

## NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

Meeting:	Employment, Skills, and Education Working Group
Date:	5 <sup>th</sup> September 2024, 10:00-12:00
Location:	Suffolk County Council, Endeavour House, Ipswich & MS Teams
Chair:	Michael Gray (SCC)
Attendees:	Michael Gray (MG), Head of Skills (SCC) Natalie Freislich-Mills (NFM), Skills Infrastructure Lead (Regional Skills Coordination Function) (SCC) James Chandler (JC), Skills and Inward Investment (ESC) Chris Young (CY), Head of Employment Affairs Unit (SZC) Guy Hazlehurst (GH), Workforce Development Lead (observer) (SZC) Johnathan Reynolds (JR), Employment & Skills Consultant (observer) (SZC) Fiona McMillan (FM), Chair of the Higher Education / Further Education Forum (observer) (SZC) Rob Wilson (RW), Secretariat (SZC)
Apologies:	None

### Meeting Notes:

#### WELCOME AND CLARIFY POSITION

- Michael Gray introduced as chair
- Previous meeting minutes all agreed by group
- RW to share governance group protocol document and confirm protective marking measures
- MG proposed one addition to the agenda of the interface between this group and the Supply Chain Working Group (“SCWG”)

**Action - RW to share Protocol Document with the group once finalised**

**Action - RW to confirm SZC preference for protective marking and to ensure this is set out in the protocol document**

#### SAFETY MESSAGE

- CY shared daily Safety Message. “Diversity is a fact, inclusion in an aim”. Highlighted some messages this month around ‘Stand Up to Safety’ Campaign, safety being overarching priority but diversity also a clear project commitment.
- A site visit by College Principals highlighted the site's welcoming atmosphere, reinforcing the value of inclusion
- The importance of continuous industry efforts in diversity and inclusion was emphasized by CY, with FM mentioning collaborative opportunities in education and skills development

#### AGREEMENT OF ANNUAL SKILLS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (“ASIP”) AND RELEASE OF FUNDS

#### General Fund Discussion

## NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

- MG introduced the importance and priority of this item and flagged potential for other parts of the agenda to give way as required to ensure this is covered in suitable detail. NFM flagged the need for recording of formal agreement from attendees on fund drawdowns
- MG sought confirmation on the agreement terms for fund release during the meeting, distinguishing between funds transferred to SCC under the Deed of Obligation (DoO) and the funding amount being communicated as available to potential beneficiaries
- FM requested clarification on the rationale, which MG provided, relating to cash flow management and how the instalments would work most effectively for the different funds
- GH brought up the proposal to release two phases of funding from the ASIP instead of just the first phase, combining Site and Enabling (15%) with Civils (35%) to make it 50%.
- MG agreed with the proposal, reiterating the legal obligation of four instalments and the option for SCC to manage cash flow without releasing the full amount to beneficiaries in the current academic year.
- CY highlighted the importance of clear communication on timing/phasing to ensure it benefits bidders and avoids premature overallocation.
- MG emphasized the need for clarity in the ASIP to prevent misconceptions about immediate fund availability, stating that specifying a phased release over two periods will clarify that the full allocation is not intended for immediate spending within the next academic period

### Outstanding ASIP Comments

- NFM comment related to the outreach fund and the timing of launching that publicly.
  - Original plan was to launch concurrently with ASEC, but recent talks suggest waiting for the thematic group's formation to shape the fund. FM noted that discussions on the thematic group are in early stages; launching within a month is premature.
  - MG suggested setting up the outreach thematic group during this academic year for flexibility, aiming for 2024 rather than 2025. GH emphasized the importance of thematic group members seeing their role as accountable and integral to delivery. CY stressed the influence of these groups on fund allocation and the need for collective control.
  - JC pointed out the logistical challenges of assessing applications and the necessity for proper resource allocation.
  - CY mentioned the expected surge of bids upon announcement, underscoring the importance of having control measures ready.
  - MG noted the need for further work on the employment outreach fund and proposed a workshop to finalize details.
  - MG clarified that the ASEC fund is a priority and more defined, while the employment outreach fund should be integrated throughout the project.

**Action - NFM to add line to the ASIP that the first action is to establish the thematic group for Q4 2024 with grant process to be launched Q1 2025. Everything else to then be shifted accordingly.**

- MG comment around the bursaries and the awareness of the different colleges of their responsibilities
  - NFM reported positive initial talks with colleges
  - MG stressed the need for colleges to be informed about their named responsibilities.
  - CY questioned if the colleges that responded are comfortable with their roles, which NFM confirmed.
  - NFM detailed discussions with three college groups about coordinating with their bursary programs and facilitating their participation. She affirmed the colleges' agreement to be named in the ASIP and that there would be a formal document moving forward

## NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

- GH comment around Not in Employment, Education or Training (“NEET”) information and the associated GDPR implications
  - MG acknowledged limitations in data sharing, noting that not all details about individuals can be disclosed.
  - GH suggested acknowledging the existence of data and sharing what is permissible under GDPR.

**Action - NFM to add comment around ‘in accordance with data sharing protocol’ in NEET information**

- NFM comment for any existing targets that could be added in, acknowledging that the STEM participation number has been included
  - CY noted that while there are work programs with targets, they should remain in a separate internal delivery plan
  - FM proposed deferring the establishment of future targets to the Thematic groups
  - CY emphasized the need to define the Thematic group's purpose and to collaboratively develop impact and outcome measures, stating that specifying targets now is premature without broader input. CY view is that this document should state that the Thematic group will establish realistic but ambitious impact and outcome measures, which will be channelled through the group and escalated within the governance hierarchy.
  - GH mentioned that future ASIPs will include aspirations for apprenticeships and employment based on annual plans, stressing the importance of addressing local employment needs and avoiding displacement. MG agreed on the importance of addressing local business concerns about displacement and clarifying the Thematic group's role in this context.
- NFM highlighted two similar comments that refer to the expected outputs and the outcomes for the different funds
  - NFM noted the need for alignment between expected outputs, outcomes, and internal data capabilities, ensuring realistic data collection and sharing
  - GH mentioned a contractor reporting pilot aligned with ESG measures, with results expected before Christmas, and emphasized waiting for pilot outcomes before confirming reporting capabilities.
  - CY acknowledged that reporting capabilities will affect what can be disclosed, considering the variety of contractors on site.
  - MG stressed the importance of distinguishing between the outcomes and impact of specific local projects and measures and the wider impact of the SZC project including on the broader supply chain and training figures to highlight the additional value to Suffolk.
  - MG suggested a future workshop on monitoring, including insights from the pilot and involving the data analytics team (SODA).

**Action - future workshop to be arranged to lift the lid on what we are asking contractors to report on, how we are doing it through the portal and how we are doing it alongside ESG.**

- NFM, comment around early work force information
  - CY stated that as defined in the DoO it is April. Within three months of First Commencement and the anniversaries thereof. MG agreed to align with the deed but can review as required.
  - NFM noted that receiving workforce information in April aligns well with the ASIP update process in June.
- NFM comment around pushing bursary back to be an Easter Launch as it is there to support the other funds such as ASEC supported courses
  - CY concurred, emphasizing the scheme's role in addressing travel barriers and its potential for positive impact.

## NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

- MG comment in relation to apprenticeships, appreciating that GH responded already just seeking confirmation on final wording
  - MG recommended update to wording to make it clear that the 540 was minimum apprentices from Suffolk with 2/3 coming from the East of England, including that 540 specifically from Suffolk. GH raised that 2/3 was an aspiration rather than a target - the 540 has been contractualized along with a requirement to report for the region. CY suggested an update to the drafting to improve clarity on the distinction between the two figures.

**Action - NFM to update wording in relation to apprenticeships to clarify the 540 for Suffolk is the hard target and the 2/3 for the East Region as a whole is an ambition**

- FM and CY highlighted the need to recognize the Levy transfer's role in fostering apprenticeships within the ASIP.
- The group acknowledged that EDF's levy transfer benefits the entire region and not just Sizewell C. FM suggested thematic groups should review the levy allocation, while CY emphasized the need for clear documentation of the apprenticeships specifically linked to Sizewell C.
- GH pointed out that the EDF levy has supported broader initiatives, raising questions about the scope of ASEC funding. MG stressed the importance of aligning ASEC-funded skills with project needs to avoid overlap with other funding sources.
- CY proposed setting clear parameters for levy transfers based on skill needs and impacts, taking cues from HPC's approach.

**Action - MG recommended that while ASEC eligibility should consider regional needs, the wording should be revised to prevent the implication that the fund is universally applicable.**

- MG comment about eligible projects being required to address critical needs of SZC project or need to backfill where demand for skills and local economy has been increased or exasperated by project
  - MG says wording is too broad and could related to any skillset exasperated by project. MG happy to revisit wording.

**Action – MG to revisit wording on projects eligible for the ASEC Fund and skillsets**

- Group looks to make official agreement of the ASIP, subject to edits being made.
  - MG says to agree in principle in this meeting. Final version will be sent with a window of a couple days for anybody to highlight any issues changes. Group endorses ASIP subject to these minor changes being made.

**Key Decision - ESEWG agrees ASIP subject to minor changes detailed above being made. ASIP to proceed to ERG for approval.**

### **Reviewal of funds to ensure agreement of amounts to be released and at what point they will be released**

- ASEC fund:
  - DoO states that the current construction phase that this document covers will be released within 30 days of this meeting assuming group agrees
  - Group suggests that both are released at same time to accelerate project support. Group needs to report on how they well be releasing this and managing expectations of those applying.
  - Group agrees amendment to construction phase and DoO Allocation Range: £3.9m to be made available (15+35%) but expecting amount to be utilised across those 2 phases of the project (not to be all allocated to projects in 2024). Group agrees firmly to the two phases (Main civils construction phase and Site operations/support services) being opened to be allocated, and are going to check in to make sure

## NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

whether they are agreed on releasing £3.9m in entirety or releasing £2.71m and £1.17m separately (with the £1.17m the initial release).

**Action – Group have agreed to two construction phases of ASEC being opened to allocation, but need to agree on the amount to be transferred from the project to SCC**

- Employment Outreach Fund:
  - Group recommends using similar approach as ASEC, with 50% being available to be allocated across two phases. So, up to 50% of fund available to be allocated (15+35%) to projects, amount to be released 160k when requested.
  - MG will confirm with finance, and the £160k is subject to change

**Action – confirmation of amounts identified to be released and allocated from Employment Outreach Fund**

- Bursary Scheme:
  - Scheme split out in equal amounts over the 10 years, and 2 different grant sizes (above and under £1000).
  - Under £1000 will be managed by colleges on whole and SCC for those people training with independent training providers. Over £1000 will be managed Suffolk City Council alongside a committee (15000 per year). In total this means £750000 would be available for Easter time to be launched as opportunity.
  - Group is in agreement of this, but suggests refining eligibility wording to be more SZC specific
  - The DoO states that the bursary is to support pathways into project or other local opportunities requiring similar skills to the project. Group agrees change of wording stating that bursary should be related to courses linked to a regional skills that that's identified by the project
- Regional Skills Need Assessment:
  - NFM states there has been some updated forecasted data regarding vacancies. This update did not create any major changes to narrative and content from April
  - MG states that Regional Skills Need Assessment isn't the only tool potential beneficiaries will use to demonstrate regional needs, but allows them to highlight what is said across desktop research piece around skills strategies which exist regionally. It is the first building block for beneficiaries to show evidence of how the project need they are fulfilling fits with a regional need too.

**Action - Regional skills need assessment to be finalised and sent to the ERG next week**

### **AGREE WORKSHOP PRIORITIES FOR NEXT QUARTER & PRIORITIES FOR NEXT QUARTER**

- Agenda items 4 and 5 remain on the agenda but will be dealt with over email

### **Actions raised during the meeting:**

Date Raised	Ref.	Description	Lead	Date Due
5/09/2024	1	RW to share Protocol Document with the group once finalised	SZC	Sep 2024
5/09/2024	2	RW to confirm SZC preference for protective marking and to ensure this is set out in the protocol document	SZC	Sep 2024
5/09/2024	3	NFM to add line to the ASIP that the first action is to establish the thematic group for Q4 2024 with grant process to be launched Q1 2025. Everything else to then be shifted accordingly	ESEWG	Next meeting

## NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

5/09/2024	4	NFM to add comment around 'in accordance with data sharing protocol' in NEET information	ESEWG	Next meeting
5/09/2024	5	Future workshop to be arranged to lift the lid on what we are asking contractors to report on, how we are doing it through the portal and how we are doing it alongside ESG.	ESEWG	Next meeting
5/09/2024	6	NFM to update wording in relation to apprenticeships to clarify the 540 for Suffolk is the hard target and the 2/3 for the East Region as a whole is an ambition	ESEWG	Next meeting
5/09/2024	7	MG recommended that while ASEC eligibility should consider regional needs, the wording should be revised to prevent the implication that the fund is universally applicable	ESEWG	Next meeting
5/09/2024	8	MG to revisit wording on projects eligible for the ASEC Fund and skillsets	ESEWG	Next meeting
5/09/2024	9	Group have agreed to two construction phases of ASEC being opened to allocation but need to agree on the amount to be transferred from the project to SCC	ESEWG	Next meeting
5/09/2024	10	Confirmation of amounts identified to be released and allocated from Employment Outreach Fund	ESEWG	Next meeting
5/09/2024	11	Regional skills need assessment to be finalised and sent to the ERG next week	ESEWG	September 2024

**Author: Robert Wilson (SZC)**