

**REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ECONOMY**  
**Date of Meeting: 12 November 2015**  
**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 and 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 the Scrutiny Committee Economy note the report, comment on the progress made and priorities set by ESB in prioritising, planning and implementing interventions designed to better skill a more productive workforce in support of a sustainable and thriving economy.
- 2.2 Funding for the post of ESB Partnerships and Projects Manager's role is extended post March 2016 for a further three years.

**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.

**5 Section 151 Officer comments:**

- 5.1 There are no additional financial implications contained within this report.

**6 What are the legal aspects?**

- 6.1 None.

**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**'. This underpins everything we do.
- 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 providers.
- 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 funded until March 2016. Significant progress and success has been made by the ESB since May 2014.
- 8.4 The ESB has a web presence where up-to-date information about their direction and achievements can be found. We encourage an interactive approach through <http://GreaterExeterSkills.com> and @ExeterSkills.
- 8.5 The ESB are looking to address underlying issues in order to improve opportunities for local people and help them to benefit from employment growth. 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 approach, 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. Previously, priority setting had been based on local intelligence gathering from board members and other more general associated research. A copy of the University of Exeter research can be viewed on <http://greaterexeterskills.com/world-class-workforce/>
- 9.2 The University of Exeter report focuses on EHOD within a regional and national context. The priorities within the report complement those identified by members of the board and current work areas, which are highlighted below.

### 9.2.1 **Improving information advice and guidance.** The ESB:

- contributed to the development of the Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance standards commissioned by the HotSW LEP, in particular to the assurance that advice is independent of the provider
- are 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
- continue to work on the Rugby Empowering Employment Programme (REEP) and are developing the Business Empowering Employment Programme (BEEP) to help young people who have experienced difficulty finding their way with work or training. REEP and BEEP both combine an intensive 10 day programme where individuals explore and reflect on their skills, talents and ambitions with a transition to work supported by volunteer trained mentors. HRH Prince Harry requested a meeting with REEP young people during his recent visit.

### 9.2.2 **Linking local people to local job creation.** The ESB:

- focused on employment and skills development around construction by researching and recommending that local councils align their planning and procurement policies to ensure that developers provide local employment and skills development opportunities. Implementation through the Construction Industry Training Board's (CITB) Client Based Approach and a jointly funded coordinators post is currently being sought.
- bid for and used £52K European Local Response Funding to pilot Customer Service Training in preparation for Rugby World Cup 2015 in Exeter as a model for a burgeoning 'event tourism' sector as the sector seeks to diversify. 256 participants received free training and 79% voluntarily undertook free City & Guilds Level 2 accreditation paid for by our funding.
- helped 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.
- is discussing with Crown Estates and Princesshay to provide a work place coordinator focusing on retail/hospitality.

### 9.2.3 **Growing the number of apprenticeships.** The ESB:

- hosted the National Apprenticeship Week 2015 – the Exeter & the Heart of Devon Summit at River Cottage to bring together local councils and experts for an Apprenticeship Update
- hosted the National Apprenticeship Week Employer Engagement Evening at River Cottage that opened with an interactive hour of discussion and which included a range of topics from micro business considering employing apprentices for the first time, through to major employers wishing to combat their ageing workforce through an investment in younger people and more apprentices
- are piloting 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. Cosmic has bid for funding to help off-set the additional costs of the pilot and is currently waiting to hear about the result of the bid.
- are 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
- 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 have begun to work with DCC on an Express & Echo campaign for the end of 2015/early 2016.

### 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
- 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

- work 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 2016 event, which will be attended by 2000 young people from the South West, at the University of Exeter for 2016 and 2017.
- Work with the University of Exeter to improve the reach of their Outreach team is currently underway.

#### 9.2.5 **Graduate Retention.** The ESB:

- promoted the University of Exeter's 'Careers in the South West Campaign' through social media and by encouraging our local employers to contribute to the event held at the University of Exeter
- identified the need for earlier exposure to undergraduates of local employment opportunities to compete with national and international corporates who woo undergraduates from year one
- promoted the University of Exeter's 'Work Shadow Scheme' through Social Media
- invited current undergraduates to the 'Unlocking Big Data – Investing in Human Capital' event at the Met Office to gather their input and so that they had the opportunity to meet with local Big Data employers
- contributes to initiatives like Innovation Exeter and the Impact Lab.

#### 9.2.6 **Higher level and technical skills to support smart specialisation.** The ESB:

- has organised and hosted an 'Unlocking Big Data – Investing in Human Capital' interactive event at the Met Office focusing on the people and skills needed to exploit the opportunities of the 'new oil'. The intelligence and interest gathered has informed decision making and linked with developments with the Science Park, Innovation Exeter and other related events
- contributed to the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership's Digital Skills, SW Digital Forum, Impact Lab, and Open Data Institute Devon events
- promoted events and news related to higher level and technical skills supporting smart specialisations using social media

## 10 **Exeter and 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 Mark Shepherd, Chair of the ESB, is a Waitrose Manager, member of the East Devon Business Forum and importantly a member of the Heart of the South West (HoSW) Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) People Group. The People Group is one of the key groups advising the HoSW LEP Board focusing on employment and skills. Mark Shepherd provides the Exeter and the Heart of Devon area with vital direct representation and will help ensure that the region is appropriately represented.
- 10.3 As previously mentioned, a new ESB Partnerships and Projects Manager was recruited in May 2014 on a fixed-term contract until March 2016. The new board has an improved membership with significant employer representation for key sectors across the partnership area broadly covering the increasingly large Travel to Work area of Exeter. The Chair is in

the process of recruiting two new members. The structure and frequency of ESB board meetings has been streamlined to two full board meeting every six months and the Employers Group, and Facilitators, Funders and Providers Group meeting roughly every quarter.

10.4 In the last year successful funding applications have secured circa £68,000 to fund numerous training opportunities and significant amounts of in-kind support. Further funding will be sought through a range of sources although this is a resource intensive exercise and not always successful.

10.5 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 is attempting to open a bank account although this is hampered by red tape. Individual employer members have a part to play in working within their own sectors and as a collective leading by example.

10.6 In the previous 12 months the ESB has:

- **RWC Hospitality Training**

- Successful bid for £53,438 of European Funding
- 10 courses successfully completed at Sandy Park
- 109% target (256 delegates)
- 79% delegates opted to take a free optional Level 2 qualification
- An evaluation of the initiative was completed and disseminated
- The Purple Cloud (training provider) & EHOD ESB proved an excellent combination

- **REEP (Rugby Empowering Employment Programme)**

- Very successful and intensive – these young people were the “furthest from the workplace” (see the attached case study)
- 13 (93%) young people still engaged
- BBC Inside Out and Archant publications featured REEP in September
- Darts Farm & Midas sponsored a celebration on 29 September with RWC 2015 tickets
- Young People had an audience with HRH Prince Harry on 7 October

- **BEEP (Business Empowering Employment Programme) a charity**

- Making REEP sustainable by asking business for sponsorship
- The Great BEEP Launch 1 October at the Innovation Centre well attended
- Three Young People were the ‘stars of the show’
- Businesses keen to meet young people in person
- Will need to pursue this effort to ensure that this remains an option for similar young people in our communities

- **Innovation Exeter**

- The employment and Skills agenda is ‘ascending’
- ESB delighted to be part of Innovation Exeter
- Links well with our Science Technology Engineering Mathematics focus
- 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 a useful for resource

- **National Apprenticeship Week (NAW)**
  - Summit with all local councils and HotSW LEP represented for NAW 2015
  - Event at River Cottage with new contacts made for NAW 2015
  - Further work with Devon and National Apprenticeships and now contributing to National Apprenticeships Week 2016
  - Disseminated of the consultation paper about the Employer Levy
- **Local Employment & Skills in Construction**
  - Imperative huge and imminent but a long slow progress
  - Concordat between councils to adopt same approach
  - 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
- **Digital**
  - Planning to pilot a Carousel ESB Digital Apprenticeship
  - Working on a Digital Strategy for EHOD with three elements to skills:
    - higher/technical/analytical data
    - Digital Leadership
    - digital skills for modern workforce and living
  - Organised a highly successful 'Unlocking Big Data – Investing in Human Capital' event at the Met Office
  - Submitted evidence to an MPs Select Committee
- **World-class Work Experience**
  - Pilot 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
  - This will be our flagship activity for work with schools
  - Possibilities to extend to undergraduates and returners to workforce
- **SOLD (Shared Opportunities for Learning and Development)**
  - Early stage of development of free places on in-house employer courses
  - Piloting with Michelmores free places to micro and small businesses (in first 2 years)
  - Plan to roll out across sectors if pilot is successful
- **GreaterExeterSkills.com**
  - Blog main communications mechanism and reduction of duplication
  - Link from [www.exeter.gov.uk](http://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 and influence
  - Providing pertinent information to the region eg ESIF event. The ESB ran a well attended European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) and Big Lottery Opportunity information event to inform partners about funding opportunities and to encourage collaborative working. ESIF funds are typically awarded for projects which cover the whole LEP region.
  - Collecting and collating evidence to influence eg EHOD Leaders, DWP and MP select committees

## **11 Regional context**

- 11.1 The landscape in which we operate is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. Cuts to Adult Learning of 15% in 2013 and 2014, 28% in 2015 and a further 25 - 40% are predicted, as a result of this, talented and experienced teachers and tutors have left the profession. Budgets for Adult Learning, except for apprenticeships, have been cut.
- 11.2 A whole HotSW LEP area review will be undertaken with two Further Education colleges at real risk. European funding has been delayed leaving gaps between previous and new (where it will exist) provision. International training bodies are bidding for contracts which are mainly being offered HotSW LEP wide. The view is that progression up the skills ladder will fall short for those in highest need.
- 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 (although there is growing criticism of the value of many of the apprenticeships on offer), 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 2016 although currently the partnerships and projects manager post is funded only until March 2016.

## **12 Value Added**

- 12.1 Apart from the £68,000 of funding won by ESB to enhance skills within EHOD there have been significant 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
  - Published evaluation reports for REEP (which includes a calculation of the significant in-kind contributions) and RWC 2015 Hospitality Training
  - 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 over £100,000:
    - £9,240 of employer partners time
    - £3,000 of free venue and hospitality (for ESB employer, and facilitator, funder and provider meetings and does not include event venues and hospitality at The Met Office, Innovation Centre etc)
    - In excess of £20,000 equivalent of our Chair's voluntary time and support from Waitrose for fuel and resources
    - 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, and the Exeter and East Devon Growth Board to provide intelligence, and complement their activities and priorities
  - It might be tempting to put a value on the ESB by estimating what the costs of not helping the Young People on the REEP programme who now have employment and more positive futures, or of not training those in hospitality interacting with RWC

2015 visitors who benefitted from Event Customer Service training organised and funded through the ESB. Such considerations are interesting but can be subjective.

### **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 – promote the city nationally and internationally to secure investment and attract new businesses and skilled workers.' 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. The successful bid for European Funding is an example of helping hospitality and tourism businesses to maximise the opportunities provided by RWC 2015.
- 'Help me get back to financial independence – promote investment in training provision for employers and progress projects which support local people to take advantage of job opportunities'. 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. This works well where an existing skills set needs to be replicated but it does not address skills which are new to the organisation. The ESB promotes investment in training provision through its connection with the HoSW LEP and the Facilitators, Funders and Providers group.
- 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 and St Loyes in order to join up services. For example in the REEP project by recruiting participants through Jobcentre Plus we leverage their funding streams for help with transport and childcare, protect participant's entitlements and help our partners to achieve their own goals. This approach will continue through BEEP.
- 'Work through the Exeter and the Heart of Devon Employment and Skills Board and JobCentre Plus will address skills and qualifications of young people in providing opportunities through training, employment and apprenticeships' – The ESB has identified as a priority the necessity to work with Young People and employers to improve opportunities for Work Experience by implementing the quality assured accredited World-class Work Experience initiative (similar to Duke of Edinburgh's Award), with partners Industrial Cadets and Education Business Partnership – SW

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

14.1 Without the City Council's contribution to funding 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 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:



- The ESB Employers have identified their difficulties in achieving diversity within their workforces. This has become one of the ESB priority areas particularly around gender equality in construction where only 2% of trades and 8% of professionals are female. Within the REEP project, which could easily become predominately male, partners have been asked to consciously recruit females nevertheless only 16% were female (which in part reflects the nature of the pool from which the young people were drawn).
- DBS checks are being carried out on all mentors recruited for the REEP and now BEEP projects 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 will ensure 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. 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 well-placed as the only Employer-led ESB within the HotSW LEP to over-weather the proposed Local Area Inspection Framework and the frequent rounds of funding cuts to the training provider sector.

**Oenone Thomas, ESB Partnerships and Projects Manager**

**Victoria Hatfield, Economy & Tourism Manager**

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

**Background papers used in compiling this report:**

None

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