

Kent and Medway Employment Task Force

9 July 10am – 11.30am
Microsoft Teams meeting

Draft Agenda

Agenda Item	Lead person	Time
1. Welcome and apologies for absence <ul style="list-style-type: none">Minutes of previous meeting (21.05.24)Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda	Roger Gough	10.00– 10.05
2. Post Election ‘Think Piece’ and discussion	Jonathan Shaw / Mike Rayner/ David Smith	10.05 – 11.05
3. Progress Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">Skills Bootcamps programme for 2025/26Sandwich Task Force	Steve Samson David Smith	11.05 – 11.25
4. AOB <ul style="list-style-type: none">ETF Comms <p>Date of next meeting – 5 September 10am – 11.30am</p> <p>Future Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Universal Support	David Smith/Steve Samson	11.25 – 11.30

Members

Roger Gough

Dean Weston

Simon Cook

Cllr John Burden

Cllr Jim Martin

Sir Roger Gale

Carol Ford

Liz Gibney

Nadra Ahmed

Cllr Vince Maple

Tudor Price

Pauline Smith

Paul Winter

Chris Norwood

Ashley Hook

Georgina Randsley de

Moura

Kent & Medway Employment Task Force

Date: 21 May 10.00 – 11.30

Members in attendance: Cllr Vince Maple, Carol Ford, Cllr John Burden, Tudor Price, Cllr Jim Martin, Pauline Smith, Liz Gibney, Hamera Ahmad, Simon Cook, Ashley Hook,

Task Force Apologies: Roger Gough, Damian Green MP, Sir Roger Gale MP, Cllr Lauren Edwards, Chris Norwood, Derek Murphy, Georgina Randsley de Moura, Nadra Ahmed

In Attendance from the Task Force Reference Group: Sarah Hamilton, David Godfrey, David Smith, Deborah Benton, Daniel Ratcliff, Michelle Stanley, Mike Rayner, Jude Farrell, Dave Knox

Number	Item
1.	<p>Welcome and apologies for absence</p> <p>Roger Gough (RG) opened the meeting advising there is a full and stretching agenda reflecting a range of progress and activity in the education and skills arena. The following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very pleased to advise that Georgina Randsley de Moura has taken over from Karen Cox as the Interim Vice-Chancellor of the University of Kent.• Professor Rama Thirunamachandran of CCCU, Prof Jane Harrington of UoG, and Georgina Randsley de Moura of UoK collectively agreed that Georgina would be the universities' representative on the ETF.• Unfortunately she is not able to join today due to a prior commitment but she will be attending the next meeting. David Powell is attending today on her behalf.• RG welcomed the Lower Thames Crossing team, for their item on the LTC Skills, Education and Employment Strategy - Matt Palmer, Executive Director at LTC, Kat Ferguson, Supply Chain Development Director and Mark Gitsham, Local Authority Engagement Lead. <p>The following apologies were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Cllr Lauren Edwards – attending a KMBF meeting○ Damian Green MP○ Sir Roger Gale – daily Speaker's Conference at 10.30 a.m.○ Chris Norwood – has a clashing school commitment○ Derek Murphy - Chairing the KMBF (small) loans board○ Georgina Randsley de Moura – David Powell attending on her behalf

	<p>And from the reference Group, apologies from Christine McInnes who is attending an SEN Improvement workshop and Susan Berdo.</p> <p>RG thanked Deborah for the minutes and they were approved by the ETF. Most actions are picked up on today's agenda but RG mentioned the following:</p> <p><u>WorkWell Vanguard</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Kent and Medway bid for the WorkWell Vanguard was unsuccessful. • This is disappointing news, however, what has been learned through working in partnership on developing the bid and beginning the strategy is that the work and health agenda is held in great importance by colleagues right across the Kent and Medway system. • There is a significant amount of work already ongoing across the system by partners which provides a strong basis on which to build. • The development of the Kent and Medway Work and Health Strategy will continue as planned, and will support our endeavour to drive change, helping people to start, stay and succeed in work. • The team which developed the bid will keep in touch as the strategy development progresses. <p><u>Skills Bootcamps bid</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC has been collating a number of ideas for a potential bid to the DFE for a 24-25 Skills Bootcamps programme for Kent and Medway. • Given the stringent requirements around guaranteed job interviews or access to a more skilled role as a result of the training programmes, we are planning to submit a small bid focusing on piloting activity within a key few sectors where there is employer buy-in and a possibility of securing a provider to deliver the identified training. • The bid will focus on a few pilot areas including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creative sector • Agriculture & Horticulture • Retail & Hospitality • Construction
2.	Lower Thames Crossing Skills Strategy

RG advised that the Lower Thames Crossing Skills, Education and Employment Strategy item follows discussions he had with Matt Palmer and his team at the recent Lower Thames Crossing parliamentary event. The event was to mark the completion of the examination process for the Lower Thames Crossing's Development Consent Order, hosted by the Thames Estuary Growth Board. A decision by the Secretary of State on the DCO is expected in June.

RG commented that this is an exciting project which many members of the board will be aware of and builds on some of the discussions around construction, skills gaps, the requirement for upskilling locally, links with schools and FE, and apprenticeship opportunities.

RG welcomed Matt Palmer, Executive Director at LTC, Kat Ferguson, Supply Chain Development Director and Mark Gitsham, Local Authority Engagement Lead

Matt Palmer spoke to the attached slides and the following points were noted:



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- It is the largest tunnel being built in the world and will require top-end construction skills.
- A wide variety of roles will be required from tunnel boring, running the office, canteen etc.
- The construction jobs will be well paid.
- North Kent has a good history of this type of project and has the right skills in the area.
- The contactors Balfour Beatty, Skanska and Bouygues Murphy are on board.
- The DCO decision is expected on the 20 June.
- Construction will start in 2026 and will last until 2032.
- There is time to plan and focus on doing it right. There is time to use local supply chains and pipelines.
- Want to leave a long-term legacy and for it to be a catalyst for change thereafter.

Kat Ferguson made the following points:

- Want to inspire the next generation and support business growth.
- Need to look at what this means in terms of roles, what is needed and when the peak will be.
- It takes time to deliver a skills strategy.

- KPIs and targets will be set by the DCO.
- This is seen as a starting point and not an end point.
- There are gaps in certain types of trades which need addressing.
- Need a mixture of graduates, apprentices and returners with a focus on green skills.
- How do we create low carbon construction?
- How do we make sure the local population have the first opportunity to apply for jobs and get them.
- How do we reach those out of employment e.g. pre-employment programmes?
- Need to target those who are struggling to find a job. The social value element is important
- Want to inspire future careers.
- Going into schools at an early age especially primary.
- Need more women in the sector. The opportunities need to be explained to people from all backgrounds.
- Looking to inspire and address pursuing a career in the construction industry.
- Support business growth through looking at how they can provide local businesses with opportunities, how they can enable local supply chains and support the upskilling of supply chains.

Natalie Bonnick (LTC, Head of Supply Chain Development) made the following points:

- There are some severe shortages in certain areas such as bore workers and ground workers.
- Will be working with local education training providers.
- How can you help us with the following?
 - Co-ordinate other local projects to aggregate regional skills demands.
 - Funding routes/revenue streams to sponsor skills initiatives in the region (make sure local people can access).
 - Nominate a rep for Education Roundtables in Essex and Kent post the DCO decision.
 - Agree a collaborative approach to skills delivery in the region.

The following points were noted during the discussion

- Pauline Smith (PS) – keen to work with the LTC team to ensure CXK is involved and embed some of the innovation.
- Simon Cook (SC) – very happy to help through KFE. Can help overcome some of the challenges mentioned. Thanked the team at LTC who have already visited and spoken to students.
- Sarah Nurden (SN) – will speak to NB offline regarding how the LTC team can engage with the Skills bootcamp bid.

- Hamera Ahmed (HA) – thanked the team for an excellent presentation. There has been an announcement by government about the importance of skills bootcamps. DWP is very happy to support their work.
- NB advised there are considering SWAPs as well.
- Cllr Vince Maple (VM) – thanked the team for an excellent presentation. It can be used as an example for mature apprenticeships. Make sure we continue to work collaboratively and that as a system we continue to block the blockers.
- Michelle Stanley (MS) – Pathways for All is a collaboration between colleges and schools etc and the LTC initiatives can be pushed out through that network. It is important to make sure the two are aligned and that the right people are involved.
- Jonathan Shaw (JS) – A core group has been brought together in one room and it is crucial that the same people are involved regarding employment support.
- Rory Love (RL) – Kent Adult Education is refocusing on skills for jobs following the EFSA change of funding requirements. Having the lead in time for the LTC is excellent as well as getting in to schools early. Need to ensure through our role in Education that we are on the same page in all that we do.
- Matt Palmer (MP) – please do challenge us and our approach. We want to leave a great legacy for Kent and Medway and we want to do it in a way that hasn't been done before. It is time to plan and then execute brilliantly.
- SC – we would encourage you to challenge the ETF as well.

RG made the following points:

- A lot of connections are already being made but 2 years will pass quickly.
- Seek to bring back on email to this group or an item we can bring back to the next meeting on how we can answer each of the 3 key challenges/requests set out at the end of the presentation.

How you can help us

Working together to improve skills and training provision in Kent and Medway

➤ Coordinate other local projects to aggregate regional skills demand

➤ Identify different funding routes / revenue streams to sponsor skills initiatives in the region

➤ Nominate representatives for Education Roundtables (post-DCO decision). Here we will:

- Share our indicative workforce demand data in more detail
- Gain a better understanding of courses offered locally
- Agree a collaborative approach to skills delivery in the region

VM – supports RG’s approach. LTC is so significant is justifies a regular update at the ETF. So much of the work feeds into why the ETF exists.

RL – What is happening regarding messaging and publicity? Should we be linking up with KCC’s media/comms team?

NB – this is being done already, but could do more. How can we build the LTC in a way that has never been done before using a green approach?

JS – suggested developing an organisational chart so colleagues can see who is doing what. JS proposed doing this with Pauline Smith, Dan Ratcliff, David Godfrey and David Smith and DWP. This can be put together showing who provides skills, training and education.

Action


- David Smith/Jonathan Shaw to lead on developing a response to the above 3 questions, which will involve an organisational chart, covering which individuals/institutions discharge different elements relating to skills, training and education.

3.

Post 16 Education (Apprenticeships, skills, supporting NEETs and long term vulnerable unemployed)

RG introduced the item by explaining it aims to set out the context of apprenticeships, alongside the whole educational offer linking into the previous presentation on Pathways for All and the Workwell vanguard bid.

It will highlight what works well for Kent and Medway and what needs to change, particularly for those people who find it difficult to get the right level of qualification in Maths and English, so they cannot therefore get an Apprenticeship.

	<p>Mike Rayner spoke to the attached slides and the following points were noted:</p>  <p>ETF post-16 and apprenticeships ma:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent has a larger number of students in sixth forms as opposed to colleges. There is a low number going into apprenticeships but this is improving. • Medway has an almost identical split. • VM commented that for English and Maths there needs to be a balance between formal qualifications and operational English. • Covid had a huge impact, especially on those turning 16 today. It has made mental health and social interactions harder for some. • David Powell – higher degree apprenticeships need to be part of the overall mix. Collaboration is key. SMEs find the system complicated and this needs addressing. Would like to be part of the conversation going forward. • SC – Will pull together a task and finish group, looking at what's working well and what we can do better. SC to take forward with David Smith. <p>RG commented on the importance of looking at areas where progression is so difficult especially at the lower levels.</p>
4.	<p>Progress Updates and AOB</p> <p><u>Sandwich Task Force</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DS advised there is a draft report ready for publication. • Waiting on negotiations to be finalised with an overseas investor who is looking to take over a significant part of the business which Pfizer is leaving behind. • Will come back with an update when the negotiation has finished. • It is also hoped that 2 significant regional projects will be fostered by the government. <p>DS summarised the following actions agreed earlier in the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping for the LTC re skills, education and training. • A Task and Finish group to be set up in relation to Post 16 Skills, looking at what's working well and what we can do better. <p>These will be progressed asap.</p> <p><u>KMEP and the skills workstream</u></p>

RG advised that regarding the new KMEP structure, Simon Cook will be the link on skills and will have a regular feedback slot.

Additional points for noting:

- The ETF has had a presentation previously on the [Kent and Medway Economic Framework](#).
- One of the five ambitions of the Framework is 'widening opportunities and unlocking talent', i.e. skills.
- There are four 'action areas' under this skills ambition in the Framework:
 1. Embed the Local Skills Improvement Plan at the heart of a closer relationship between employers, further education and other skills providers to meet current and future skills needs;
 2. Invest in Kent and Medway's skills infrastructure to harness the potential of the long-term transformational trends we have identified and support the growth of our sectoral strengths;
 3. Collaborate to make the most effective use of skills budgets, focused on Kent and Medway's shared priorities; and
 4. Be flexible to focus on Kent and Medway's shared priorities.
- KMEP recognises that the ETF is the core forum where skills matters are discussed. KMEP does not wish to add any duplication or confusion by setting up other skills workstreams or group.
- KMEP has approached the Chairman of the ETF to formally ask if the ETF could please lead on the skills agenda for KMEP.
- KMEP wishes to establish two-way communication between the groups.
- KMEP has selected Simon Cook of Mid-Kent College and Dan Ratcliff of Medway Council to act as its 'Thematic Leads' for skills issues.
- The intention is for Simon Cook and Dan Ratcliff to act as the communication conduits to achieve the desired two-way communication flow.

Future Items:

- Universal Support
- Health & Social Care deep dive
- Progress with 10 Point Plan on Economic Activity

AOB

- Carol Ford advised that she is developing a piece of work with Thanet Earth and they are opening a centre of excellence at Hadlow

	Date of next meeting – 9 July 10am – 11.30am on Teams
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