

# Terms of Reference

## South East Diamonds for Investment and Growth Skills and Employability Group

### **Background**

Eight 'diamonds for growth' have been identified in the Regional Economic Strategy 2006-16(RES):

- Basingstoke
- Brighton & Hove
- Gatwick Diamond
- Oxford
- Reading
- Thames Gateway Kent
- Milton Keynes
- Urban South Hampshire

These Diamonds for Investment and Growth have been identified as having economies that are either growing faster than the rest of the region or are under performing and the potential to act as a catalyst to stimulate prosperity and sustainable growth across the south east.

### **Skills and Employability Group – key purpose**

It is recognised that there are a number variations as well as similarities between the individual Diamonds in terms of economic performance. It is therefore important that any investment in infrastructure, using the widest definition, should be relevant to an area's specific needs.

A number of topic based policy groups have been set-up to look at commonalities between Diamonds, share best practice and learn from and build on each other's successes and equally to understand what the barriers to full economic growth are.

By working together the Diamonds are more likely to have an influence over the issues identified. They can be a collective voice that can lobby and present the case for further investment.

In 2007 a Skills policy group was established and over a two year period it was convened on a number of occasions to consider skills and employability issues. In 2009 it commissioned and produced a skills and employability strategy<sup>1</sup> and action plan to define the priorities and shape delivery in this important area of work. The group now has a new focus and has been

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<sup>1</sup> Meeting the Challenge and Making the Change – Employability and Skills Strategy 2010-2014, published February 2010

renamed *'The Skills and Employability Group'* to reflect its remit in taking forward the recently published strategy and action plan.

### **Objectives**

The main objectives of the Skills and Employability Group will be to:

- consider what the priority skills issues are for the Diamonds. (The Skills Policy Group will cover essential and intermediate skills and will work with the Knowledge Economy Policy Group on progression to higher-level skills)
- create an annual work plan with milestones and clear outcomes, that will deliver the action plan from the recently published strategy
- use the collective voice of the Diamonds to lobby regional/central government on skills issues and present the case for further investment

### **Key tasks**

The key tasks of the Skills Policy group are to:

- Identify the common issues relating to skills which effect the Diamonds and may be barriers to their further growth
- Share and co-ordinate outcomes, including employer engagement, with the Knowledge Economy Policy Group which will focus on higher-level skills
- Interface with existing skills development groups to ensure coherent strategy development
- Develop a work plan with milestones and outcomes
- Drive forward the skills related objectives identified in the National Skills Strategy and Regional Skills Strategy
- Ensure that partners organisations adopt and support the objectives as appropriate
- Ensure co-ordinated employer engagement across the policy groups
- Assist other Policy Groups in the creation of a clear, consistent and co-ordinated message on the Diamonds
- Monitor progress against the action plan and report to the Leaders and CX Board

- Identify strategic projects which require significant investment from key partner(s)
- Undertake additional research and gather data jointly with other policy groups and partners, as necessary, to inform future planning

### **Membership**

Membership of the Skills Policy Group is drawn from the Diamond Authorities and partner organisations. It is chaired by the PUSH Executive Director.

Current membership includes:

Skills Funding Agency  
 SEEDA  
 JobCentre Plus  
 Diamond Project Director  
 Diamond Policy Officer  
 Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council  
 Gatwick Diamond  
 Medway Council  
 Portsmouth City Council  
 Reading Borough Council  
 Brighton and Hove City Council  
 Oxford City Council  
 Milton Keynes  
 Partnership for Urban South Hampshire

### **Ways of working**

The following ways of working will be adopted by the Skills and Employability Group:

- Meetings will be held at least quarterly, with additional meetings called by the Chair as deemed necessary, or as considered necessary by the majority if the group
- Meetings will be held in advance of Leaders and CX Board meetings to ensure accurate and timely information on the group's progress against plan
- The Diamonds Project Director and/or Diamonds Policy Officer will cascade relevant communication from the Leaders and CX Board meetings to the Skills Policy Group
- Members of the Skills Policy Group will act as decision makers for their organisations
- Location for meetings will be agreed by members

- Members to identify relevant agenda items and issues for meetings which require group discussion
- The Diamonds Policy Officer will be responsible for all administrative requirements in servicing the Skills Policy Group, i.e. agenda, minutes, follow up, etc.
- Minutes will be circulated to the Knowledge Economy Policy Group members