

ANNEX 9 – Minutes of an oral evidence session with Lindsay Pamphilon, Orbital South Colleges Group Principal, and Jayne Dickinson, Orbital South Colleges CEO, on 14 December 2022

Meeting of the **ADULT LEARNING AND SKILLS TASK GROUP** held at 2.00pm on 14 December 2022 via Microsoft Teams.

Elected Members:

Chris Townsend

Jeremy Webster

Jonathan Essex

Catherine Baart

1 EVIDENCE SESSION WITH ORBITAL SOUTH COLLEGE GROUP (EAST SURREY COLLEGE & JOHN RUSKIN COLLEGE) [Item 1]

Witnesses:

Jayne Dickinson – Outgoing chief executive

Lindsay Pamphilon – College Principal and incoming chief executive

Can you explain the landscape you are working in – how many adult learners do you have? Do you have rival providers or does provision in East Surrey come solely from you?

The steer is very much on upskilling, reskilling and bringing people back into education and we do a lot of work with adults with high needs. Provide some leisure but a smaller amount nowadays because the funding is directed at English and Maths. ESOL is massive for ESC, we have seen a huge growth in that – have more than 100 students over the summer and were directly approached by Job Centre Plus (JCP) to run it in Guildford where it was lacking. No rival providers in our area.

How will the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) becoming statutory affect East Surrey College, will the push from Government to focus on the skills that employers need require a big transformation? What will ESC have to do for LSIP? Is this achievable? Is it desirable for the college to do this?

No big transformation because we're doing it already, we were part of its formation. We are an executive member of Surrey Chambers of Commerce. We subcontract to the WEA [voluntary sector provider of adult education, to open doors to adults, receives funding from ESFA], they are delivering under our contract in the community (mental health, childcare). We have already gained funding under the Strategic Development Fund (SDF) which comes out of the LSIP. We have an extraordinary position in Surrey where we have the money before the LSIP is produced.

Under the SDF aligned to the LSIP we will be delivering on electric vehicle technology, green tech is the main one for us and have been for a while but this funding is allowing us to move forward, we need to spend that money by the end of March. We're already upskilling staff. This equipment has to be in a central location, it can't go in every village hall. We've got more funding to invest in retrofit. John Ruskin is focusing on domestic heating so solar panels, ground source heat pumps, wind turbines, the skills needed to fit those attached to an apprenticeship.

Surrey Care Association directly input into the curriculum we deliver. Access to Nursing – numbers coming forward during Covid were enormous. We run a pre-access course for those who'd like to go into nursing but first need English and Maths GCSEs.

We've been talking to a social care provider based in Surrey and looking at whether they could write programmes that would enable some of the ESOL learners to get the skills they need to apply for healthcare assistant jobs.

How do you prepare for what skills are going to be needed?

Our teachers are practitioners. We work with about 500 employers.

We work very closely with the employer to look at what their future requirements are going to be. We've been running access to social work for many years. We'd like to collaborate more with the local authority on that. Have spoken to the adult social care team about our students getting placements with them. SCC could help recruit people onto our course and then give them jobs.

What has been the college's focus for adult learning – have you traditionally leaned more towards economic needs or social needs or an equal balance? What proportion of your provision is community learning (e.g. arts and crafts, foreign languages) versus adult skills (provides a qualification from an awarding body)?

We try to meet both needs. Art, floristry, calligraphy, MFL. Community side is also encouraging a pattern of learning. Getting level 2 allows progression onto level 3 which will increase their earning potential.

When it's provision that we don't need a really significant resource for, the WEA can be much more flexible about doing that in a community, skills like supporting someone's mental health you don't need to take technology with you, but you can't do calligraphy in that way.

How many adult learners pay for their own course and how many have it funded from the ESFA Adult Education Budget / Multiply adult numeracy funding?

Employers pay for training that would benefit their business. UK power networks in South East. We can draw down on level 3 National Skills Fund. We've got national skills funding to deliver childcare free of charge on a Saturday for adults not qualified to level 3 and then we expect them to go on and do the foundation degree, the industry desperately needs staff. Also Multiply. Also we successfully bid for boot camp funding to deliver computer aided design which has employment opportunities.

What current skills shortages are you helping to counteract – can you give specific examples?

Digital sector (everybody needs digital skills in whatever sector), engineering (embedded electronic systems), social care sector, green skill element to lots of areas, particularly construction industry.

Do you fulfil the adult skills need in the area entirely or are there any skills needs you would say are not being met by East Surrey College? Are some skills met elsewhere e.g. JobCentre Plus/DWP's Restart programme, or is there an overlap?

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What green tech skills do you teach specifically - again please give examples - and what sort of roles are opened up to the people acquiring these skills?

Retrofit is the big one, we're working with housing associations to develop that, closely with Raven Housing.

We're greening up all our provision so if you're studying a hairdressing course for example you'll be questioning products (e.g. without palm oil/plastic packaging) and we bring in employers to answer them.

Solar panels ties in with roofers retraining.

SDF funding pays for purchasing of electric vehicles.

How do you go about targeting people who would most benefit from adult learning? How are disadvantaged areas being targeted?

It's difficult. One area of deprivation is Merstham. Merstham Hub is becoming increasingly important to us. We want to put in Multiply courses there. That's where our family learning is running. Our younger SEND students have been doing work experience there. And putting our career advisors out on social media. Partnerships. The work with JCP has been important (Good relationship with JCP, regular meetings but not familiar with Restart). WEA are present in the local communities building those relationships. We can't take large pieces of kit out so what we want to do is make sure there is the transport support network to enable adults to come to us. And mental health support that potentially that person needs.

How do you encourage and facilitate adults with SEN, and early school leavers, to come back to education?

We are funded at a very low rate to meet SEN need. LSAs are not paid well. We need an extra 16 SEN staff if we could recruit them. We have taken on a noticeably bigger number of students with high needs this last year.

Surrey Choices SEN adult internship programme.

We have three careers advisors, they advise if funding is available. It's amazing how many people don't know that if you haven't got maths and English level 2 it's free.

Some of the barriers to the unskilled participating that you listed in your submission were course costs, locations, lack of IT if online – have you managed to overcome any of these barriers and if so how?

Travel is the biggest barrier to immigrants learning. Their biggest barrier is travel and funding that would enable that travel would completely revolutionise what activities they can access. They would stop being people who just live in a hotel who don't have any relationships and don't feel part of this community. For me, education is the key to all of that.

An increasing number from Ukraine but because they can legally work in the UK they are 100% funded because they're effectively unemployed.

ESC has a very large number of Afghans, they're only 50% funded because they're still seeking asylum status

If we use the bursary to bus them here we would have run out of money in November, so we decided to take their provision to them in their hotels. But it's not ideal because it doesn't develop their travel and community skills.

They think they left learning a long time ago. The WEA take initial steps so they then think actually maybe I can learn something again e.g. learning to help in schools. Progression route for that is onto the teacher training academy.

We'd like to see people who have given up their career coming back into the workforce , and to show people they can have a higher career not just something to do while the children are young.

Rail engineering at level 2 have a guaranteed interview. Same with Wilmot Dixon after a 4/6 week course.

Re. online, predominantly we're bringing adults back because you can't beat face-to-face learning where it's possible.

One barrier is staffing, you've got to stay one step ahead. We don't have a lot of gaps, often engineering is complex.

What can SCC do to assist ESC going forward?

Help us get the word out.

Colleges well-placed to provide progression route into the care industry.

Improve transport.

2 NEXT STEPS [Item 2]

Arrange evidence sessions with principals of Surrey Adult Learning and Nescot and CEO of Surrey Chambers of Commerce.