

MINUTES - DRAFT

Meeting Skills for Londoners Construction Sub-Group

Date Tuesday 2 March 2021

Time 2.00pm

Place Remote Meeting

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Meetings are not held in public and are only open to those invited to attend by the Chair.

Members present:

Seamus Keogh (Chair)
Bunmi Atta
Shenaaz Chenia
Steve Drury
Paul Gallagher
Yvonne Kelly
Jessica Mellor-Clark
Martyn Price

Also in attendance:

Matthew Bracewell, Senior Project Officer,
Skills & Employment
Laura Dubeck, Senior Manager –
Programme Delivery, Skills & Employment
Julia Harrowsmith, Senior Manager, Skills
& Employment
Michael Heanue, Principal Policy Officer,
Skills & Employment
Simon Hughes, Managing Director,
Simian Risk
Laura Marshall, Senior Board Officer,
Skills & Employment (Clerk)
Polly Persechino, Policy & Programme
Manager (Economy, Skills &
Employment), South London Partnership
Rachel Roberts, MCA Programme
Manager, Skills & Employment
Rebecca Roper, Programme Officer,
Skills & Employment
Sarah Spindler, Senior Project Officer,
Delivery, Skills & Employment
Jackie Thomason, Finance Director,
Simian Risk

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1 Introductions and apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the Group.
- 1.2 Apologies for absence were received from Andy Carson, Mark Farmer, Jenny Herdman, Brian McKeown, Tom McLoughlin, Caroline Roberts and Janette Welton-Pai.

2 Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

3.1 RESOLVED:

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

4 Actions Arising

- 4.1 The Mayor's Construction Academy (MCA) Programme Manager provided an update on the outstanding action around discussing putting the unspent Levy funds in the London Progression Collaboration (LPC) to help small and medium (SMEs) with the Cross Industry Construction Apprenticeship Task Force (CCATF). She confirmed that GLA officers had discussed this action with LPC which had raised the issue with CCATF. GLA officers would continue to discuss this with LPC and CCATF.

4.2 RESOLVED:

The actions arising from the previous meeting were noted.

5 Governance Update

- 5.1 Members heard that the pre-election period for the 2021 GLA (Mayor of London and London Assembly) elections lasted from 22 March 2021 until Thursday 6 May 2021.
- 5.2 The Senior Board Officer explained that Skills for Londoners (SfL) subordinate bodies would be disbanded at the start of the pre-election period, and officers would undertake a review of the subordinate bodies to ensure they continued to meet the needs of the SfL Board and Business Partnership and were responsive to any new policy development and manifesto commitments, particularly in light of the COVID-19 recovery work. Officers would also review the subordinate bodies to ensure they reflected Mayoral manifestos/new commitments. The Senior Board Officer explained

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that GLA officers would be in touch after the election to outline the next steps for the Group.

5.3 RESOLVED:

The Skills for Londoners (SfL) Construction Sub Group noted the update.

[Paul Gallagher joined the meeting].

6 Mayor's Construction Academy Round 2 Hub Case Study – South London & Partners Hub

- 6.1 Members received a presentation on the work of the South London & Partners (SLP) MCA Round 2 Hub. Polly Persechino highlighted the following areas: the significant impact of COVID-19 on the SLP MCA Hub; the areas and geography that the SLP MCA Hub covered; the partners that the SLP MCA Hub worked with; the aims and objectives of the SLP MCA Hub; examples of SLP MCA Hub coordination; and the opportunities and threats for the SLP MCA Hub. Members also heard about SLP MCA Hub pipeline activities which included a Construction Skills Outreach Programme and Green Construction Skills Programme.
- 6.2 In response to a query, Polly Persechino explained that the SLP MCA Hub had engaged with other MCA hubs and had attended regular meetings with West London and other South London MCA hubs in particular. Members heard that MCA hubs had been sharing information, literature, different approaches, best practice and lessons learned, which had been helpful for the SLP MCA Hub when holding conversations with providers.
- 6.3 Members heard, for example, that other MCA hubs had advised that the SLP MCA Hub established clear guidelines with the providers as they cited challenges around acquiring information and data. As a result, the SLP MCA Hub had developed a Memorandum of Understanding with their providers.
- 6.4 In addition, other MCA Hubs had provided information around the ambitious targets that had been set around getting women into the construction sector.
- 6.5 The Chair questioned where the SLP MCA Hub saw itself in the next six months and whether the SLP MCA Hub had seen an appetite for people willing to get involved in construction, given COVID-19 and Brexit. Members heard that the SLP MCA Hub continued to see a significant proportion of construction jobs coming through their employment brokerage systems, highlighting that there were still opportunities available in the sector. She explained that the SLP MCA Hub would be completing a large piece of outreach work with schools, colleges and parents to highlight the job opportunities available in the construction sector.

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- 6.6 Polly Persechino explained that there had been some COVID-19 related anomalies linked to learners choosing construction, specifically that there had been an increase in participation for ages 16-18 Further Education (FE) studies. It was noted that there had been some challenges around maintaining those learners due to the impact of COVID-19 on classroom learning and practical work experience.
- 6.7 Members heard that the impact of COVID-19 could lead to anxiety around returning to the workplace. Polly Persechino highlighted that there was a real challenge around linking local people to local jobs. She also explained that it was clear that some sectors were in decline (such as retail, hospitality and leisure) because of the impact of COVID-19. These industries had a lot of transferrable skills that could be used in the construction sector and the SLP MCA Hub would be working to promote this. This included work to ensure people had access certification to enable employment on construction sites such as the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS).¹
- 6.8 Jessica Mellor-Clark agreed that there were still job opportunities in the construction sector and confirmed that as a response to COVID-19, a lot of construction workers preferred to work locally. This could be an issue, especially when employers moved contractors around multiple sites on different days. Another issue was around contractors working for multiple clients that had different COVID-19 testing approaches. For example, an employer providing free COVID-19 tests on site versus employers requiring workers to have COVID-19 tests independently. She also praised the SLP MCA Hub for helping people get basic tickets such as CSCS cards. She questioned how the SLP MCA Hub was funding this work.
- 6.9 Polly Persechino explained that the influence of the SLP MCA Hub on COVID-19 testing was limited. She highlighted that this issue had not been raised as a challenge by employer brokerages, but she would make a note of this issue. She confirmed that the SLP MCA Hub had received funding through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) and the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), as well as some commitment through Section 106.
- 6.10 The Chair and members thanked Polly Persechino for coming to present at the meeting and praised the SLP MCA Hub for their hard work.
- 6.11 RESOLVED:**

The SfL Construction Sub Group noted the presentation and the subsequent discussion.

[Simon Hughes joined the meeting].

¹ CSCS cards provide proof that individuals working on construction sites have the appropriate training and qualifications for the job they do on site.

7 Mayor's Construction Academy – Coordination and Collaboration

- 7.1 The MCA Programme Manager presented an update on the MCA programme, with specific reference to case studies and examples of coordination and collaboration between MCA hubs.
- 7.2 Members received an update on MCA hub performance, the interim evaluation, and next steps for the MCA Programme. Examples of collaboration included: quarterly best practice meetings between MCA Hubs and GLA officers; the Skills London event (UK's largest careers event for young people aged 15-24); and the example of the West London College MCA Hub Coordinator working with the National Careers Service to deliver a regular virtual event, #ConstructLondon. Examples of coordination activity included the MCA Prospectus 2020/21 for construction training across South East London.
- 7.3 The Chair questioned the details around the MCA evaluations. The MCA Programme Manager explained that in addition to the interim evaluation delivered last year, the interim final evaluation of the Round 1 MCA Hubs was expected in June 2021, with the final evaluation expected in September 2022. The Chair thanked the MCA Programme Manager for providing the Sub Group with good examples of MCA Hub coordination and collaboration.

7.4 RESOLVED:

The SfL Construction Sub Group noted the presentation and the subsequent discussion.

[Polly Persechino left the meeting and Jackie Thomason joined the meeting].

8 Capital Funding Case Study – Waltham Forest Centre Project

- 8.1 Members received a presentation on the work of Simian Risk and the Waltham Forest Centre Project. Simon Hughes provided some background on the journey of Simian Risk so far, examples of good news and successes, the impact of COVID-19 and details on how Simian Risk overcame the challenges, as well as detail on post-COVID-19 re-purposing.
- 8.2 COVID-19 challenges highlighted included issues around employer and learner engagement, the limitations and issues with remote learning and access to technology, and the difficulty of COVID-19 security arrangements and repeated lockdowns. Members heard that Simian Risk had been supported by the GLA's Emergency Relief Support Fund which had allowed it to ensure that its facilities were COVID-19 secure.
- 8.3 Simon Hughes highlighted that even though extensive support from the GLA had been received, there was still approximately 1000 deferred learners, explaining that a lot of these learners had been deferred several times due to repeated lockdowns.

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Simon Hughes explained that the Waltham Forest Construction Training Centre project was being repurposed so it could respond to the challenges posed by COVID-19.

- 8.4 Bunmi Atta highlighted that there was so much work that organisations were doing. She wanted to ensure there was an understanding of which training provider was providing which training opportunity, from entry level up to higher education. She explained that all this needed to be captured so there was a 'golden thread' of data, which could be tracked and improved upon. This was important when viewing the construction labour force and this information and 'golden thread' would be needed if organisations were to address the lack of labour workers. Simon Hughes felt that the MCA programme did a lot of this work, stating that the MCA was a real power for good. He highlighted that signposting was more important and duplication needed to be avoided.
- 8.5 Yvonne Kelly explained that for FE colleges, a lot depended on whether learners were under the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Scheme and therefore there were disincentives for FE colleges to invest heavily.
- 8.6 Yvonne Kelly suggested that work should be done on mapping the FE colleges that delivered specialisms. She also explained that signposting to specialist training providers from FE could only take place if there were greater access to awareness of local career opportunities linked to these qualifications. She felt that more could be done to signpost toward job opportunities.
- 8.7 The Chair was concerned that some employees that were PAYE were not being paid by their employers to turn up for training. He questioned whether Simon Hughes had seen an increase in this practice and whether there was anything the MCA Hubs, GLA officers or the Sub Group could do to assist with this.
- 8.8 Simon Hughes explained that this practice was not uncommon, especially with Tier 2/3 specialist contractors. As an example, he highlighted that in the London scaffolding sector, most of the workers were self-employed and there was no PAYE relationship with an employer. As a result, the employer would often not be able to invest in the worker. He explained that large employers took advantage of CITB grants so that PAYE employees could be paid to train.
- 8.9 Simon Hughes felt that there seemed to be a trend where employers bought in expertise rather than investing. He suggested that Brexit had had an impact and the quality of labour was reducing, which was forcing employers to invest in apprenticeships and invest in developing their own workforce. Jackie Thomason highlighted that the new National Skills Fund for Level 3 included the scaffolding qualification and that this funding should be able to help.
- 8.10 The Chair and members thanked Simon Hughes for coming to present at the meeting and praised Simian Risk for their hard work, especially around adapting to COVID-19.

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8.11 RESOLVED:

The SfL Construction Sub Group noted the presentation and the subsequent discussion.

9 Capital Programmes Update

- 9.1 Members received a presentation on the GLA's Capital Programmes. Matthew Bracewell, Senior Project Officer explained that a £7.2m capital funding programme was available for MCA Quality-Marked providers to ensure that equipment and facilities kept pace with changing technology.
- 9.2 Members heard that six MCA projects had been approved and all had entered grant. Two projects had commenced prior to the COVID-19 lockdown and had been largely completed, but the remaining projects had suffered delays due to the pandemic and were therefore at varying stages of delivery. The Senior Project Officer confirmed that the capital projects had been supported through the provision of COVID-19 Emergency Recovery Support Fund and COVID-19 Contingency Funding. It was noted that outputs associated with delayed projects were expected to be delivered in line with targets, albeit later than originally profiled.
- 9.3 The Chair thanked the Senior Project Officer for providing an update on the MCA Capital Programme.

9.4 RESOLVED:

The SfL Construction Sub Group noted the presentation and the subsequent discussion.

10 Date of next meeting

- 10.1 The next meeting of the Skills for Londoners Construction Sub Group would be confirmed after the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections in May 2021.
- 10.2 The Chair and GLA officers thanked the Sub Group for their hard work, contributions and commitment throughout this Mayoral term.

11 Any Other Business the Chair Considers Urgent

- 11.1 The Chair felt that a key theme seemed to run through all the items of this meeting: a shrinking pool of construction workers in London. He questioned whether other members felt that this was the case.
- 11.2 Steve Drury explained that he had not seen this yet but highlighted that a lot of work had been held up. He explained that there was a pent-up demand for construction

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work in London which should restart over 2021. Paul Gallagher agreed, suggesting that it was too early to say given the immense changes in the last 12 months due to Brexit and COVID-19.

- 11.3 Jessica Mellor-Clark highlighted that the Construction Leadership Council and CITB were doing some anonymised work with businesses which looked at the effect of Brexit and COVID-19 on construction and construction workers. She explained that the report should provide some answers when it was published.

12 Close of meeting

- 12.1 The meeting closed at 16.00pm.

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