

## Meeting Note - Strategic Board 19 August 2020 - Skype Call

### **Attendees:**

**Members:** Nora Senior (Chair), Scott McLarty (Vice Chair), Caroline Barelle, Mike Cantlay, Simon Cotton, Audrey Cumberland, Alistair Dodds, Russel Griggs, Poonam Gupta, Steven Heddle, Melinda Matthews-Clarkson, Alison Milne, Gillian Murray, Lord Smith of Kelvin, Grahame Smith.

### **Other attendees:**

Stephen Boyle (Adviser to Chair), Steve Dunlop (SE), Lorna Gibbs (SG), Oonagh Gil (SG), Nick Halfhide (SoSE), Uzma Khan (SG), Stuart King (AU/Sec), Jo-anne Lawson (Sec), Mary McAllan (SG), Richard Murray (AU/Sec), Colin Robertson (SG), Kathleen Robertson (SG), Karen Watt (SFC), David Wilson (SG), Charlotte Wright (HIE), Damien Yeates (SDS).

### **Apologies:**

Sara Carter, Liz Cameron, Frank Mitchell, Kevin Quinlan, Liz Ditchburn (SG), Gary Gillespie (SG).

### **Welcome and Minutes from the Previous Meeting**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the call and asked the Board to agree the previous minutes with a request for any comments to be made via correspondence to the Secretariat. [one amendment via correspondence has been noted].

### **Item 1. Introduction from the Chair**

The Chair began the meeting with a recognition of thanks to the Members and again for their patience with the technical issues involved in having the meetings remotely. It was noted that video meetings in future would be preferable.

She reflected that despite the last meeting of the Board only being in June, a lot had happened since then. Notably the sub-group to the Board had submitted their report on mitigating the labour market impacts of COVID-19, the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (AGER) had submitted their report and the Board has also published their review into Industry Leadership Groups (ILGs). The Scottish Government (SG) had published their response to all three at the same time, accepting all the recommendations. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) had also commenced their review into and that will be covered in greater detail in item 3 today.

The Chair then observed that as well as all those developments, the agencies have been continuing to work towards the response to the pandemic. She formally noted her and the Board's recognition and appreciation of the agencies work again, whether that be through the support for businesses for example managing the plethora of grant funds, or supporting workers and learners.

She drew attention to the last item of the day where the Board must look at what it needs to do to adapt further in response to current events. Some of our actions from the Strategic Plan or missions will have been overtaken by recent events and so she encouraged Members to think about whether the Board's current priorities are correct.

Before moving on, the Chair invited Mary McAllan (SG) to add her thoughts for the meeting today. Mary echoed the Board's thanks to the agencies for their incredible work undertaken in this

demanding and challenging time. She noted that SG is aware that the demands are huge, resources are challenging and everyone is trying to prioritise. It is encouraging that the Board is being front-footed around the crisis and looking to align actions.

The Chair noted that the impetus and speed of response will likely not lessen but with a collective focus we will get through this in a collaborative and focussed way.

## **Item 2. ESSB Labour Market Sub-group – SG Response**

The Chair welcomed Oonagh Gil (SG Deputy Director, Skills) and invited her to update Members on the SG response to the sub-group's report (Paper 02a). Members to note Paper 02b (SG Summary AGER response).

Oonagh talked through the presentation including a summary of the recommendations, the SG response to these and next steps. She noted that Ministers had responded to the immediacy of the recommendations and had already begun to implement some actions such as the scale up of PACE+. The next steps will be to confirm implementation details and ensure there is clear ownership of each action.

The Chair thanked Oonagh for the update and opened up the item for discussion. She commented that monitoring & timescales are the key areas the Board wants to understand. Is there clarity on who is responsible for leading what and frequency of updates to the Board (what we're going to measure, what does success look like). Oonagh noted that this is a priority and a member of her team has been assigned to look at this. There is a degree of complexity as there is overlap with actions already in place that we need to be alert to. There is a need to streamline this, having a monitoring process that is giving people what they need.

Other comments included the role of local authorities, representation on the programme board and the Centre for Workplace Transformation and how the Board's current BMWI mission fits into this.

- **SH:** employability role of local authorities (LA) will be very important. Reiterate the importance of having a LA rep on the Board.
- **SM:** understanding the breakdown of the of £2.3 billion package would be helpful.
- **GS:** commend the SG's work, with the development of a coherent plan. What are the internal mechanisms within SG: a programme board? Would be good to have external representation. On the Centre for Workplace Transformation this was a proposal Grahame put forward and one he is keen to engage with. The aim is to build on the work the ESSB has done on BMWI and how we take this to the next stage. Attention needs to be accelerated due to pandemic. Businesses are now thinking innovatively on how they can adapt their business model to respond to COVID. The Centre would coalesce all the evidence, providing real insight into new practices, develop new behaviours and be a real resource for the ESSB and agencies (like Fair Work Convention). The ESSB should be heavily involved in the feasibility study on the Centre.
- The Chair endorsed the comments from SG and noted that the ESSB would be keen to participate in the programme board.
- **AC:** overlap and potential duplication is the biggest concern. Benefit of real-time on-the-ground intelligence to provide reassurance on what we're doing is working.

The Chair thanked Oonagh for her update. By December, we should have clear roles and responsibilities, and measurement in place, with a progress update in September.

**Action ESSB August 20 (01) - The AU to provide members with a breakdown of the £2.3 billion SG funding.**

**Action ESSB August 20 (02) - Oonagh Gil to speak with RG (SoSE) and CW (HIE) to update on Sandy Begbie work around the Jobs Guarantee.**

**Action ESSB August 20 (03) – Oonagh Gil to update the Board at the September meeting around plans for ensuring clarity of ownership and governance structures. The Secretariat will work with Oonagh to update the Board accordingly.**

### **Item 3. The SFC Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability**

The Chair welcome Karen Watt and invited her to update Members around the work the SFC are undertaking. Members to note background briefing paper. Karen then updated Members, summarising the process, caveats and context, emergency year 20/21 and broader changes themes.

#### **Process**

- Three phases: 1<sup>st</sup>, early conclusions by early September. 2<sup>nd</sup> to December and third phase through to May 2021. There have been a lot of submissions to the call for evidence so far. Karen noted her feedback on this is initial and just a flavour and will be refined further.
- The process involves the use of Roundtables, advisory groups, programme board, commissioning evidence and analysis and looking at international models, economic modelling and scenario planning and policy analysis on student expectations and industry/employer links.
- SFC looking at funding models and how they hold organisations to account. Also looking at what advice to give to government in what they could do to thrive and adapt.

#### **Caveats and Context**

- Working within ever changing policy landscape. Many countries are facing the same issues and dealing with a global pandemic and no one knows for sure how businesses, colleges and universities will need to adapt.
- Funds and public finances stretched and there were already issues eg skills mis- match. It takes time to change (e.g. 4 year commitment to students).
- Big changes need transition and whilst there is no simple answer there are a number of points that need to be elevated for better and public discussion.
- Not starting from scratch, with the Muscatelli and Cumberland/Little reports, the sub group report and AGER. These are starting points alongside the submissions and consultation.

## Emergency Year 20/21

- Priority has been health and safety and how campuses can adapt – there are significant complexities around these.
- Financial sustainability and stability (students in hardship, protecting research and science base and paying staff). Colleges already face financial challenges but have an important role to play in the response.
- Immediate funding for the emergency year and looking at what we can be reprioritised (ensuring no loss of learning skills, new learners, providing and working on headroom for upskilling and reskilling. Credit guidance has been updated and choices need to be made within existing allocation of funding).
- Universities facing the challenges with decreased international admissions and expectation to increase the number of students from Scotland.
- Emergency year assess, reassess, re-prioritise and respond to changes in policy.
- Responding to the recovery: all of this is about the response, but sheltering more people in productive learning, responding to employment crisis, seeing universities and colleges as local anchors and research and innovation

## Broader Themes

- There have been some really impressive recommendations for change including stimulating better evidence and discussion, digital education now core rather than 'nice to have' – what this means for residential life and how is this funded in the future. Changing student expectations and what student want and need in this new world. Review estate strategies.
- Looking at condensed less expensive learning, commitment to widening access and how this is measured going forward, better ladders and bridges (better articulation between institutions and levels) and looking at funding models around this. More flexible entry and exit points and looking at senior school overlap funding.
- Long term business and industry relationships, looking across the spectrum and how
- R&D likely to be picked up in the next phase of the review. If we have full economic costing models, then we're likely to do less R&D.
- Process is iterative and collaborative. First report will be published in September and will prompt further debate.

The Vice Chair thanked Karen for her time and mentioned that he was pleased to see a strong programme management; focus on 2020-21 and with the links to employers and how to get people back into work. He then opened up for discussion. The main discussion points are summarised below:

**SC:** increased number of learners from rUK. How does that match with the reduction of students coming from the EU?

**KW:** This involves many moving parts. We can expand Scottish places to counter the drop in EU students. The big issue isn't necessarily the numbers, but particular issues for certain STEM subjects. We are trying to balance a range of competing priorities. Will be giving advice to Ministers shortly on this and around the funding implications. The fundamental issue will be around transport, airlines and visas which will ultimately determine how many international students will physically come to Scotland to study.

**SH:** The ESSB evidence submitted - when we say 'we're a long way away from providing support for distance learning' we may be being too negative and pessimistic.

**KW:** Agreed with this, as we also have Open University and UHI and there's a lot we can build on. Do we as a funding council need to put more investment into quality digital curriculum and can we do more to enhance that?

**MC:** the key feature is that our institutions come out of this stronger than before and stronger than our competition.

**GS:** Could you expand on what the review is picking up on apprenticeships.

**KW:** We will be having further discussions with SDS on higher apprenticeships. How do we do longer-term planning and long-term investment? Can we extend the range of courses, and is there flexibility in progression between the models. Are there bridges between apprenticeships and traditional modes of study? Themes will be discussed with SDS and more broadly (there are already shifts in how we do things through COVID and in a crisis position and how we support and deliver the models).

**LSoK:** SE and I are happy to make connections with business. Sue Bruce whilst working at the City of Edinburgh Council did just that.

**Vice Chair:** A lot of good work to build on, the review is very comprehensive and there is a lot of interest. Thanks to Karen for updating us.

#### **Item 4. ESSB Action Plan for Recovery**

The Vice Chair noted that there is a common theme around the topics discussed and now is a good time to make change. This crisis has generated a lot of activity and we need to revisit and look at how relevant the Board's missions are. He invited Richard Murray to talk through Paper 04, looking at what we might want to set as the next meeting's agenda. This is summarised below:

- Very complex landscape with a lot of reviews that has led to a large amount of recommendations (around 110 that relate to the current missions). We need to consider how we have got to these, what are still a priority, what needs revised and tweaked and what has been superseded.
- Some structure is in place through the SPJWG but it also worth tapping into the Board's expertise (and knowledge from current missions). RM then proposed small working groups to be formed that:
  - (1) seek to describe alignment of the various actions/recommendations across the missions (Annex B in Paper 04 provides an example);
  - (2) where possible ascertain from SG and agencies the status of the various actions;
  - (3) establish what that means for the mission actions going forward – i.e. will some be discontinued/de-prioritised, have some been replaced or combined with new actions;
  - (4) Finally, establish which of the actions sit most meaningfully with ESSB.

**Vice Chair:** Thanked RM. The suggestion is to go back and revisit the Strategic Plan, reprioritise and ensure there is no duplication. Agree with **CW** that this needs to be speedy and effective, bearing in mind that Staff resource is fully engaged on delivering support to businesses and people in need and with **SD** that the work should capture key milestones and metrics to track impact .

**Action ESSB August 20 (04) – Secretariat to outline a process for undertaking the review which will be taken forward by the Strategic Plan Joint Working Group (which includes the Secretariat), drawing on the support of Board members.**

**AOB**

**SC:** What are the next steps on ILG review in terms of implementation?

**Action ESSB August 20 (05) – Secretariat will follow up and get a detailed plan from policy colleagues. To circulate to Members.**

The Vice Chair thanked everyone for their time, noting a lot of interesting topics and the next member is 17<sup>th</sup> September, and closed the meeting.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Action ESSB August 20 (01)</b>	The AU to provide members with a breakdown of the £2.3 billion SG funding.
<b>Action ESSB August 20 (02)</b>	Oonagh Gil to speak with RG (SoSE) and CW (HIE) to update on Sandy Begbie work around the Jobs Guarantee.
<b>Action ESSB August 20 (03)</b>	Oonagh Gil to update the Board at the September meeting around plans for ensuring clarity of ownership and governance structures. The Secretariat will work with Oonagh to update the Board accordingly.
<b>Action ESSB August 20 (04)</b>	Secretariat to outline a process for undertaking the review which will be taken forward by the Strategic Plan Joint Working Group (which includes the Secretariat), drawing on the support of Board members.
<b>Action ESSB August 20 (05)</b>	Secretariat will follow up and get a detailed plan from policy colleagues. To circulate to Members.