



Partnership for Urban South Hampshire

Employment and Skills Board

Terms of Reference

Background

The Employment and Skills Board has always focused on the needs of the sub-regional economy and the skills of the resident workforce, and our aim is to achieve sustainable economic growth by anticipating and meeting the employment and skills needs of employers within the Solent Region and by developing and retaining the talents of people to work within their local economy.

The ESB has been operating in its current form since May 2010, bringing public and private stakeholders together to lead employment and skills. In January 2011 PUSH published a new Economic Development strategy, confirming that by 2026 there is a wish to see a more prosperous future for the residents of South Hampshire where everyone shares in the benefits, with reduced levels of deprivation and increased levels of labour market participation. A review of the economic evidence base has identified:

1. The need to support the cities to fulfil their potential as engines for economic growth in the sub-region.
2. The need to address the impact of the recession and create jobs to tackle unemployment, as well as seeking to increase productivity. This is a notable change from the context in which the first economic development strategy was drafted when unemployment was close to its lowest point in the last economic cycle and labour market indicators suggested a fairly tight labour market, albeit with some room for improvement compared to benchmark areas.

Context

When looking forward, baseline projections paint an undesirable picture of the South Hampshire economy in the future. Persistently high levels of unemployment as a result of rising population without sufficient employment growth will also bring pressures on public services.

In addition, a great deal has changed both in the policy and funding environment established by the Coalition Government and in the local strategic context. In particular, the business led Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has been formed to take responsibility for delivery of economic development in the Solent area, building on the firm foundations established by the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH). The Solent LEP is now the key interface and lead for economic development, and both the Solent LEP and PUSH are working towards building a shared understanding of what their respective roles should be. It is therefore important that the Employment and skills Board revises its terms of reference to reflect the new economic landscape, and the government's Local Economic Growth Agenda, which includes:

- LEP's
- Enterprise Zones – “ The new generation of 22 enterprise zones we are rolling out will help this country become one of the best places in Europe to start and grow a business” – George Osborne August 2011
- Incentivising Local Authorities to go for growth
- Skills – freedom from central control and the creation of a two way engagement between colleges and training organisations and local partners

Objectives

The ESB will continue to provide a strong and well established vehicle for local authorities and other partners (including the Solent LEP and other neighbouring LEP's as appropriate) to work together/collaborate on joint strategy and policy development for employment and skills. Such joint working builds on the strong track record we have already established in this regard and our priorities going forward will be based on:

- Providing leadership and co-ordination for the Solent area on employment and skills
- Strengthening education business links from school to adult learning
- Improving the work readiness of young people and adults
- Simplifying the employment and skills system to make it easier for employers and learners to engage.

Methodology: The Need for Action Plans for Focused Priorities

An action plan provides a clear focus for engaging with and supporting sectors where the area has a clear advantage regionally, nationally and globally including marine, aerospace and environmental technologies. This includes:

- Establishing a significant advanced manufacturing and engineering training function to support the skills needs of the growth hub and sector clusters.
- Establishing an employer-led Apprenticeship Training Agency with a focus on priority sectors, and in particular, small to medium sized businesses (SME's), providing a flexible demand-led approach to the employment of apprentices.
- Strengthening local business partnerships between employers and HEIs, further education and schools focused on priority sectors in the area, improving the information, advice and guidance young people receive about vocational and academic options linked to local employment opportunities in the Solent area.
- Extending the Skills Development Zone (SDZ) that is currently operational in Southampton to secure an increase in apprenticeships through cross-organisational programmes, reducing levels of worklessness.
- Promoting Graduate Retention from our four universities in the region will place a strong emphasis on growing internship programmes, work placements and curriculum reform in Higher Education in partnership with employers.
- Aligning single work programmes to provide route ways into sustainable employment for those currently not engaged in the labour market. The Solent LEP will seek flexibilities to develop tailor made work programmes to facilitate sustainable employment, particularly in areas that are heavily reliant on the public sector for employment.
- Creating opportunities for residents to access jobs in sectors that underpin employment growth, such as financial and business services, the health and care sector, retail and the visitor economy.

Membership and Structure

The ESB will be a formal partnership between the private and public sectors.

The objective of bringing employer requirements to the heart of the employment and skills provision and the need for the ESB to benefit from business acumen, necessitates a strong level of private sector representation, whilst the participation of high level representatives from the public sector is also required in order that both their roles as service providers and as major employers are reflected on the Board.

The membership of the Board should be made up of:

- At least 50% drawn from local private sector businesses and their representative organisations, with an emphasis given to those businesses operating in sectors of the economy which are expanding or are targeted for growth within the overarching PUSH economic strategy.
- Nominated Chief Executives or their equivalents, and members of the PUSH Joint Committee to represent Local Authorities, the Skills Funding Agency, Jobcentre Plus and the Education and Training sector

The Board's Relationship with the wider PUSH structure

The ESB will draw its authority from, and report directly to the PUSH Joint Committee. The Chair of the Board, should be appointed directly by the PUSH Joint Committee. We recommend that this appointment should be for a period of two years, although that will ultimately be a decision for the PUSH Joint Committee. This provides both accountability and legitimacy to the ESB.

The work of the Board will be reported regularly to the PUSH Economic Development Delivery Panel and the PUSH Joint Committee and its work undertaken in close co-operation with the Solent LEP. The precise reporting arrangements need to be considered further in order to prevent these from being overly bureaucratic whilst also facilitating links to be made between the Board and other aspects of PUSH and Solent LEP work.

It is also logical for the Board to develop links to the wider agenda of business support and enterprise development, so that employment and skills issues are placed in the wider context of economic development.

Support and Delivery Arrangements

As the responsibilities and authority of the ESB have evolved over time there will be a need to consider how the Board will be supported in order to carry out its proposed functions. We propose that a secretariat be provided to the Board from the existing partner agencies and PUSH.

At this stage in its development, the ESB will need to be provided with dedicated resources in order to resource and support its activity. We propose that the capacity to support this for 2011/12 be identified from existing resources in PUSH and from 2012/13 from wider sub-regional sources, including support that may be available from the Solent LEP and other neighbouring LEP's.

Appendix 1 Part 1

Please refer to Annex 1 for more information regarding the membership and conduct requirements of the ESB and those associated with it.