

**South East LEP Skills Advisory Panel**

**25th June 2020 – Microsoft online meeting**

**Minutes and Actions**

**Attending**

**Louise Aitken** (LA) South East LEP   
**Neil Aitken** (NA), BT Group

**Holly Aquilina** (HA), East Sussex County Council (*for LEP area local authorities)*

**Colette Bailey** (CB), Metal (**CHAIR**)

**Amy Cable** (AC), Lower Thames Crossing

**Ana Christie** (ACh), Sussex Chamber of Commerce *(SME Lead)*

**Helen Clements** (HC), Morgan Sindall *(construction sector lead)*

**Mike Derrick** (MD),Oakdown House Ltd (*care sector lead)*

**Samantha Desforges**, (SD) Berry Gardens *(food and land-based sector lead)*

**Viki Faulkner** (VF), University of Brighton *(HE lead)*

**Vimbai Foroma** (VFo) SELEP *(SAP Analytical toolkit lead)*

**Diana Garnham** (DG),Skills East Sussex Chair

**Iain Hawthorn** (IH), HSBC *(finance sector lead)*

**Kirsty Hawkins**(KH), *Social Enter*prise Kent *(for voluntary sector)*

**Lindsey Hayward,** Konica Minolta *(Engineering / Success Essex lead)*

**Trevor Hutchinson** (TH), DP World London Gateway *(logistics sector lead)*

**Jeremy Kerswell**(JK),Plumpton College**(Vice Chair)**

**Lynne Matthews**(LM), EDF Energy / Bradwell B

**Jo Nolan** (JN), Screen South (*creative sector lead)*

**Angela O’Donoghue** (AOD), South Essex College (**Vice Chair)**

**Alexander Riley (AR),** SELEP

**Ajay Sharman** (AJ), STEM Learning

**Pauline Smith** (PS),CXK (*for training provider networks / National Careers Service)*

**Rebecca Smith** (RS), Social Enterprise Kent *(for voluntary sector)*

**James Wilkinson**(JW),SELEP Digital Skills Partnership *(presenting)*

**Wayne Wilson** (WW), Kent Association of Training Organisations

**Paul Winter** (PW), Wire Belt Company Limited (*Kent & Medway Skills Commission Chair)*

**Apologies**

Liz Austin, Stansted Airport

Jayne Willcocks, Chartwells

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| **AGENDA ITEM / NOTES** | **ACTION/ PAPER** |
| **Introductions** |  |
| *Please note that the following minutes have also reflected points made by attendees in the ‘chat’ section of the online meeting.*  Colette welcomed everyone to the meeting. All members introduced themselves and their area of work. |  |
| **Minutes and actions of the last meeting (23rd April 2020)** |  |
| There were two comments on the previous meeting minutes:   TH noted a point of clarification that it had been stated in the April minutes that driver shortages weren’t likely, which wasn’t accurate. For clarification therefore, at the April meeting (within the chat function) HA had asked whether there was increased demand for delivery drivers in the logistics sector. TH’s response was ‘I've not received any feedback in that regard Holly. From the LG point of view movements have so far remained stable but not grown. A fall off in movements is expected so I would assume not greater shortage in drivers as a result of C19.’  HA noted that not all her updates had been reflected in the minutes and offered to send some bullet points through for inclusion.  LA noted that some biographies were still outstanding and asked members to return these if they hadn’t already. LA confirmed that all other action points were due to be covered during the meeting. |  |
| **Updated letter to government, Louise Aitken** |  |
| LA noted that at the April meeting, it had been agreed that a draft letter to government introducing the SAP should be updated to reflect current challenges. LA had circulated this to members for comment. It was agreed that some of the content was moved, such the proposed event on 8th October to be moved to the start of the letter given that MPs and Ministers were being invited to attend.  Members also agreed that the letter should reflect:   * the continued need for significant investment in skills * the high proportion of micro, small and medium enterprises in the SELEP area * the continued challenges faced across the area * the need for critical skills across sectors   LA confirmed that these changes would be made and the letter would be recirculated for final sign off. | **ACTION**: LA to recirculate updated letter for member sign off (updated letter attached) |
| **Funding - £2 million Skills Covid-19 fund, Louise Aitken** |  |
| CB noted that this item was moved to earlier in the agenda to enable time for discussion as some members needed to leave the meeting early.  LA explained that SELEP had committed £2million to a Covid-19 recovery fund for skills. This is alongside £2.4 million for SME support. Further information on these funds is at <https://www.southeastlep.com/selep-board-agrees-economy-support-package-to-support-business-and-boost-skills-in-the-south-east/>  LA noted that this was in the context of national funds emerging such as the National Retraining Scheme, National Skills Fund, apprenticeship incentives and other forthcoming government support which it would be important not to duplicate. LA noted that also that she was working with the National Retraining Scheme team at the Department for Education (DfE) and there was a meeting the following week with several LEPs and the DfE. Additionally, there is an opportunity due to apply to European Social Funding which could be utilised to support those furthest from the labour market.  AoD also outlined that there was due to be further information on support for apprenticeships which was obviously important in the context of declining apprenticeship numbers. AoD noted also that there was not due to be any change to the position on frameworks for apprenticeships. 16-19 funding is also secure for colleges. Therefore the main gap is with adult upskilling and retraining.  Members agreed that it would be important to focus on the gaps and for the funding to be employer led. There was a discussion about priorities and key feedback included:   * Funding should support all age groups and retraining to sectors with jobs due to the significant increase in unemployment numbers and those furloughed potentially becoming unemployment, * Funding should focus on sectors where there are guaranteed jobs and identifying where within the sectors the jobs are – e.g. it’s not all entry level jobs. Ring-fencing for particular sectors would be positive. * Quite a lot of funding is emerging for younger groups, so it will be necessary to assess any gaps in adult funding. * Members highlighted the fact that some industry qualifications (such as forklift truck, CSCS) are not currently funded through mainstream funding so could be a good option for supporting individuals into jobs. * Funding for adults is often hindered by the fact that it has to be provided for a qualification but sometimes the need is for short, sharp, industry relevant training. * It was noted that SME upskilling and retraining is important also and LA confirmed that she would be feeding back to colleagues looking at the SME support funding pot. * Skills for enterprise and entrepreneurship are likely to be needed. * Raising awareness of the various routes such as T-levels, apprenticeships and traineeships is important. There may also be support required to help make the transition from Year 11, particularly if this is still happening online. * Raising awareness of the different sectors and the opportunities within them is also a continued need. * Digital support was noted as a high need, both for individuals and SMEs. This would help with resilience going forward. Maximising existing free courses would be an important part of this also. * Carbon literacy, equality and digital were agreed to be important cross cutting themes for all sectors. * Regarding digital, NA noted that BT were working with DfE on issues such as free Wi-Fi. It was noted that the availability of devices was a key area of challenge also. * There may still be gaps around apprenticeships also, such as levy transfer and ensuring SMEs can access these and gain support. * Business, leadership, mentoring and crisis management skills are also particularly relevant now.   LA confirmed that this would be incorporated into the development of the skills funding and with further information on next steps and process to be shared soon. It was agreed also that it would be useful for LA to do a mapping of existing national funding, to ensure the £2m is tackling the gaps. LA invited colleagues to feed back any additional ideas in the coming weeks also in terms of gaps / need.  **POST MEETING NOTE:** LA will prepare a paper to go to the main LEP Board on 4th September. Pending their approval, the first calls would start from September / October.  There is also now further confirmation of government funding to support, as outlined in the Plan for Jobs 2020, which includes incentives for apprenticeships, traineeship plans and job retention incentives. Further information is at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-plan-for-jobs-documents/a-plan-for-jobs-2020>  LA confirmed also that an extension application for the Tutor Bursary programme had been approved and which would enable more bursaries to be awarded and more videos produced for the [www.becomealecturer.org](http://www.becomealecturer.org) website.  AS noted that there had also been an increase in teaching in general (as per <https://www.tes.com/news/coronavirus-applications-teaching-home-schooling-interest-survey>) | **ACTION:** LA to confirm next steps /process for the £2 million Skills fund  **ACTION:** All to continue feeding back to LA on gaps / need for the £2m Skills funding |
| **Digital Skills Partnership update, James Wilkinson** |  |
| JW gave an update on the Digital Skills Partnership (DSP) progress. JW noted that several SAP members are also on the DSP Steering Group and therefore there is good join up. The DSP is co-chaired by Alison Parmar of the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and Professor Melissa Hanna-Brown of Pfizer UK.  There are now five working groups, leading on the areas of priority for the DSP. Over 140 people across the LEP area volunteered to be part of these. Leads for the working groups have now been confirmed as:   * Support to Educators and Students – led by Dr. Ajay Sharman (STEM Learning) and Murray Foster (Digital Southend) * Support to SMEs – led by David Taylor (DNASix) and Jane Knight (Successful Mums) * Education /Industry Alignment – led by Olivia Suleman (South Essex College) * Preventing Digital Exclusion – led by Will Pickford (Thurrock Adult Community College) and Rhona Drever (East Sussex Libraries) * Digital Skills Prospectus – led by James Maltby (Save the Children) and Dan Williams (Ginger Nut Media Ltd) * Kit Ahweyevu (Mindweaver) is also confirmed as the DSP Diversity Lead   Further information on the working groups and leads is available at <https://www.southeastlep.com/our-delivery/skills/digital-skills-partnership/digital-skills-partnership-members/>  JW noted that the SME working group was hosting an online event ‘Stay Visible, Stay Viable, Stay Profitable’ on 9th July which there had been a lot of interest in.  **POST MEETING NOTE**: a recording of the webinar is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUJkreSyfr4&feature=youtu.be>  JW noted that a donation was also due to be confirmed to enable the purchase of kit and connectivity. Pfizer and Discovery Park had added to this and it’s hoped that this may encourage others. Further information will be shared soon. JW noted that the BBC were also due to announce a campaign to encourage the donation of devices which it would be possible to build upon.  The DSP has also signed up to Coursera – the largest provider of online learning and who have provided the SELEP area with 10,000 free courses to those facing redundancy, on furlough or looking to reskill to enter a new industry (until 31st December). Further information is at <https://www.southeastlep.com/our-delivery/skills/digital-skills-partnership/free-online-learning/> JW noted that it was a priority to ensure that local providers are also reflected on this.  JW noted that Digital Boost is a useful resource offering expertise and support to SMEs and charities. Further information is at <https://www.southeastlep.com/founders4schools-and-bcg-digital-ventures-launch-uk-based-digital-boost/> and <https://www.digitalboost.org.uk/>  AoD asked whether anything was being undertaken with internet providers in that this was one of the main barriers experienced by students. Therefore, paying for internet access is being explored. JW noted that he’d started conversations with various providers such as City Fibre to explore this and will report back.  CB asked whether there was further information on where the need is most prevalent. JW noted that a lot of this has come through the Lloyds Digital Index and also working with organisations such as Devicesdotnow who have looked at where the greatest need is and have a network of centres. This often correlates with those geographies where there are other issues of deprivation.  Colleagues noted that this could be an issue for lobbying in terms of broadband connectivity and the barrier that this represents. HA noted that there was a good case for this being linked to Universal Credit. LA noted that the donation being made was also intended to raise the profile of digital exclusion and raise awareness among the wider landscape.  NA outlined that BT were also very aware of the digital connectivity issue and exploring this further. BT is one of the founding partners of Futuredotnow. Working with local partners has also helped identify where the need is. BT have also announced a partnership with the DfE for free WIFI access for disadvantaged families to help with home schooling. NA had also seen feedback that the devices issue was more prevalent than the connectivity issue and will look further into this. There is also a product called ‘BT Basic’ enabling people on benefits to get internet access for £10 a month. Some further information is available at <https://newsroom.bt.com/bt-to-help-disadvantaged-children-with-home-schooling-offering-six-months-free-internet-access/> |  |
| **SAP Analytical Toolkit, Vimbai Foroma** |  |
| VF gave an update of the most recent data including benefit claims, furlough figures and vacancies. LA noted that the updated letter to government also made reference to the significant increases in out of work benefit claims and the fact that nearly a quarter of the SELEP area workforce was furloughed. Vacancy numbers have continued to decline which is obviously of concern.  Due to some technical issues with the slides loading, it was agreed to circulate the presentation to members with the minutes. These are attached.  AS suggested it would be useful also to get feedback from some of the key companies across the SELEP area and challenges they’re experiencing, perhaps at MD and CEO level. LA noted that the business recovery survey had given some initial feedback and there would be further intelligence via an updated survey focusing on recovery and next steps. Further qualitative data would be helpful.  PS noted that there had been a dip in individuals accessing National Careers Service support even through the current period, which is of concern. LA noted that SELEP and partners could help with signposting also.  HC asked if there was a reason for drop off in vacancies being starker in some areas than others. LA noted that certain sectors hardest hit such as hospitality had geographical concentration but understanding of this further would be key to offering support also. |  |
| **Proposed virtual SAP and DSP Autumn conference, 8th October** |  |
| LA noted that at the last face to face SAP meeting, members had agreed to an event in the Autumn and for which a suitable venue at Here East (Stratford) had been identified. This had been put on hold due to Covid-19 but there was an opportunity to hold an online event utilising software at <https://remo.co/conference/>. Members were shown a video of the platform and agreed it looked ideal in enabling breakouts, presentations and networking.  To this end, LA explained that it was proposed to hold a virtual conference as a collaboration with the Digital Skills Partnership and Skills Advisory Panel. Members agreed that this would be positive and helps maintain momentum and progress. The event could include spotlights on sectors and breakouts on issues such as adapting to the digital environment. This would also be an opportunity to set out the support on offer and receive updates from government. The date has been included in the letter to government.  LA explained also that the intention would be to share / launch some of the labour market information and resources being build up through the analytical toolkit. There has been a lot of demand for such information locally and the intention is to build a website / page to host this and provide up to date information. Members agreed that this would be useful. LA outlined that this could also include videos about the key sectors and which is particularly relevant at a time when more people will be seeking employment. SAP sector representatives could feature in such videos / information to talk about their sectors. This could also include the current challenges and opportunities arising from Covid-19. AS suggested a series of webinars could also be valuable.  PW noted that there is also a virtual graduation ceremony planned for 2nd October for Kent and Medway so any information could be shared via that platform also.  JK noted that showcasing what different employers have done on different agendas would also be very positive to share. This will also help to inspire and raise ambition against the current challenging backdrop. JN agreed that showing local opportunities and the local ecosystem around jobs in various sectors would be helpful. LM suggested also that green economy and growth could be picked up as a theme.  8th October was agreed as a suitable date for the conference. | **ACTION:** LA to share further information / proposed agenda for the 8th October virtual event  **ACTION:** LA to liaise with SAP members in development of sector information |
| **AOB / Date of next meeting** |  |
| Alex Riley from the SELEP Secretariat joined the meeting to talk about the Freeports consultation currently underway. This includes questions about skills for which SAP input is invited. LA confirmed that she would share further information on the request after the meeting (sent by email 26th June). TH declared an interest and noted that he is representing an entity intending to make an application.  LA noted that DWP had approached SELEP regarding running a webinar to outline support for carers in the workplace, which has increased under Covid-19. LA had attended others which were very useful. LA noted that this could be positioned as a SELEP webinar and members agreed.  **POST MEETING NOTE:** A webinar has been arranged with Carers UK for 12th August 2020 and further information and registration details are at: [*https://www.eventbrite.com/e/supporting-carers-in-the-workplace-developing-carer-friendly-workplaces-tickets-114332114432*](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/supporting-carers-in-the-workplace-developing-carer-friendly-workplaces-tickets-114332114432)  LA confirmed that the next meeting would be on 10th September at 10am. This would be via Microsoft Teams again rather than in person. Joining details to follow. |  |