

# CROSS PARTY GROUP ON SKILLS

Wednesday 3 June 2020, 1330-1430 hours  
Virtual Meeting

## Minutes

### Present

- Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP
- Beatrice Wishart MSP
- Stuart McKenna, Scottish Training Federation
- Grant Ritchie, Dundee and Angus College
- Fiona Stewart, Skills Development Scotland
- Sara Collier, Skills Development Scotland
- Joanne Buchan, Colleges Scotland
- Mark McCahill, Colleges Scotland
- Will McLeish, Colleges Scotland
- Cara Hilton, CECA Scotland
- Ian McCulloch, ITC Academy
- Boab Thomson, Universities Scotland
- Kevin Patrick, Lantra Scotland
- Chic Brodie, Caledonian (Strategy) Scotland Ltd
- Jacqueline Hall, Enginuity
- Robert Bruce, Enginuity
- Tommy Breslin, Scotland Union Learning
- Ann Garscadden, Scotland Union Learning
- Robert Girvan, CITB
- Paul Allford, CITB
- Fiona Harper, SELECT
- Kerry Bamber, City & Guilds
- Anne Galbraith, SECTT
- Alison McLure, Institute of Physics
- Christine Powell, Essentials Plus Ltd
- Simon Williams, NHS Education for Scotland
- Debbie McCreath, Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre
- Ian Archer, Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre
- Aileen Ponton, SCQF Partnership
- Rachel Le Nolon, SCVO
- Martin McGuire, WorldSkills UK
- Alasdair MacRae, SQA
- Barbara Adams, Servelec
- Drew McGowan, West College Scotland
- Moira Houston, Chartered Banker Institute
- Anne Meikle, Cearta Associates Ltd
- Jane McCormack, Scottish Government
- Jennifer Watson, Scottish Government

### Apologies

- Gillian Martin MSP
- Johann Lamont MSP
- Ross Greer MSP
- Kirsty Conlon, Universities Scotland
- George Brown, SQA
- Jim Metcalfe, College Development Network
- Shona Matthews, Chartered Banker Institute
- Kirsty Summers, SWA

### 1. Welcome and Apologies

Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP opened the meeting and noted apologies.

## **2. Approval of Minutes from the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the Wednesday 4 March 2020 meeting were ratified.

## **3. Presentation and Discussion**

This meeting was focused on the immediate issues around Covid-19 for the skills sector and going forward what will be the opportunities and challenges, and consideration of what the skills landscape may look like. Fiona Stewart, Head of NTP Operations at Skills Development Scotland (SDS), began by discussing apprenticeship programmes. She noted that 108 apprenticeship providers have furloughed all of their staff and said that SDS is monitoring the situation and checking in with the providers regularly, and that they are working with the Scottish Government on how best to assist providers within the parameters of public funding.

Fiona highlighted that SDS has launched a grant scheme, under the Covid-19 temporary framework, and that providers have to be eligible to apply, with certain criteria necessary so that it stands up to financial scrutiny. She said it also doesn't cover what has already been paid by other grants available out there, companies must still be trying to deliver 'business as usual'. She said that the grant would help to ensure continuity of service so that the training infrastructure can continue, and the intention is to ensure that applications can be turned around as quickly as possible.

In terms of apprentices, Fiona noted that there are a lot of good examples of training providers working with apprentices and that SDS has TV adverts running, to help those who need support or have been made redundant, which points them to alternative opportunities, jobs and training, and that helplines were available. She said that skills investment advisors are also contacting apprentices daily to support them.

Stuart McKenna, Chief Executive of the Scottish Training Federation (SFT), noted how Covid-19 has changed the way that STF has been working with its members since the crisis began by making use of technology such as Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp to connect. He said that there has also been more one-to-one telephone calls and communications, with around 80 members attending weekly meetings.

Stuart highlighted that one of the key issues for businesses is cash flow as payments have stopped and said that they are in discussions with the Scottish Government and SDS about grant relief. He stated that more flexibility of assessments evidence required from awarding bodies is needed as is more relaxation of audit requirements, for example, it is currently difficult to gather in signed employer signatures for payments due to lockdown and social distancing rules.

Looking ahead, Stuart said that employers won't be in a rush to take on new apprentices and that incentives would be required. He also noted that providers would not necessarily be able to do what they did before because of social distancing, that they would need to be nimble and look at delivering smaller chunks of learning and more online learning.

Grant Ritchie, Principal of Dundee and Angus College, outlined the work that has been undertaken within the college sector, the largest training providers in Scotland, throughout the duration of the pandemic. He said that colleges had to move quickly to move to online learning, that colleges already had the infrastructure to adapt to this way of working, and it has worked well.

#### **4. Dates for Future Meetings**

It was noted that future meetings would be scheduled in due course and in line with Covid-19 guidance.

#### **5. Close**

With no further business to conduct, the meeting was closed.