

Minutes of Meeting 10th May 2012
Cross Party Group on Skills

Date: 10th May 2012

Location: Holyrood, Committee Room 2

Present:

Association of Accounting Technicians	Helen McGougan	NSCC & Independent Roof Training Association	John McKinney
Barnardo's Scotland	Helen Brown/ Simon Warr	OPITO	Gillian Black
Chartered Banker Institute	Shona Matthews/ Simon Thompson	SECTT	Anne Galbraith
Construction Skills Scotland	Laura Thompson	Scottish Enterprise	Brian McLeish
Education Scotland	Ruth Ohldag	Scottish Conservative Party	Gavin Brown MSP
Economic Development Association [Scotland]	Irene Bell / Anne Meikle	Scottish Labour Party	John Park MSP
Federation of Small Business Scotland	Mary Goodman	Scottish Parliament Education Committee	Jonas Rae
GS Reid	Gordon Reid	SQA	Joe Wilson
ICS Learn	Joanne McManus	Scottish Youth Parliament	Andrew McGowan MYPSP
Investors in People	Vicki McLean / Judith Ackerman	The Open University	Úna Bartley / Pete Cannell
JHP Training	Jim Murphy	Universities Scotland	Heather Sloan
NHS Education for Scotland	Karen Adams	Unite the Union	Walton Pantland / Lindsey Millen

Apologies received:

Bio Reliance	Louise Rice	SCQF	Aileen Ponton
British Retail Consortium	Ian Shearer	Scottish Investment Operations	Alan Thornburrow
Close the Gap	Emma Ritch/ Suzanne Motherwell	Scottish Labour Party	Margaret McCulloch MSP
COGENT Scotland	Paul Coffey	Scottish Liberal Democrats	Liam McArthur MSP
Construction Skills Scotland	Graeme Ogilvy / Stephen Sheridan / Phil Ford	Scottish Land And Estates	Sarah-Jane Laing
Creative Scotland	Helena Ward	SQA	George Brown
Education Scotland	Anne Jardine	Scottish Renewables Forum	Gavin Donoghue
Fife Council – Enterprise & Protection Services	Lucinda McAllister	SELECT	Newell McGuinness
Improve	Kelvin Thomas	SEMTA	Brian Humphrey
Loch Lomond & Trossachs Community Partnership	Kate Sankey	Skills Development Scotland	Fiona Stewart
NHS Education for Scotland	Simon Williams	Skills for Logistics	Chris Campbell
MHP	June Deasy	STUC	Sylvia O'Grady
Rathbone Scotland	Chris Sutherland	The Scottish Whiskey Association	Siobhan Patterson
Remploy	Margaret Barton	University of Abertay	Prof. Stephen Olivier

Agenda Items:

1 Welcome:

- 1.1** John Park MSP the Co-Convenor [JP] welcomed everyone to the meeting and opened the formal AGM.
- 1.2** Several apologies had been received in advanced of the meeting. No further apologies were taken from the floor.
- 1.3** JP then provided a brief summary of the work undertaken by the CPG during the course of another quick year. Having reapplied for CPG status successfully in June 2011, the first meeting had managed to secure the Minister for Learning and Skills as speaker. The level of activity and engagement from members was clear, not only at meetings but also in the frequency with which members were seen around the Parliament building. Reviewing the year showed the breadth of topics covered but also some recurring themes; from the issue of funding and apprenticeships, learning in the workplace for those that are experienced workers [Open University and Unite] or those not yet in employment [work of Universities Scotland and business communities]. JP noted that there is a lot to look at, particularly with regards to employability, management and leadership skills. The Group is already working to bring some of this to the agenda for our next session.
- 1.4** JP also wished to remind members of the generosity of our lunch sponsors and offered a special note of thanks once again for their support.

2 AGM:

- 2.1** The Co-Covenors confirmed that the Group was quorate and proceeded to the formal business of the AGM.
- 2.2** Nominations for the office bearers:
 - 2.2.1** Having reminded attendees that only existing members of the CPG may vote, it was proposed that the office bearers remain in post for the coming session as follows:
Co-Covenors: Gavin Brown MSP and John Park MSP
Secretary: Shona Matthews
Proposed by John McKinney of NSCC, seconded by Joe Wilson of SQA and carried unanimously.
- 2.3** Nominations for formal acceptance of new members to the group:
 - 2.3.1** The following individuals and organisations were proposed for membership of the CPG:
 - Marco Biagi MSP
 - Aplus Training, British Retail Consortium, Castle Douglas Community IT Centre, Close the Gap, Fife Council – Enterprise & Protection Services, JHP, Remploy, Scottish Land and Estates, Scottish Youth Parliament, SEMTA, University of Abertay, Working Links.The motion to include all proposed new members was carried unanimously.

2.4 As there was no further business for the AGM JP closed the meeting.

3 Before commencing with the remaining agenda items, JP took the opportunity to thank the meeting lunch sponsor Investors in People and invited them to say a few words. Judith Ackerman highlighted the importance of 2012 for IIP, with a change in focus from review work to look at and support strategy. The team at IIP would be delighted to discuss in detail with other members of the Group.

4 Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

4.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 9th February 2012 were approved, noting that some suggested amendments by EDAS had been received by the Secretary and had been adopted. Matters arising included:

4.1.1 Festival of Politics update: The Secretary advised that the responses had resulted in a tie and so a combined theme had been submitted to look at the issue of youth employment by focussing on the renewable sector and whether Scotland was producing the right skills sets to support its objectives. The CPG's proposal of *Reaching the Reality of Green Jobs- Skills for Young People in a Renewable Scotland* had been successful due to a record number of submissions this year for the limited timetable. The CPG was due to receive two free tickets to an event and more information was to be forthcoming on this once the programme was finalised. Anyone interested should contact the Secretary. This meant that the topics of skills for renewables and youth employment remain on the workplan.

4.1.2 Youth Employability: A joint meeting was proposed with the CPG for Colleges and Universities with a view to including this prior to the parliamentary recess. JP asked whether members were generally in favour of progressing this, bearing in mind the timing. Joe Wilson of SQA felt that anything that supported the objectives of lifelong learning and opened dialogue between like minded organisations was to be encouraged. Irene Bell of EDAS supported the idea particularly with the growing issue of graduate underemployment. JP asked whether there were any views from the group on the format or potential speakers. It was suggested that all funding streams should be invited. Having them in the same room would be useful as part of a joint discussion and could help identify and avoid the potential for duplication. Simon Thomson of the Chartered Banker Institute suggested that Young Scot might be contacted to get involved. JP agreed to take the ideas forward with the Convenor of the CPG on Colleges and Universities and seek a date as soon as possible and to liaise with Heather Sloan of Universities Scotland to get things moving.

4.1.3 EDAS: Irene Bell and Anne Meikle provided some details about events organised by EDAS on the topic of youth employment. Irene explained that a parliamentary reception was planned for 30th May. There was already good support from MSPs, researchers and Angela Constance MSP, Minister for Youth Employment will give the keynote address. This provided a great opportunity to discuss youth employment. Attendance was by invitation only to EDAS members, therefore anyone interested

that is not an EDAS member should get in touch. The EDAS Annual Summit was taking place on 20th June, an open event chaired by Lesley Riddoch. The event is in two parts; the first a question time style debate with wide ranging topics from 'Scotland the Brand'; views on immigration; the 'big green question' versus the economic reality of delivering this; and 'small is beautiful'. Part Two would be a smaller round table forum discussing the business opportunity environment and looking at the issues of leadership ambition and entrepreneurship. It is also intended that the delegates will look at the 'what if' scenarios were Scotland to vote for full independence. JP thanked Irene and Anne for their contributions and noted further information on the events could be gained directly from EDAS.

4.1.4 Workplan for 2012/13: JP noted the offer from Investors in People to lead a session on leadership and management skills. This was topic was outstanding alongside an invitation to hold a joint meeting with the CPG on Renewable Energy in the context of skills transfer. The renewable sector continues to offer huge opportunities however it is unclear whether Scotland has the skills capacity and such a meeting might reveal what direct interventions are being made.

4.1.4.1 Joe Wilson of SQA also reminded the group of the suggested topic of the Curriculum for Excellence, noting that digital participation in learning was still a key challenge. John Park noted that there is a CPG on Digital Participation looking at how individuals can take full advantage of the benefits of the digital age. Anne Meikle commented that the Leadership Enterprise forum held in April had provided some feedback on this topic, also noting that skills gaps for the renewables sector was something being discussed with Skills Development Scotland.

4.1.4.2 Co-Convenor Gavin Brown MSP suggested that the Group also seek to invite the Minister Angela Constance for a Q&A session on the matter of youth employment during the next session.

4.1.4.3 John McKinney of NSCC urged that the topic of funding avenues be revisited – many still do not know where to turn for funding or not aware of what is available when or indeed how to access this. Simon Thompson of the Chartered Banker Institute suggested this was an area where the CPG could work on a framework that SDS could then take forward to create something tangible. Mary Goodman of the Federation of Small Businesses commented that this issue had come up at a recently attended event, the feeling being that organisations don't know about funding unless they 'trip over it'. Smaller businesses seemed less likely to know about funding. It was noted that SDS were trying to pull something together but there is a need for information to be presented in a simple way and for better relationships between funding agencies and businesses. There was agreement from members that often the only information or advice reaching a business comes directly from the learning provider. Jim Murphy highlighted the issue of duplication. For

example no one knows exactly where to go for vacancy matching. Helen McGougan of AAT advised that her organisation aims to provide a link between the business and providers, however providers change so quickly and at short notice it was hard to gain commitment over the long term. JP suggested that members consider the end game – what would be the desired output of such a session and then make suggestions about how to improve the system, possibly developing a short paper highlighting anomalies in the current system. Helen McGougan highlighted a round table event taking place in June on the issue. The Secretary, Shona Matthews asked whether, given the changes to the Sector Skills Councils highlighted at the previous meeting, and that many SSCs had provided a central hub for businesses in engaging with the funding agencies and providers, there might be a gap in funding knowledge. Anne Galbraith of SECTT voiced her concerns that the electrical sector no longer had SSC representation in Scotland.

- 4.1.4.4** The Secretary also noted that the topic of measuring return on investment in learning and development had not been tackled as yet. John McKinney of NSCC and Karen Adams of NHS Education for Scotland both confirmed that they could support this discussion.

John Park MSP thanked everyone for their contributions and would discuss with his Co-Convenor and update the workplan to address these issues in the forthcoming programme of meetings.

5 A.O.C.B

- 5.1** John McKinney reminded the group that the week commencing 21st May was Scottish Apprenticeship Week. There would be a display of traditional Scottish building skills at the Castle during the week and initiatives in Glasgow and Edinburgh during the Edinburgh Festival focused on traditional buildings. Mr McKinney also updated members on a specialist lead roofing apprenticeship to support £3 million in contracts associated with the building ‘MOT’ programme. Anne Galbraith asked for more detail and John stressed it was early days and was attending a meeting later that day to discuss and would then discuss with contractors.
- 5.2** JP informed the Group of a letter received from the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights enquiring about whether the racial equality impact of Modern Apprenticeships had been assessed. Responses around the table suggested that no member organisation was aware of any data that could provide a picture of what is happening. It was unclear whether any other body had looked into this matter or considered it. Simon Thompson of the Chartered Banker Institute asked whether colleges would have any usable data. JP felt that the Association of Scottish Colleges should hold some data as this came up when presenting his maiden Bill, together with the issue of disability and apprenticeships. John was due to meet with office bearers soon and would raise the query.

Joe Wilson suggested that there may be some way of extracting the data through college funding. Gordon Reid added that the CPG on Human Rights had been promoting education as

part of the training. Anne Meikle of EDAS noted that apprenticeship data was still being gathered on gender and occupational segregation. It was not clear how this data would be used and wished to know who looks at the feedback received and what is done with it thereafter; those contributing needed feedback. Úna Bartley of OU commented that one report had suggested 90% of apprenticeships had been taken up by men. JP thanked all members for their views and suggested responding to CRER on behalf of the CPG that this matter be taken to the Equal Opportunities Committee and SPICE but that he would continue to liaise with CRER. Irene Bell commented that the CPG could use the information positively if it was there but was extremely concerned that the data did not appear to have been captured. JP noted to also highlight gender segregation in his investigations.

6 Close of Meeting

- 6.1** With no further business to discuss JP thanked everyone for their ongoing support and advised that the next meeting was planned for the 4th October. The Secretary confirmed that dates for the full meeting programme would be issued over summer. Before the meeting formally closed, Irene Bell of EDAS wished to propose a vote of thank to the Convenors and the CPG's Secretariat for their ongoing efforts in running the meetings.

Appendix 1.

Cross Party Group on Skills

AGENDA

Annual General Meeting

12.45pm Thursday 10th May 2012

Committee Room 2, The Scottish Parliament

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Opening of AGM**
 - Convenors' annual report
- 3. Nominations and election of office bearers**
- 4. Nomination and ratification of new members**
- 5. A.O.C.B**
- 6. Close of AGM**
- 7. Open Session of General CPG Business**
 - Minutes of the meeting of 9th February
 - Matters arising
 1. Festival of Politics Update
 - Youth Employability
 1. Potential for joint meeting with CPG for Colleges and Universities
 2. EDAS Events – May 30th and 20th June
 - Planned Programme 2012/13 session
 1. Developing Management & Leadership Skills
 2. Joint event with CPG on Renewable Energy
- 8. AOCB**
- 9. Close and date of next meeting - 4th October 2012**