

Scrutiny Board

19 January 2016

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| Report title | Scrutiny Review of Employability and Skills-Tracking and Monitoring | |
| Cabinet member with lead responsibility | Councillor Reynolds City Economy | |
| Wards affected | All | |
| Accountable director | Keren Jones, City Economy | |
| Originating service | City Economy | |
| Accountable employee(s) | Sheila Collett Tel Email | Head of Service 01902 551848 sheilacollett2@wolverhampton.gov.uk |
| | Jim Cunningham Tel Email | Head of Service 01902 550166 James.cunningham@wolverhampton.gov.uk |
| Report to be/has been considered by | n/a | |

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Scrutiny Board is recommended to:

1. Consider progress made to implement recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Employability and Skills.
2. Agree to close the review on the basis that the recommendations are being implemented as detailed in the report.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Scrutiny Board on progress on the implementation of recommendations resulting from the Employability and Skills Scrutiny Review undertaken in 2014-15 and to seek sign off of the review.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The review focussed on the challenge of high levels of unemployment alongside low skill levels amongst the local population. The challenge faced by the City is clearly significant in terms of how we ensure that local people are able to access jobs and therefore benefit from the economic growth in the City.

- 2.2 The questions the review group responded to were:

1. What is stopping local people with low level skills getting into employment – what are the barriers?
2. What are the jobs that are currently available in the City and the wider Black Country and what are those likely to be in the future which would be suitable for this group. What needs to happen to enable local people to successfully compete for these jobs?

- 2.3 The review report and executive response were reported to Cabinet on 11 March 2015.

3.0 Conclusions

- 3.1 The employability and skills gap is one of the most significant and complex challenges faced by the City of Wolverhampton in 2015. The challenge is not a new one but the need to find and deliver sustainable solutions has become critical.
- 3.2 The evidence base from the review highlighted what the Council needs to do to get people with low level skills and qualifications into employment. It also fed detailed baseline information and intelligence into the independent Employment and Skills Commission work.
- 3.3 The role of the commission was to ensure that Wolverhampton has the appropriately skilled workforce required to support the City's economic growth, to support the sustainability of businesses in the City and critically, ensure our residents and young people have access to the right skills provision to give them the best chance of securing employment, developing their careers and staying in employment.
- 3.4 The review identified a series of headline recommendations which the Council and its partners should focus on:
- 3.4.1 Partnership working
- Effective and accountable partnership working is vital if we are to address skills and employability issues in the City.

- The Council has a key role of influence and brokerage and this needs to ensure a far greater understanding of the support available across agencies and the customer journey for our residents seeking work. This should provide clarity on progression routes and the barriers faced by local people.
- The value of delivery through community venues was highlighted as good practice.

3.4.2 Skills and pathways to work

- We need a far greater understanding of the reasons why individuals are not employed by businesses to inform our future learning/skills and employability support work. This needs to be consistently collected and analysed.
- There is a need to identify talent in the city and to address the softer skills issues including attitude.
- Work experience is important and needs further development across agencies to enable local people to develop these softer work skills and be 'work ready.'
- We need a fuller understanding of the position within our local areas/wards to inform more targeted provision with greater impact. We need a greater reach into target areas.
- We need to address the gap in provision for older age groups including work experience, skills development and enterprise skills.
- Our skills interventions need to closely reflect the projected business growth sectors for the City/region. To achieve this we will need robust evidence of future projected growth areas.
- We need to link with and learn from key local initiatives such as Talent Match and City Deal.
- There is a need for a strategy to help older people back into employment with a range of adult education and support to re-skill and the need to have flexibility for people in employment and wanting to improve skills and progress.
- The fractured nature of support for people unemployed and on JSA needs to be addressed.
- We need more data from schools relating to take up of alternative pathways to work such as cultural effort and sport.

3.4.3 Business and enterprise

- A culture of entrepreneurialism is vital and needs further development/nurturing. We are not currently recognising or supporting the growth in this area or its future potential.
- We need a consistent business/work experience offer in our schools.
- An issue has been highlighted for the need for businesses to see the added value of training their employees. This needs greater work with businesses and a greater reach to smaller companies.
- There is a disconnect between schools and businesses which links to why so many young people were not getting levels of attainment. The review group highlighted the need for a strategy and long-term plan to get young people ready to leave school and into employment, further training or apprenticeships.
- Business leaders need to look at training and development in businesses as an integral factor in sustainable success for the business and people in the City.

3.5 Resources

- The scale of the challenge for the City means that interventions need to be deliverable and quantifiable.
- There is a considerable gap between demand and resource in the City to improve employability and skills, taking into consideration the vast numbers that need to be helped and the reducing resources for provision in the public and voluntary sectors.
- There is a need to develop the employability and skills team to gather intelligence, broker partner relationships and work closely with businesses in the City.

3.6 The findings of the review informed the Wolverhampton Skills and Employment Commission, which was tasked in December 2014 with finding solutions aimed at improving the City's prospects for sustainable, long-term economic growth and prosperity. The Commission reported their findings to the City Board in September 2015. A task group, chaired by the Strategic Director, Place, is now in place and will drive forward the action plan developed by the City Board in response to the Scrutiny and Commission findings.

4.0 Recommendations of the review

- R1. That the Council take a stronger role as the champion and honest broker within and across partnership forums to ensure that employment and skills outcomes are effectively delivered.
- R2. That the Council utilises its role of champion and honest broker within partnership working to generate confidence and credibility in the capability of the City to deliver against the employability and skills agenda, linking strongly with the Council's Corporate Communications Team.
- R3. That the City develops a long term cross partnership strategy for employability and skills to achieve a step change in reducing the number of the working age population with no qualifications and not in employment. The strategy should:
- provide clarity of roles and responsibilities whilst also ensuring quality provision
 - make provision for oversight and accountability, consideration should be given to establishing a bespoke forum to maintain oversight of this agenda
 - take into account the extent of the issues facing the City and ensure interventions are scalable and closely aligned to the emerging work on the Combined Authority
 - ensure consistency of approach for young people in the City
- R4. That schools be strongly encouraged to fully engage in the partnerships in the City that are dealing with employability and skills issues to meet the reasonable expectation that schools will support young people to develop soft skills, receive careers advice and gain work experience to get work ready.

- R5. That the Council has a key role as an influencer for example specific work needs to be undertaken with Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) to consider more flexibility regarding Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) and voluntary work experience arrangements.

This influencing role needs to extend to issues of skills and employability that relate to the combined authority.

- R6. That partnership working needs to ensure a far greater understanding of the support available across agencies in terms of the customer journey for our residents seeking work.
- R7. That the Council and its partners implement a series of initiatives, which include:
- a) A toolkit outlining the available support for aspirant individuals in the City to enable them to access employment and enterprise
 - b) A mentoring programme for entrepreneurs
 - c) Collaborating to deliver a joined up, high quality work experience programme
 - d) A multi-agency volunteering strategy that includes employment pathways for volunteers
 - e) A clear pathway of support for young people to get work ready, including consistency relating to work experience opportunities and the development of life skills.
- R8. That the City develops appropriate business support to enable the growth and development of small and mediums size enterprises (SMEs) and should offer targeted support to budding entrepreneurs and innovators. This should build on the work of the Black Country Growth Hub and the business led forums in the city.
- R9. That the Council works closely with businesses to ensure that they recognise the value, and return on investment, to their business from training their employees and supporting career progression.
- R10. That the Council develop and effectively utilise a robust intelligence base to better understand the trends in business growth and job opportunities, future skills needs, and resident profiles. This should include specific intelligence relating to age, geography and other equality characteristics
- R11. That the Council utilises its staffing teams to gather intelligence, broker partner relationships and work closely with businesses in the City.

- 4.1 The executive response pro-forma and update to the review recommendations is attached (Appendix 1).

5.0 Progress

- 5.1 The scrutiny review findings have now been substantially progressed. They were reported to the first meeting of the Skills and Employment Commission in December 2014 and form an integral part of the skills and employment action plan that has now

been developed by the City Board. The data and intelligence collected by the scrutiny review also formed the strong foundations for the work of the commission and has significantly informed their final recommendations. The City Board have now established a cross-partner task group, chaired by the Strategic Director for Place, to drive forward the employment and skills action plan and to ensure an integrated approach to employment and skills support in the City.

- 5.2 The review findings which related specifically to the Council have been progressed more quickly. This is detailed fully in Appendix 1 of this report but includes the development of the volunteer offer as a pathway to work for City Council volunteers; the development of all age work experience placements the provision of mentoring support for entrepreneurs, and the development of the Youth Employment Initiative which will bring significant funding into the City for work with young unemployed people. This will form part of the integrated employment and skills offer for the City.

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The recommendations related to Council activity will be met from within existing resources. The recent alignment of the City Council functions and budgets related to employment and skills within the remit of the Service Director for City Economy enables this work to be undertaken in a coordinated and efficient way.
- 6.2 The approach will also seek to capitalise European Structure Funds and any other further funding coming through Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership. The development of the action plan by the cross-partner task group will seek to align existing resources to maximise impact on employment and skills in the city.

[ES/17122015/W]

7.0 Legal implications

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications associated with the recommendations.

[TS/15122015/E]

8.0 Equalities implications

- 8.1 Although there may be equalities implications arising from the implementation of the individual recommendations relating to employability and skills, there are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

9.0 Environmental implications

- 9.1 There are no environmental implications as a direct result of this report.

10.0 Human resources implications

10.1 There are no human resources implications as a direct result of this report. The Council will however be exploring with partners the joint use of resources, including officer time, to maximise impact on employment and skills

11.0 Corporate landlord implications

11.1 There are no corporate landlord issues as a direct result of this report.

12.0 Risk Implications

Corporate Risk Register (risk reference 2) Skills for Work. If the City residents do not have the appropriate skills that employers require then they will be unable to access the jobs and opportunities available resulting in high rates of unemployment and increased demand on Council services. Risk owner: Tim Johnson. Cabinet Member: Cllr John Reynolds.

Current score red in the Risks Update to Audit Committee 15 December 2014

13.0 Schedule of background papers

- 13.1 Cabinet report 11 March 2015 Item 9 here
- 13.2 Skills and Employment Commission Final Report
- 13.3 Skills and Employment Action Plan

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Executive response: Scrutiny Review of Employability and Skills

| Recommendation 1 | | |
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| That the Council takes a stronger role as the champion and honest broker within and across partnership forums to ensure that employment and skills outcomes are effectively delivered. | | |
| Comment | Timescale/progress so far | Officer Responsible |
| Accept. The City Board and its relevant sub-groups are the key partnership forums for employment and skills outcomes. The Council is represented at a senior level at each of these partnerships. All Council representatives will be fully briefed on the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review to ensure that this strong role as champion and honest broker is in place. | COMPLETE - The outcomes of the Scrutiny Review have been fed into the Skills and Employment Commission. The Commission report and action plan were considered by the City Board in September 2015. All key partnership forums and sub-groups have now considered the findings and initial action plan. City Board partners are now working with the Council to take forward the refined and focussed action plan. The Council is taking a leadership role in ensuring that this partnership work is effective and timely and links with the emerging Combined Authority agenda. The Place Strategic Director is the Chair of the Skills and Employment Commission Task Group responsible for progressing the action plan. | Strategic Director, Place |
| Recommendation 2 | | |
| That the Council utilises its role of champion and honest broker within partnership working to generate confidence and credibility in the capability of the City to deliver against the employability and skills agenda, linking strongly with the Council's Corporate Communications Team. | | |
| Comment | Timescale/progress so far | Officer Responsible |
| Accept. The City Board and its relevant sub-groups are the key partnership forums for the employment and skills agenda. The Council is | COMPLETE The City Council took a lead strategic role through commissioning the external examination of skills and employment issues in the City. | Strategic Director Place |

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| <p>represented at a senior level at each of these partnerships. All Council representatives will be fully briefed on the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review to ensure that this strong role as champion and honest broker is in place and that this is utilised to generate confidence and credibility in the capability of the City to deliver against the employability and skills agenda. Discussions will now commence with the Councils Corporate Communications team to identify proactive ways in which this confidence and capability can be promoted and enhanced.</p> | <p>The outcomes of the Scrutiny Review have been fed into the Skills and Employment Commission. The Commission report and action plan have been submitted to the City Board and considered by all key partnership forums and sub-groups. City Board partners are now working proactively with the Council to implement the action plan. The Council is taking a leadership role in ensuring that this partnership work is effective and timely and links with the emerging Combined Authority Agenda. The Place Strategic Director is the Chair of the Skills and Employment Commission Task Group</p> | |
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Recommendation 3

That the City develops a long term cross partnership strategy for employability and skills to achieve a step change in reducing the number of the working age population with no qualifications and not in employment. The strategy should :

- provide clarity of roles and responsibilities whilst also ensuring quality provision
- make provision for oversight and accountability, consideration should be given to establishing a bespoke forum to maintain oversight of this agenda
- take into account the extent of the issues facing the City and ensure interventions are scalable and closely aligned to the emerging work on the Combined Authority
- ensure consistency of approach for young people in the City

| Comment | Timescale/progress so far | Officer Responsible |
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| <p>Accept. The City Board is the lead partnership forum for employment and skills in the City. The Board currently has two sub-groups the Growth Board and the Inclusion Board. There is also already a Skills and</p> | <p>ON-GOING - The final report for the Skills and Employment Commission was reported to the City Board in September 2015. This final report built upon the strong foundations of data and intelligence provided by the scrutiny review. The City Board has now established a</p> | <p>Service Director, City Economy</p> |

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| <p>Employment Board in place for the City. It is proposed that we capitalise on these existing structures, and discuss with chairs the need for any refinement to terms of reference in light of the review findings.</p> | <p>partnership task group, chaired by the Place Strategic Director to take forward the actions within the commission's report. The task group is focussed exclusively on taking partnership action to ensure an integrated approach to employment and skills in the city. The Task Group has already agreed the need for the Skills and Employment Board to be re-invigorated to ensure that businesses and other stakeholders are involved in the implementation of the action plan for employment and skills. This will now be implemented</p> | |
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Recommendation 4

That schools be strongly encouraged to fully engage in the partnerships in the City that are dealing with employability and skills issues to meet the reasonable expectation that schools will support young people to develop soft skills, receive careers advice and gain work experience to get work ready.

| Comment | Timescale/progress so far | Officer Responsible |
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| <p>Accept. As outlined above the key partnership forum is the City Board and its sub-groups. It is proposed that discussions are held with the City Board and the Director of Education to identify the most appropriate way to engage schools within the employability and skills agenda.</p> | <p>ON-GOING - The action plan that has been developed by partners recognises the key role that schools play in the employment and skills agenda. The integrated model of supported pathways to work that is being developed will have schools as a key part of the implementation. The Director of Education will also be a key player on the re-invigorated Skills and Employment Board</p> | <p>Head of Enterprise and Skills</p> |

Recommendation 5

That the Council has a key role as influencer for example specific work that needs to be undertaken with Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) to consider more flexibility regarding Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) and voluntary work experience arrangements. This influencing role needs to extend to issues of skills and employability that relate to the Combined Authority.

| Comment | Timescale/progress so far | Officer Responsible |
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| <p>Accept.</p> | <p>COMPLETE – discussions have taken place</p> | <p>Head of Economic Inclusion</p> |

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| The review will feed into the on-going work on work experience and greater flexibility already under discussion with DWP. | with DWP and a pilot approach is in place providing more flexibility for work experience placements. This is based upon closer working relationships with the Council and will be evaluated in May 2016 This pilot approach is also being utilised within Talent Match to assess its success and impact upon employment outcomes for those furthest away from the job market. | |
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Recommendation 6

That Partnership working needs to ensure a far greater understanding of the support available across agencies in terms of the customer journey for our residents seeking work.

| Comment | Timescale/progress so far | Officer Responsible |
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| Accept. To form part of the work programme for the Economic Inclusion team. | ON-GOING -The customer journey for various groups of residents has been completed. This includes various cohorts, for example, young people, older people and people facing drug and alcohol issues. This provides clarity on the current customer journey, the gaps in current provision and the barriers to work faced by those who are currently unemployed. This information will be used to shape the model for future integrated working being developed by the City Board Task Group to ensure that it is suitable for all groups and individuals. | Head of Economic Inclusion |

Recommendation 7

That the Council and its partners implement a series of initiatives, which include:

- a) A toolkit outlining the available support for aspirant individuals in the City to enable them to access employment and enterprise
- b) A mentoring programme for entrepreneurs
- c) Collaborating to deliver a joined up, high quality work experience programme
- d) A multi-agency volunteering strategy that includes employment pathways for volunteers
- e) A clear pathway of support for young people to get work ready, including consistency relating to work experience opportunities and the

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| development of life skills. | | |
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| Comment | Timescale/progress so far | Officer Responsible |
| Accept. | <p>a) ON-GOING Funding of £20,000 has been secured from public health to develop a clear toolkit outlining the available support for aspirant individuals to access employment and enterprise. This piece of work is now being finalised with final sign off by Inclusion Board on 4th December 2015 and immediate implementation to link to Universal Credit roll-out in February 2016</p> <p>b) COMPLETE Mentoring support for entrepreneurs forms part of the current offer from the Economic Inclusion team. Individual micro-businesses are offered intensive support from the Council Community Economic Development Officer to develop their business ideas. This currently focuses on the areas of highest deprivation in the City and within these areas a small fund is also in place to provide mentoring support from experienced entrepreneurs where this is demonstrated to be a barrier to aspiring entrepreneurs.</p> <p>c) COMPLETE There is already the structure in place through the Education Business Partnership team to support work experience within the Council. This currently focuses on young people. Work has now taken place to link this with the work of the Enterprising Communities team to extend the offer to all age groups. This is now in place. The various services</p> | Head of Economic inclusion |

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| | <p>within the Council are currently being encouraged to make work experience placements available within their services to ensure that the Council demonstrates a leadership position on work experience for unemployed residents.</p> <p>d) ON-GOING -Volunteering Strategy – work is advanced on the City Council development of volunteering as a pathway to work, working in partnership with the Volunteer Service. A Scrutiny Review is underway which is developing the volunteer offer for all volunteers but with specific support to unemployed residents who volunteer with the City Council. This review will conclude in January 2016 and will be followed by work across partners to embed volunteering as a pathway to work in the wider partnership arena utilising the Council approach as a foundation</p> <p>e) Complete. A pathway of support for young people to get ready for work including consistency on work experience and the development of lifeskills links closely with the work of the Education Business Partnership team. Initial discussions have highlighted the crucial role of schools in this process. Recommendation 4 above has set the initial foundations for engaging with schools in this dialogue. Work will commence with schools and the Education Business Partnership to develop a consistent citywide work experience and life skills offer. This ongoing activity will be monitored by the</p> | |
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Skills and Employment Board

| Recommendation 8 | | |
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| That the City develops appropriate business support to enable the growth and development of small and mediums size enterprises (SMEs) and should offer targeted support to budding entrepreneurs and innovators. This should build on the work of the Black Country Growth Hub and the business led forums in the city. | | |
| Comment | Timescale/progress so far | Officer Responsible |
| Accept. | Complete.Has been built into the on-going work of the Black Country Growth Hub and business forums. | Head of Enterprise and Skills |
| Recommendation 9 | | |
| That the Council works closely with businesses to ensure that they recognise the value, and return on investment, to their business from training their employees and supporting career progression. | | |
| Comment | Timescale/progress so far | Officer Responsible |
| Accept. The review will feed into the on-going work with businesses led by the Enterprise and Skills service. | This forms part of the work programme of the Enterprise and Skills Service. | Head of Enterprise and Skills |
| Recommendation 10 | | |
| That the Council develop and effectively utilise a robust intelligence base to better understand the trends in business growth and job opportunities, future skills needs, and resident profiles. This should include specific intelligence relating to age and geography. | | |
| Comment | Timescale/progress so far | Officer Responsible |
| Accept. The recent re-configuration of services to form a cluster of services within the City Economy with a service director for this area enables a far greater focus to be placed upon the development of robust intelligence. The focus on intelligence and trends related to business | This forms part of the work programme for service development within City Economy. This will include the collection of specific intelligence relating to age and geography. | Service Director Economy |

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| growth and job opportunities, future skills needs and resident profiles will form part of the work of this service area. | | |
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| Recommendation 11 | | |
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| That the Council utilises its staffing teams to gather intelligence, broker partner relationships and work closely with businesses in the City. | | |
| Comment | Timescale/progress so far | Officer Responsible |
| Accept. The recent re-configuration of services to form a cluster of services within the City Economy with a service director for this area enables increased co-ordination in terms of gathering intelligence, brokering partnership relationships and working closely with businesses in the City. It will also enable external funding to be maximised in terms of delivery against the employment and skills agenda. | The re-configured service area came into place in January 2015 | Service Director Economy |