU which funded the Erasmus programme, European Research grants and many of the work readiness programmes (amongst others) has led to talented and experienced teachers and tutors leaving the profession with the exception of those involved in apprenticeship delivery.
- 11.2 The Area Review of Further Education colleges does not map on to the HotSW LEP instead the government has adopted a Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly area. The recommendation is that there will be mergers and a multi-sited collaborative approach adopted reducing the number of overall colleges. The HotSW LEP is lobbying for Somerset to be included in the review area.

11.3 On a more positive note partnership working is the best way to mitigate the negatives, apprenticeships will receive more funding through the employer levy, our colleges are rated highly by OFSTED and there are opportunities through possible devolution. Within this context ESB is planning a programme of meetings and activities for the remaining part of 2016 and into 2017.

12 Value Added

12.1 Apart from the £15,400 of funding won by ESB to enhance skills within EHOD there have been significant qualitative successes which add value and weight to the business case for the existence of the ESB.

12.2 Much of our work is long-term and difficult to measure meaningfully using a quantitative approach. However, we have:

- Adopted a qualitative case study approach and begun to use post event survey monkey questionnaires and 'bulls-eye' ratings
- Used an iterative design approach with careful piloting and planning of projects to maximise opportunities and minimise resources when working with partners
- Benefitted from generous in-kind ongoing employer partner contributions estimated to be equivalent to be circa £60,000 which include:
 - £12,600 of employer partners time to attend meetings. This does not include their time in preparation or participation in activities eg contributing to the Public Sector – Ready for the Levy event
 - £5,550 of free venue and hospitality (for ESB employer, and facilitator, funder and provider meetings and events in non-member premises)
 - In excess of £37,000 equivalent of our Chair's voluntary time and support from Waitrose for fuel and resources
 - Research and report writing and presentations from the Marchmont Observatory at the University of Exeter
 - £9000 of Facilitator, Funder and Provider partners time to attend meetings. This does not include their time in preparation or participation in activities eg contributing to the Untapped Talent Event.
 - Michelmores provide pro-bono advice, secretarial and legal support for EHOD ESB Co Ltd the cost of which we have yet to calculate but nevertheless appreciate greatly
- ESB is well respected and recognised as an active, creative and cross-border agent and as such has attracted attention from across the broader region.
- The Partnerships and Projects Manager works in partnership with council colleagues, especially those in Economic Development to provide intelligence, and complement their activities and priorities.

12.3 During the next twelve months we expect to:

- Convene a summit of CEs, Leaders, Economic Development Officers, Portfolio Holders from EDDC, ECC, MDDC, TDC and DCC to agree appropriately prioritized and resourced Employment and Skills function
- Organise and run three more Untapped Talent Events in the greater Exeter area
- Inform and influence members and other organisations about Employment and Skills related topics and implement wherever appropriate and where funding can be identified
- Develop our identity and work on strengthening our organisation
- Complete and evaluate the World-class Work Experience Placement pilot
- Work with the Cultural Partnership to develop their workforce especially through the apprenticeship route

- Continue to assist BEEP (Business Empowering Employment Programme) through charity registration and to help its first cohort of Young People and their mentors
- Run ESB three more meetings for each of our two sub-groups (Employer and Facilitator, Funder and Providers groups) and four EHOD ESB Co Ltd meetings in order to disseminate information, gather intelligence and prioritise actions
- Work with the University of Exeter on graduate retention, Innovation Exeter and the Data Analytics Skills Escalator
- Work with Providers as changes in Government and Brexit decisions unfold
- Approach Lidl about local work opportunities for EHOD residents
- Promote and support Apprenticeships

13 How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

13.1 The ESB seeks to identify and address skills and employment issues affecting the local economy. It contributes to delivering the council's corporate plan, including:

- Help me run successful business –The ESB's aspiration is to up-skill the local workforce to support local business productivity and thereby help to attract new businesses to relocate here. 'Help me get back to financial independence –The ESB's current projects cover a range of skills needs from those furthest from the workplace to highly skilled specialist skills development. The majority of small businesses rely on on-the-job training with little formalised learning and in times of financial constraint all but mandatory training tends to be shelved. On-the-job training works quite well where an existing skills set needs to be replicated but it does not address skills which are new to the organisation.
- Help me get back to financial independence – work with local partners to explore how we can join up services to help residents to find or get back into employment – The ESB works with organisations such as Jobcentre Plus, Careers SW, Pluss, CoLab and St Loyes in order to join up services.

14 What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

14.1 Without the City Council's contribution to funding 50% of the post of ESB Partnerships and Projects Manager this important work will not be achieved. This was demonstrated when the previous post holder was not replaced immediately which led to the demise of the organisation and the positive difference it made.

14.2 Considerable thought and effort has been dedicated to achieving high-calibre board membership who bring considerable expertise, knowledge, profile and resources to the ESB. Their involvement will be lost should the ESB lapse again.

15 What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing? Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults; economy; safety and the environment?

15.1 The ESB promotes equality and diversity within the workforce, and safeguards young people and vulnerable adults. By consciously reflecting that 'we are doing the right thing' we will safeguard the environment and individual's health and well being:

- Some ESB employers have identified their difficulties in achieving diversity within their workforces or in certain specialisations or levels of responsibility. The EHOD ESB is committed to especially promoting STEM careers to young women and aspiration to everyone.
- DBS checks are carried out on all mentors and trustees recruited for the BEEP project as the participants are potentially under 18 years of age or considered vulnerable.

There are financial and time resource implications of this route but without this measure we cannot work with this age group.

- Education Business Partnership – The ESB have ensured that all young people and employer hosts participating in our World-Class Work Experience placements are appropriately covered by insurance for the placement.
- It is recognised that working individuals with greater control over their own destiny than those out of work, are happier and healthier individuals. In turn they provide better role models for their children and contribute to the local economy. The work of the ESB supports this.

16 Are there any other options?

- 16.1 The HoSW LEP is one of the largest LEPs in England and has varied and vast issues across the full LEP area. In the past there have been discussions that there should be a Devon-wide ESB although the existing arrangement was thought more effective in delivering the particular needs of the differing functional economic areas within Devon. The EHOD ESB is the only Employer-led ESB within the HotSW LEP and as such is well-placed and well-respected.

Oenone Thomas, ESB Partnerships and Projects Manager

Victoria Hatfield, Economy & Enterprise Manager

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None

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