

Terms of Reference

1. Aim of *Skills East Sussex*

- 1.1 *Skills East Sussex* (SES) is a private/public body and is the federal East Sussex sub-board of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) Skills Advisory Group. The SES Terms of Reference are aligned to the overall SELEP Terms of Reference and the SELEP Assurance Framework, both of which can be viewed on the [SELEP website](#)
- 1.2 The aim of *Skills East Sussex* is to drive an improvement in employment and skills in East Sussex in order to increase economic prosperity by improving business competitiveness, supporting social inclusion and working effectively as part of the wider system towards this goal.
- 1.3 *Skills East Sussex* will be the county's recognised strategic body for employment and skills. Using a firm evidence base it will agree and set priorities and provide direction for the county's approach to employment and skills, ensuring that resources and expertise are deployed efficiently and effectively to achieve maximum impact in line with priorities.

2. Main responsibilities

- 2.1 To provide an oversight and enable the joining up of key stakeholders, strategies and local spending to agree a clear, long-term vision for skills and employment in East Sussex and provide on-going review, so that it continues to accord with changing circumstances.
- 2.2 To advocate for East Sussex.
- 2.3 Develop a sustained dialogue with East Sussex employers to:
 - Identify generic and sector-specific skills needs and develop effective strategies to address these;
 - Promote employer investment in workforce skills; and
 - Encourage employer involvement in activities to promote and develop skills amongst young people and vulnerable adults
- 2.4 Commission and/or influence activities and interventions that *Skills East Sussex* agrees will make a tangible, positive and sustainable impact on employment and skills within the county.
- 2.5 Support and influence providers with the design and delivery of learning/training programmes that fully engage with and meet the needs of businesses, learners and potential learners.
- 2.6 Develop effective links with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), through Team East Sussex; the South East European Structural Investment Funds Committee, Government Departments (particularly the Department for Work and Pensions) and agencies (particularly Job Centre Plus and the Skills Funding Agency); and other relevant organisations, in order to:
 - Influence relevant national and LEP policies and resource allocations decisions so that they support East Sussex priorities; and
 - Share intelligence about the effectiveness of different interventions and approaches.
- 2.7 Ensure that skills provision and Information, Advice and Guidance is based on robust and up to date labour market intelligence, presented in formats that are relevant and accessible to different audiences.

- 2.8 Where appropriate develop a co-ordinated approach to maximising funding opportunities to support employment and skills interventions across the county.
- 2.9 Develop and maintain a clear understanding of the skills and employment activities undertaken by organisations and networks within the county, and seek to eliminate duplication and inefficiencies where they exist.
- 2.10 Provide forums and spaces that enable businesses and providers to develop a common understanding of employment and skills needs and deliver joint actions to address these.
- 2.11 Wherever possible ensure that *Skills East Sussex* promotes and links to existing business initiatives, interventions and facilities (such as growth hubs, Locate East Sussex, job hubs)

3. How *Skills East Sussex* will work

Skills East Sussex will be the strategic body for employment and skills in East Sussex. It will:

- 3.1 Meet every six times a year.
 - Agendas and background papers will be sent to members at least five working days prior to meetings
 - Minutes of actions and decisions will be circulated to members for approval no later than ten working days following each meeting and actions will be monitored as a standing item at subsequent meetings
 - Minutes and decisions will be circulated widely, once they have been approved by *Skills East Sussex* members
- 3.2 Report to Team East Sussex and other forums on progress in achieving the county's skills and employment priorities
- 3.3 As required, establish Ad Hoc 'Task and Finish' groups to address specific issues identified by *Skills East Sussex*
- 3.4 Test ideas and proposals with local businesses through 'Business East Sussex' and other relevant bodies including the Economic Advisory Board, sector organisations (eg the Manufacturing Advisory Service) and invite business participation in Board Meetings and in Task and Finish Groups, as appropriate.
- 3.5 Work closely with local skills and employment groups to ensure that *Skills East Sussex* decisions inform and are informed by actions and priorities at District/Borough level
- 3.6 Ensure that appropriate current and future work of the voluntary and community sector in contributing to employment and skills is fully supported
- 3.7 Communicate *Skills East Sussex* actions and decisions clearly and transparently to interested organisations and individuals within and outside East Sussex, on a regular basis

4. Membership, decision-making and secretariat

Membership

- 4.1 Members of the Skills East Sussex will be individuals who are of sufficient seniority to make decisions on behalf of their organisations and to influence the actions and decisions of other organisations. They will also have sufficient expertise or association with Skills East Sussex areas of responsibility to ensure informed and beneficial input to the Board.
- 4.2 Membership will be reviewed on an annual self-evaluation basis, drawing on external support where necessary. Members are expected to attend all *Skills East Sussex* meetings. In exceptional circumstances, with the written consent of the Chair, Members may send a substitute. Requests to send substitutes should be made to the Secretariat at least three days before the meeting. Failure to attend at least 4/6 of the meetings in a 12-month period may result in a removal from the *Skills East Sussex*.

4.3 Applications to invite new members should be made in writing to the Secretariat and should be provided, with a clear rationale by a Proposer and a Secunder from *Skills East Sussex*. Applications will be subject to discussion and decision at the subsequent *Skills East Sussex* meeting.

4.4 New SES members are selected through a competitive procedure: the Chair will initially invite nominations through SES's sub-groups / reference groups and their wider networks. The Chair will then review all applicants and make a recommendation based on the balance of representation. The Chair will propose their recommended candidate to SES for electronic approval (providing full disclosure of all applicants), whereby the quorum and decision-making conditions shall apply. The Chair may choose at her/his discretion to invite candidates to a SES Board meeting before calling for a decision

4.5 Members of *Skills East Sussex* will:

- Make decisions that will lead to improvements in employment and skills in East Sussex
- Promote the East Sussex Employment and Skills vision and priorities within their organisations, communities and partnerships
- Be the main link between *Skills East Sussex* and those that they represent, including:
 - Bringing forward issues and ideas for debate and decision at *Skills East Sussex*
 - Ensuring that best practice is widely communicated
 - Feeding out and in from the sector or organisational groups represented to ensure comprehensive sector or organisational group input to *Skills East Sussex*
 - Identifying potential members of and, where appropriate, participating in Ad Hoc Task and Finish Groups; and
 - Ensuring that *Skills East Sussex* decisions and Task and Finish Group actions are communicated widely.
- Act as East Sussex Employment and Skills Champions both within and beyond the county
- Contribute to and advise on joint funding applications to support employment and skills
- Recognise and disclose any activities that might give rise to conflicts of interest

4.6 Members of the East Sussex Employment and Skills Partnership Board (*Skills East Sussex*) are:

1. Bexhill College (Principal)
2. Sussex Community Development Association (Community Sector Representative)
3. CXK
4. District and Borough council representatives
5. East Sussex County Council (Chief Executive & portfolio councillors)
6. Plumpton College (Principal)
7. Secondary School Representative (Causeway School)
8. Sussex Chamber Commerce
9. Sussex Coast College Hastings
10. Sussex Council of Training Providers
11. Sussex Downs College
12. Sussex Learning Network
13. Job Centre Plus (DWP)
14. Up to four employer representatives

Other expert attendees will be invited to present and to report on specific agenda items.

Decision-making

4.7 Half of the members of Skills East Sussex will constitute a quorum. Decisions will be made by a majority of the number of members present and voting at meetings. In the event of a drawn vote, the Chair will make the casting vote. Where decisions are required outside meetings, these can be made via written procedure (email) with the agreement of the Chair, co-ordinated by the Skills East Sussex Secretariat (The ESCC Employability and Skills Strategy Manager). Five working days will be allowed for a response; a nil response will be taken as an abstention.

4.8 The Chair will be elected by *Skills East Sussex* members on an annual basis to run from the date of the first *Skills East Sussex* meeting. The existing Chair will be eligible for re-election at the end of their term. The *Skills East Sussex* Chair will:

- Chair the quarterly *Skills East Sussex* meetings, and provide the casting vote where necessary.
- Ensure that all representatives have a fair and equal opportunity to contribute to debate without censor
- Formally sign newly proposed members onto the *Skills East Sussex* and manage *Skills East Sussex* attendance.
- Act as the key spokesperson for *Skills East Sussex*, where necessary.
- Agree all *Skills East Sussex* papers and Minutes before circulation
- Make sure that conflicts of interest are properly managed or avoided

Secretariat

4.9 The Secretariat for the Skills East Sussex will be provided by ESCC. Its main responsibilities will be to:

- Organise *Skills East Sussex* Meetings, including agreeing dates and venues, and providing agendas and background papers and gaining prior agreement to dates, venues and papers by the *Skills East Sussex* Chair before circulation
- Produce the minutes of meetings and ensure that these are circulated in accordance with these Terms of Reference.
- Convene Sector Task and Finish Groups and support the implementation of other actions, in accordance with decisions made by *Skills East Sussex*.
- Liaise with the *Skills East Sussex* Chair and Members on other matters as required

5. Review and monitoring

5.1 Review and monitoring will include:

- Regular reporting to and feedback from Team East Sussex and other strategic groups
- Wide and transparent circulation of *Skills East Sussex* minutes
- Establishing informal 'Peer Review' arrangements with Employment and Skills Boards in neighbouring local authority areas
- Three year review of LMI skillset data to map progress in matching skills provision to employer needs
- An Annual Employment and Skills Challenge Event, open to a wide group of businesses, partners and stakeholders

5.2 In addition, Skills East Sussex may undertake or commission a review of specific areas of activity or organisation, as agreed by Skills East Sussex members, which may include the effectiveness of the evolving Skills East Sussex model in ensuring that county's employment and skills priorities are delivered.

6. Conflicts of interest

6.1 A Register of Interests shall be held by the SES Secretariat. All SES members are required to complete a Declaration of Interest form, recording details of any relationship or other financial or personal interest which might conflict with their duties to SES and SELEP. This includes recording memberships of external bodies or undertaking outside work (voluntary or paid) with anyone who has, or may seek to have, dealings with SES or SELEP. They are further required to identify close family members who are also a SES or SELEP representative, or has the ability to exercise significant influence over SES/ SELEP's agenda or activity. Copies of all declarations are retained by the Secretariats of both SES and SELEP. The Register will be available for public scrutiny.

- 6.2 All declarations are reviewed annually in accordance with the Register of Interest Policy; however each SES member is required to ensure their declarations are up to date and must notify the Secretariat of any changes immediately.
- 6.3 SES members are required to declare interests in any matter being considered by SES, direct or indirect, at the outset of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed. Such declarations will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. After an interest is declared, the Chair may choose to ask the individual SES member to withdraw from the meeting; if permitted to remain, the individual SES member may not participate in any discussion of the matter, or vote in any questions relating to it.
- 6.4 These rules apply whether or not the interest concerned is already set out in the Register of Interests. The rules do not apply where the interest concerned relates primarily to the general interest of any public sector member in her/his area of geographical responsibility, or to the interests of East Sussex as a whole
- 6.5 The rules also apply to any substitute member or Non-Voting Participant.

7. Equality and Diversity

7.1 SELEP and its federal boards are covered by the general equality duty as set out within the Equality Act 2010. Accordingly all decisions taken by SES will pay due regard to:

- a) Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the act;
- b) Advancing equality of opportunity between people from different equality groups;
- c) Fostering good relations between people from different equality groups.

7.2 Members of all SELEP boards, including SES, are required to maintain high standards in the way they undertake their duties. All members of SES are de-facto representatives of SELEP, and therefore their actions impact on the way in which the SELEP is viewed by the public. All members are therefore required to have regard to the 'Principles of Public Life', known as the Nolan Principles, contained within the provisions of S.29(1) of the Localism Act 2011, and set out below:

- a) SELFLESSNESS – to serve only the public interest and never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person;
- b) INTEGRITY – not to place themselves in situations where their integrity may be questioned, not behave improperly and on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour;
- c) OBJECTIVITY – make decisions on merit, including when making appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits;
- d) ACCOUNTABILITY – to be accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities and co-operate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their office;
- e) OPENNESS – to be as open as possible about their actions and those of TES/SELEP and be prepared to give reasons for those actions;
- f) HONESTY – not to place themselves in situations where their honesty may be questioned, not behave improperly and, on all occasions, avoid the appearance of such behaviour;
- g) LEADERSHIP – promote and support these principles by leadership and by example and always act in a way that secures or preserves public confidence.

8. Transparency

- 8.1 SES meetings are not public meetings, however SES shall seek to operate in an open and transparent manner at all times.
- 8.2 Following approval by SES, minutes shall be made publicly available via the ESCC website (and the websites of partner organisations if appropriate).
- 8.3 Other relevant operational documentation for SES shall also be made publically available on the ESCC website (and via partners' websites if appropriate), including SES membership, contact details, meeting schedule, annual reports, the Register of Interests and this Terms of Reference document.
- 8.4 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 shall apply to SES papers and to records of SES decisions.

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