

**East of England Economic Summit – 25 May 2021**  
**Chatbox Feedback**

- Concern raised about town centres which has lost some large retailers and the ability to pivot into re-purposing the larger shops into living and smaller retail spaces. Availability of Financing for this regeneration and supply side shortages could mean the market towns could get left behind.
- The required changes in business models and ways of working for businesses to be resilient going forward require a significant increase in skill, knowledge and investment.
- For Cambridgeshire, there has been a major political change in the County Council, now a coalition of LibDems and Labour and Mayorality in the Combine Authority. So we can expect significant change in emphasis with green technologies being introduced in transport and related industries
- Salary now factors further down the list of priorities when looking at employment opportunities, and it's definitely the wider package - flexible working, holiday, healthcare, training opps which are turning heads now. People are looking for a personal commitment from their current or potential employer. The attraction power by offering something as valuable as affordable housing options would be fantastic when wanting the top talent to look their way.
- There's a real risk here of ending up with a two-speed economy/talent market.
- All businesses need to work very carefully to knit all arms of the business together - those who have been working throughout and the new "hybrid" groups.
- There are many positives of agile working but we shouldn't overlook the negative impacts to corporate culture of a split workforce and the loss of unplanned "water cooler" chats that often spark the best ideas
- agile working and hybrid may not work for everyone
- some clients, dependent on industry, are as equally fearful of increased regulation (such as increased health and safety compliance etc) being financially detrimental to their business going forward
- labour and skills are a massive challenge for Essex business
- the business model of many companies evolving quickly over the last year and I hope support is made available to help these entities make and sustain this transition.
- somewhat concerned that training and support will be heavily focused on the young (needed of course) but at the expense of a group that I think will struggle, i.e. the 30 to 50 group, who may lose jobs while coping with the needs of a young family, mortgage, etc.
- With Bank IF providers that's correct but with most of the Independent providers there is a lot more flex and facilities are moulded to meet customer needs - concentration issues can be overcome through Debt Protection insurance - some providers are happy with 100% concentration
- a lot of students have developed outstanding resilience but there are some school leavers and FE leavers who are uncertain of their preparation for the workplace and lack confidence in their exams results which is impacting on their ability to take the next steps
- We have employed apprentices over the last year and whilst they have had a valuable experience, a lot of the supported learning and mentoring has been almost impossible to do online. I feel this has impacted on their experience with us and the quality of their placement and their personal development.
- Remote delivery can work well but I fear it has the potential to widen disadvantages caused by home situations and background

- I think the efficiency of models is very different for every sector as well as the ability to offer hybrid delivery. Every apprentice is entitled to 20% of their contracted time in off the job training so conversations with employers is critical
- The government could provide funding for catch up sessions for Apprentices as it has done for other FE
- full remote delivery is not high quality learning for apprenticeships but a well structured and well supported blend of remote learning and face to face delivery.
- Government support is needed for apprentices who have been unavoidably delayed beyond their planned completion date and therefore have become 'Out Of Funding' but still need support to complete through to EPA
- EPA organisations need to stop changing their rules, increasing their prices and fit in the EPAs for those that are ready
- future skills and changing automation is a challenge for FE - upskilling our teachers and working with schools to create the pipelines is part and parcel of our role as educators
- There is a huge challenge in the education sector of preparing young adults for jobs that don't exist yet, in companies that don't exist yet, in industries that don't exist yet. I think they have to focus more on building inter-personal transferable skills that can be applied to any role
- One of the biggest single challenges that has been identified across all level of skills in this part of the world is more of a focus on STEM related subjects, training and qualifications.