

## **Industrial Communities Cross Party Group**

### **Minutes of the Industrial Communities Cross Party Group Meeting Held on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

#### **1. Present**

Vikki Howells MS (Chair), Cynon Valley; Robin Lewis, Office of Vikki Howells MS; Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Ogmore; David Rees MS, Aberavon; Sioned Williams MS, South Wales West; Cllr David White, Bridgend CBC; Cllr Jayne Brencher, Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC; Cllr Gareth Jones, Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC; Cllr Graham Thomas, Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC; Peter Slater (Secretary), ICA Wales; Joan Dixon, ICA National Secretariat; Danny Grehan, Office of Heledd Fychan MS; Liz Hill O'Shea, Office of Dr Altaf Hussein MS; Elin Hywel, Office of Mabon Ap Gwynfor MS; Ellie Richards, Office of Luke Fletcher MS; Ryland Doyle, Office of Mike Hedges MS; Ioan Bellin, Office of Rhys Ab Owen MS; Alexander Still, Office of Hefin David MS; Sharon James, Cardiff and the Vale College.

#### **2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Anthony Hunt, Torfaen CBC.

#### **3. Welcome**

Vikki Howells MS, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and began with a mention of Cllr Graham Thomas, Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC, who was retiring at the next election. On behalf of the Group she thanked Cllr Thomas for his regular contributions to the CPG and for his many years of service representing his community. She went on to wish the Council representatives on the CPG good luck in the forthcoming local government elections.

#### **4. Minutes of the Meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021 were approved as a true record.

#### **5. Levelling Up White Paper**

Peter Slater, Director of ICA Wales, gave a brief account of the much-anticipated Levelling Up White Paper, which he described as being based on a detailed and objective analysis of the nature and scale of the regional economic divide, which was encapsulated in the UK Government's aim to '*Break the link between geography and destiny.*' He continued with a summary of how the UK Government aimed to close the prosperity gap by mobilizing the so-called six capitals: human; financial; intangible (ideas and innovation); physical; institutional; and social.

However, despite the White Paper's clear and unambiguous ambition, he informed the meeting of an apparent disconnect between the analysis and the proposed solutions, particularly in respect of resources and the unrealistic timescale. Moreover, the White Paper was almost entirely England-focused, and using the recently enacted Internal Market Act would result in the Westminster Government spending money on devolved matters such as education, health and housing. There were also serious other concerns over the centralization of decision making in London and the marginalization of the Welsh Government, which amongst other matters raises issues of accountability and scrutiny.

In conclusion, he stated that final judgment of the White Paper would rest in part on the yet to be announced delivery and allocation details for the UK Shared Prosperity and Levelling Up Funds.

## **6. Skills for a Low Carbon Future: Sharon James, Deputy Principal, Cardiff and the Vale College**

The Chair welcomed Sharon James, Deputy Principal, Cardiff and the Vale College (CAVC), to the meeting.

Sharon introduced the item on the role of skills investment in securing a low carbon future with an outline of current initiatives being developed and delivered at CAVC, which included the following headline messages:

- The Green Jobs Taskforce described every job as having the potential to become 'green', identifying 366 "green" job titles on account of their being connected to sectors such as conservation, environment, energy efficiency, recycling, renewable energy, solar power, sustainability and water/wastewater;
- Approximately 80% of people who will be working in the UK in 2030 are already working today, and transformational change will be needed to meet the 2050 target;
- Investment in key infrastructure projects, green industries and nature restoration could create at least 45,000 direct jobs and over 60,000 jobs by 2022;
- A housing retrofit programme could be a game changer for the Welsh Economy;
- Skills need to be reframed in the context of net zero by: analysing sectoral demand and supply; creating training and qualifications that meet these skill gaps; Investing in training infrastructure to develop high quality training and create a talent pipeline; promoting job opportunities that are attractive to those wishing to upskill and to new entrants; Incentivising manufacturers and employers.
- Creating a skills plan to include: an expansion of training standards/apprenticeships/qualifications; coordination of training providers/colleges/universities; developing accredited high quality upskilling programmes; linking with employers, Qualifications Wales,

Welsh Government and training providers to develop a consistent skills strategy underpinned with funding and investment in new technologies

- New developments at CAVC include: Green Academy; Net Zero Level 3 course for all vocational Learners; creating Sector Skills Priority Academies in Wales and Centres of Industrial Excellence.
- The need to create Talent and World Class Skills from 14 plus.

The Chair opened the discussion with a reference to the paradox of high youth unemployment in her constituency and reports of labour shortages, enquiring whether other colleges were following a similar path to CAVC. Sharon James responded that most colleges were active, referring to specialist courses at Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot by way of examples, adding that there was potential to share resources and the need for local government and Welsh Government to provide a steer. Cllr Jayne Brencher raised the issue of grants for re-training and access to quality work experience, which was difficult to access in parts of the Valleys. In response, Sharon James referred to the Personal Learning Accounts introduced by Welsh Government, and the need for inward investors to 'give back' in terms of skills and training.

Huw Irranca-Davies MS called for a joined-up approach to spread the 'offer' to other colleges, and raised the specific issue of matching the supply and demand for skills in response to the emerging technologies. He also referred to the need for better quality skills assessments. It was acknowledged that matching supply and demand was difficult, although the Sector Academies were developing strong links with employers, and quality assured assessments undertaken by manufacturers were part of the learning accreditation process. Reference was also made to role of local government and Welsh Government in driving and incentivising green technologies through, for example, social housing initiatives. Finally, Cllr Graham Thomas, referred to the impact of the former training levy as an incentive to invest in training, together with the need to build manufacturing capacity.

The meeting was pleased to note that good progress on responding to the zero carbon agenda was being made, and that the expansion was benefitting from the favourable financial and policy framework provided by Welsh Government. Sharon James was thanked for her informative and thought provoking presentation.

Peter Slater  
Secretary

18/3/2022

