

Hampshire Skills Partnership
25 September 2025 – 10:00 – 12:00
at Sparsholt College

Attendees: Sarah Greer (Chair, University of Winchester), Julie Milburn (Vice-Chair, Sparsholt College), Andrew Kaye (South Hampshire College Group), Anthony Bravo (Basingstoke College of Technology), Barney Ely (Hays Recruitment), Graham Galbraith (University of Portsmouth), James Knowles (Southampton Solent University), Matt Johnson (South Coast IOT), Sara Russell (Peter Symonds College), Virginia Barrett (FCoT).

Guests (item 4 only):

Jane Lamer (Portsmouth City Council – agenda item 4 only), Professor Rosa Wells (University College Birmingham – agenda item 4 only)

Hampshire County Council: Andy Tickner, Jamie Mackay, Michelle Wells (Record Keeper), Natalie Wigman (agenda item 4 only)

Apologies: Adele Blaker (DWP), Paul German (Yateley School), Ross McNally (Hampshire Chamber of Commerce), Sue Taylor (ALPS / ALPHI).

		Action
1.	<p>Welcome and Introductions and Apologies</p> <p>The meeting commenced with a welcome from Sarah Greer, who thanked everyone for attending and to Sparsholt College for hosting. Each attendee introduced themselves, and apologies, above, were noted.</p> <p>It was confirmed that Julie Milburn is the new Vice-Chair for the Partnership and Sarah welcomed Anthony Bravo to the Partnership as a new member. The dedicated webpage (https://www.hants.gov.uk/business/hampshire-prosperity-partnership/hampshire-skills-partnership) will be updated by Michelle Wells to reflect the changes.</p> <p>The group agreed to amend the order of the Agenda: Item 4 was moved up, followed by items 2, 3 and then items 5-8.</p>	MW
4.	<p>Devolution for Solent and the Isle of Wight</p> <p>4.1 Natalie Wigman and Jane Lamer gave updates on Devolution and the <i>Skills and Employment</i> workstream (presentations to be shared) and Professor Rosa Wells provided a verbal insight on how devolution has worked in the West Midlands; (West Midlands Combined Authority, WMCA) particularly with respect to skills.</p> <p>4.2 Some of the key insights from the presentations and insights included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An outline of what the Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) will do 	

<p>4.3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An insight into the policy delivery framework to prepare for the MCCA, including the need for statutory plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Government will be expecting a Strategic Skills Plan and a Commissioning Plan from the area by December 2026 • A list of ways in which stakeholders can engage with the Devolution process and confirmation a Communications plan is in place • A summary of the Skills and Employment responsibilities set out in the Devolution white paper, with further detail on the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) and local Get Britain Working plans. • WMCA has a focus on strategic relationships with providers as well as transactional • A key strategic focus for WMCA has been expanding Level 3 provision through ASF, while navigating challenges in the Level 4 and 5 space between colleges and universities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Colleges often operate independently, prompting efforts to unify voices via regular constitution meetings and regional collaboration through College West Midlands, with emphasis on local projects and LSIPs. • The West Midlands benefits from ‘Colleges West Midlands’ (https://www.collegeswestmidlands.org.uk/) – a strategic partnership of 18 colleges (but does not include University College Birmingham). • Universities maintain separate, monthly strategic meetings and deliver Skills Bootcamps, aligning with broader policy pillars and cultural development. Operationally, a fixed-cost model for starter courses has been adopted, though postcode eligibility and flexibility remain barriers. • WMCA is looking to have more influence on 16-19 education as well as careers information, advice and guidance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Currently, the careers element focuses on capacity checks and feedback, but there is an expectation that influence will grow—though the exact structure is still unclear. • The two Institutes of Technology (IoTs) bring FE and HE together where sometimes it can be otherwise difficult to do so (e.g. competition with level 4/5 provision) • Lessons learned highlight the agility and responsiveness of the FE sector, with ongoing efforts to reduce proximity barriers and shift from annual to three-year agreements to better meet future demand. • The WMCA area benefits from more agility in the skills space with different, more flexible funding rates and models – more ability to collaborate, innovate and test • Geography can be an issue: Impact on those who live / work / learn across borders. <p>A discussion followed the presentations. Key insights included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding rates focused on local delivery partners and ideally direct rather than subcontracting arrangements 	
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4.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the first year, there was a review of which colleges were delivering in the region. This process has now been consolidated, and an agreed study rate programme has been established for young adults aged 19–24 • The shadow year of the WMCA was helpful in consultation with providers, identifying priorities & funding allocations and in curriculum planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ During this year, funding remained stable with providers knowing their allocations and given time to plan and adapt their curricula ○ Hampshire and the Solent is looking at different models and aware the Mayor might have different approaches and priorities ○ It's important to have a definitive list of who receives ASF, how it is used and the impacts. ○ An opportunity to simplify and focus on a good balance of provision versus administration • Observations about the importance of senior leaders and policy makers having a good understanding of the differences between different providers (e.g. colleges, universities, IoTs, independent training providers) and the challenges they face • MCCA likely to welcome collective voices rather than individual – opportunities for (e.g.) ALPS-ALPHI, Hampshire FE Principals' group and the Wessex Group of Sixth Form Colleges. <p>Natalie asked if she could arrange a separate meeting with Rosa to learn more about other aspects of devolution that could be of interest to Hampshire and the Solent area.</p>	NW
2.	<p>Terms of Reference</p> <p>The following revisions to the Terms of Reference were formally agreed by all members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Julie Milburn has been appointed as the Vice-Chair of the Hampshire Skills Partnership, replacing Mike Gaston. • Antony Bravo has joined the partnership, filling the vacant position for a college principal, created in Julie's move. • The Strategic Skills Manager role has been removed from the Terms of Reference. 	
3. 3.1	<p>Minutes and Actions from the last meeting</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as an accurate record. As per the Minutes, action points were complete apart from action no. 8 below:</p> <p>Discussion: Exploring the match / mismatch between learners' expectations vs employers' skills demands. JM and SG to discuss next steps (including Ethical consent), lead institution/s and potential funding bid. – IN PROGRESS</p> <p>SG will arrange a meeting with other universities to explore how they might carry forward this action, which is also included in the Get Hampshire Working Plan.</p>	SG

<p>5.</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p> <p>5.3</p>	<p>Hampshire Prosperity Partnership Board (HPPB) update</p> <p>Julie provided a verbal update on the recent HPPB meeting. There were four main items - approach to use of LEP legacy reserves, the Local Innovation Partnerships Fund, the Get Hampshire Working Plan and joining up the business support system.</p> <p>Concerns were raised about the adequacy of government funding to meet skills delivery needs, particularly the importance of investment in colleges through both matched and non-matched funding. It was confirmed this had been noted at the HPPB.</p> <p>A question was raised about the continuation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund as Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation progress. JaM to find out more.</p>	<p>JaM</p>
<p>6.</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p> <p>6.3</p>	<p>Updates</p> <p>Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) programme</p> <p>RM was unable to attend and will be asked to share a written update.</p> <p>Get Hampshire Working Plan</p> <p>JaM confirmed the Get Hampshire Working Plan was adopted at Decision Day on 18 September 2025. The Plan and supported annexes can be found here: https://www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/strategiesplansandpolicies/get-hampshire-working-plan. JaM is now taking forward the action plan with other, lead partners.</p> <p>Hampshire Skills Strategy / Working Group</p> <p>JaM provided an update (slides to be shared) on the Hampshire Skills Strategy including some background, policy developments since the Strategy was agreed by HPPB and an outline of the three main parts of the Strategy: A skills profile of Hampshire; Priorities for Hampshire and Taking the priorities forward (the action plan).</p> <p>The discussion focused on alignment with other plans and strategies (e.g. Get Hampshire Working Plan, LSIPs, Economic Strategy) and trying to rationalise new actions for partners.</p> <p>It was agreed that the action plan would try to capture existing actions from other plans and strategies (mapped to the priorities) but also include some new activity to demonstrate coordination and impact and reduce duplication.</p> <p>The Strategy is due to be adopted on 9 December and the next meeting is on 4 December. Therefore, JaM will arrange an additional Teams meeting for the Partnership to approve the final draft.</p>	<p>RM</p> <p>JaM</p> <p>JaM</p> <p>JaM</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p>	

7.1	A member had shared a question about the ' <i>Substitutions will not be permitted</i> ' clause in the Terms of Reference. The group discussed and agreed to maintain this.	
7.2	There was also a discussion about the format of the meetings – could there be an option for hybrid meetings rather than always in-person? A compromise was suggested for alternate meetings on Teams and in-person. SG and JaM will talk through and feedback at the next meeting.	SG / JaM
7.3	Andrew Kaye explained there is a draft document which is bringing together collective perspectives and requests from colleges with respect to Devolution. The document is due to be considered by all college principals and could be presented at a future Hampshire Skills Partnership meeting. Andrew asked to liaise with Jamie for it to be included at a future meeting.	AK / JaM
8.	<p>Future meetings</p> <p>The next meeting will be taking place on Thursday 4 December, 10am – 12pm, at Southampton Solent University.</p> <p><u>Future meetings are proposed as follows</u> (format / venues to be decided on 4 December 2025):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday 5 March 2026, 2 – 4pm • Thursday 11 June, 2 – 4pm • Thursday 17 September, 10am – 12pm at LifeLab, University Hospital Southampton • Wednesday 9 December, 2 – 4pm 	

Action Log:

No.	Actions	Who
1	All slide decks to be shared with the members and published on the Hampshire Skills Partnership webpage	MW / JaM
2	Hampshire Skills Partnership webpage (https://www.hants.gov.uk/business/hampshire-prosperity-partnership/hampshire-skills-partnership) to be updated to reflect changes to the membership.	MW
3	Natalie Wigman to meet with Rosa Wells regarding Devolution	NW
4	Discussion: Exploring the match / mismatch between learners' expectations vs employers' skills demands. SG to discuss next steps with other universities on ethical consent, lead institution/s and potential funding bid.	SG
5	UK Shared Prosperity Fund JaM to make enquiries on whether this fund would continue or be lost if LGR/Devolution progresses	JaM
6	Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) programme: A written update to be provided.	RM
7	Hampshire Skills Strategy: Create a unified action plan that consolidates existing actions from other related plans and strategies, mapped to the six Strategy priorities.	JaM
8	Sign off final draft of Hampshire Skills Strategy JaM to arrange an additional meeting on Teams for the Partnership to approve the final draft of the Hampshire Skills Strategy.	JaM
9	Format of future meetings: The format of Hampshire Skills Partnership meetings for 2026 will be discussed. Feedback at the next meeting.	SG / JaM