

Scrutiny Board Meeting

Tuesday, 5 September 2017

Dear Councillor

SCRUTINY BOARD - TUESDAY, 5TH SEPTEMBER, 2017

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at next Tuesday, 5th September, 2017 meeting of the Scrutiny Board, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No	Item
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5a	<u>Scrutiny Review of the City's Apprenticeship Offer</u> (Pages 3 - 26)
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	[Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal, Chair, to present the findings and recommendations of the scrutiny review]
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Scrutiny Board Meeting

6 September 2017

Report title	Scrutiny Review of the City's Apprenticeships Offer	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Cllr John C Reynolds City Economy	
Review Chair	Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal	
Review Members	Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre Cllr Keith Inston Cllr John Rowley Cllr Zee Russell	
Lead Scrutiny Review Officer	Earl Piggott-Smith Tel. Office: 01902 551251 E-mail: earl.piggott-smith@wolverhampton.gov.uk	
Link Officer(s)	Angela McKeever Head of Skills Email: angela.mckeever@wolverhampton.gov.uk Tony O'Callaghan Skills and Employability Manager (Young People) E-mail: Tony.OCallaghan@wolverhampton.gov.uk	
Report to be/has been considered by	Place Leadership Team	14 August 2017
	Strategic Executive Board	22 August 2017
	Scrutiny Board	5 September 2017
	Cabinet	13 September 2017

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to approve the recommendations detailed in Appendix 1

Executive Summary

1. Apprenticeships offer a tool for organisations to 'grow their own' talent to meet gaps in skills and knowledge. However, the delivery of the Government's national apprenticeships strategy is proving a challenge to small and large organisations alike due to its complexity. The achievement of the Government target to create three million new apprenticeship starts by 2020 in England will require sustained partnership efforts across different sectors.
2. Apprenticeships offer great opportunities to fill gaps in skills but more work is needed to persuade parents and schools that apprenticeships are not a second-class option and can offer a pathway to better paid employment in the future. The lack of parity between vocational or technical courses and academic courses is an on-going challenge to efforts to increase the number of apprenticeships starts in areas of skills shortage and future jobs growth.
3. The challenges to improving skills levels across Wolverhampton and closing the gap in performance compared to neighbouring authorities and national benchmarks were outlined in evidence to the review group and should not be underestimated. However, the evidence presented showed that current plans for improving local skills will deliver real improvements in the future.
4. Training providers have broadly welcomed the changes to the national apprentice strategy policy and in particular the introduction of the levy to fund the expansion of current numbers. However, there were concerns expressed about how such a major change in national policy can deliver the ambitions agenda detailed in the Apprenticeships (In England): vision for 2020, without proper consideration of the local challenges facing local area and the current skills mix.
5. The issue of managing the administrative and extra costs involved in recruiting and supporting an apprentice is considered to be a barrier to small employers wanting to meet future skill shortages or indeed large employers who may be financially better placed to absorb the cost of the levy charge; but choose instead not to offer a vacancy.

6. The review group welcomed the City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) focus responding positively to the new national strategy and actively encouraging service areas to consider then option of recruiting an apprenticeship to help meet its target. The stated commitment of CWC in its role as an employer to offer quality apprenticeships with the aim of wanting this work to lead to permanent work in the future is to be commended. The work is supported by the recent publication by CWC of a workforce planning strategy which sets out plans for meeting the public sector apprenticeship target and the appointment of apprenticeship co-ordinator.
7. It is also important that CWC continues to lead by example and actively challenge representatives of partners organisations, where appropriate, to improve the quality of the current apprenticeship offer in Wolverhampton so that it is a more attractive option for local people and employers. The change to national apprenticeship policy offers the opportunity to help meet gaps in local skills and knowledge and support continued business growth.
8. There is good evidence that work at local and regional levels is co-ordinated and good progress is being made to ensure that the Wolverhampton apprenticeship 'offer' meets the current and future needs of the local economy.
9. The review group share the concerns of witnesses about the consistency of approach to giving careers advice and the extent to which all Wolverhampton schools are fully meeting their statutory responsibilities to offer independent, impartial advice. The review group welcome the fact that 15 schools have signed up to meet the Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) standard. The review group is hopeful that with financial support successful schools will apply for re-accreditation and other schools are encouraged to follow suit.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1. To bring to the attention of Cabinet the key findings and recommendations of the scrutiny review of Wolverhampton's apprenticeships offer as detailed in Appendix 1.
- 1.2. The review makes a series of recommendations to further improve the current city-wide apprenticeships offer and highlight those areas where further action is needed to create successful pathways to sustainable employment for local people by giving them the skills and knowledge to compete for jobs now and in the future.
- 1.3. A key expected outcome of the review was to provide evidence to support efforts that will help the Council and partners to work together more effectively, to respond positively to the challenge in meeting the target for apprenticeship starts and also make full use of the apprenticeship levy to fill the gaps in skills and knowledge.
- 1.4. The overall aim of the scrutiny review was to investigate the work being done by City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) to respond to the challenge set by Government for public sector bodies to contribute to the national target for new apprentice starts and also to consider the work being done locally and regionally to close the skills gap. The members of the review group also wanted to investigate how different local organisations had responded to the introduction of the apprenticeship levy and other policy changes.
- 1.5. Apprenticeships offer the potential to provide much needed skills pathways for young people and adults into sustainable and well-paid careers or better jobs. However, Wolverhampton has the lowest number of apprenticeship starts at the 16-18 and 19-24 year old age groups and the second lowest at 25+ compared to the rest of the Black Country.
- 1.6. The review group support efforts to improve skills and knowledge of local people that can help to grow the economy. In evidence to the review, it is clear that apprenticeships offer a pathway to sustainable employment for residents of Wolverhampton and it is important therefore to respond positively to changes in national policy. The review group accept that there are areas where the Council can lead work on implementing the recommendations as an employer, but there is also a recognition that progress in other areas of policy will require key partners working together effectively to meet the challenge to improve skills and knowledge levels.
- 1.7. There is a significant demand from employers in Wolverhampton for people with the right skills and knowledge to fill gaps in areas such as health, construction and social care. At a time of major investment in construction and other developments across Wolverhampton such as housing, there is an urgent need to grow and develop the local workforce to meet the skills demands now and in the future.

2.0 Background

- 2.1. At the Annual Scrutiny Planning Session in May 2016, Councillors agreed that a scrutiny review of the City's apprenticeship offer met the agreed selection criteria – for example, priority should be given to topics that are relevant to a large part of the Council.
- 2.2. The scrutiny review group met on eight occasions to gather evidence from key witnesses with knowledge and understanding of the issues under investigation. Evidence sessions were arranged around agreed themes and questions sent in advance to witnesses to help focus discussion and encourage an informed debate. Witnesses were sent a short guide to help them prepare evidence for the review meeting. A summary of the evidence sessions themes and witnesses is attached at **Appendix 2**.
- 2.3. A key area of concern to the review group was the finding that 19% of the local population have no qualifications. This factor has contributed to the trend for employers looking outside of Wolverhampton to find people with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience required. The highest levels of skills shortages in the West Midlands area are reported to be in the care and business sector - marketing, advertising, legal services. The highest levels of job growth are projected to be in health and caring sectors.
- 2.4. The skills challenge for Wolverhampton is described as being acute - Wolverhampton residents' skills are below those of other Black Country areas and the West Midlands Combined Authority area - only 23% of Wolverhampton residents have a Level 4 qualification compared to 31% at West Midlands level.
- 2.5. The issue of the skills gap in Wolverhampton was considered in a detailed study commissioned by the City of Wolverhampton Council - the Skills and Employment Commission Final Report – September 2015 and in previous scrutiny review- Employability and Skills (2014). The commission report action plan details the recommendations that will support efforts to improve local skill levels and create alternative pathways to employment.

3.0 Apprenticeship - an overview

- 3.1. An apprenticeship is a full-time paid job which combines on and off the job training. A successful apprentice will receive a nationally recognised qualification on the completion of their contract. The apprenticeship will be the minimum of 12 month contract to a maximum of 36 month contract.
- 3.2. An apprentice will be entitled to the National Minimum Wage. The current minimum wage rate for an apprentice is £3.50 per hour. This rate applies to apprentices under 19 and those aged 19 or over who are in their first year. An apprentice will get at least 20 days paid holiday per year, plus bank holidays. The Government has issued guidance about how to improve success when applying for an apprenticeship vacancy.
- 3.3. Apprenticeships can be studied at different qualification levels:

Apprenticeship Level		Equivalent Qualification
Intermediate	2	5 GCSE passes at grades A* to C
Advanced	3	2 A level passes
Higher	4,5,6 and 7	Foundation degree and above
Degree	6 and 7	Bachelor's or master's degree

4.0 Apprenticeship - national policy background

- 4.1. The Government introduced plans to increase the quality and quantity of apprenticeships in England. The Government set a target to achieve three million new apprenticeships starts in its [Apprenticeships \(in England\): vision for 2020](#) document. The reforms only affect funding in England.
- 4.2. The document outlined a range of reforms to apprenticeship policy that include: protecting the term apprenticeship, a simplified funding model, the introduction of a levy and a digital service portal for employers, a focus on degree and higher level apprenticeships and requirements on the public sector to meet a specific recruitment target.
- 4.3. The Government set an annual target for the public sector that 2.3% of the workforce are to be apprentices. The number of apprentices is based on a headcount of staff. The

Government also expects public sector organisations to contribute towards achieving this target through its own recruitment practices and procurement of contracts and services.

- 4.4. The Government has published a series of [apprenticeship standards](#) - the standards show what an apprentice will be doing and the skills required of them, by job role. The standards have been developed by employer groups known as 'trailblazers'.
- 4.5. The apprentice will be independently assessed against the standard three months before the end of the apprenticeship. This is called an [endpoint assessment. \(EPA\)](#) The purpose of the endpoint assessment is to check that the apprentice meets the standard set by employers and are fully competent in the occupation. The Government policy states that 30% of the payment to the training provider will be awarded if an apprentice passes the assessment.
- 4.6. An EPA can only be completed once a learner completes the agreed length of training - 12, 18 or 24 months. There is a concern that employees on fixed term contracts may choose to leave their employment prior to the EPA being completed, which is a concern in evidence submitted by training provider organisations.

5.0 Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

- 5.1. The Government is committed to increasing the number, range and quality of apprenticeships that offer training to degree level. The introduction of higher and degree apprenticeships is intended to offer an alternative to university. Apprentices achieve a full Bachelor's or Master's degree as a core component of the apprenticeship. An apprentice completing a higher or degree apprenticeship typically splits their time between college or university and the workplace. The programme can be used to either recruit new people into the organisation or to develop the skills and knowledge of existing staff.
- 5.2. The University of Wolverhampton are leading the development of higher and degree level apprenticeships through the investment in the [Apprenticeship Hub](#). The University opened the Apprenticeship Hub in December 2016. The Apprenticeship Hub will offer a one-stop destination for employers, parents and apprentices wanting information on the range of apprenticeship programmes. Future degree apprenticeships will include healthcare science practitioner, policing, social work, nursing and paramedic degrees.
- 5.3. The University of Wolverhampton have reported that the number of higher and degree level apprenticeships have grown substantially.

- 5.4. There is a concern from witnesses to the review group that organisations will seek to convert existing posts to degree apprenticeships to meet the Government target rather than recruit new staff. However, there is evidence to suggest that this not a long-term solution, as there may not be enough staff available to meet the apprenticeship target through the recruitment of graduates.

6.0 Apprenticeship Levy

- 6.1. The apprenticeship levy is a payroll tax on UK employers with a pay bill of more than £3 million per tax year. The levy was introduced on 6 April 2017. The levy rate is set at 0.5% of the payroll bill. There are 82 levy-paying employers in Wolverhampton. The majority of employers in Wolverhampton will not have to pay the levy.
- 6.2. The Government have published detailed guidance on changes to apprenticeship policy and how levy-paying employers can register an apprenticeship (Digital Apprenticeship Service) DAS account. The Skills Funding Agency has also produced a calculator that businesses can use to estimate if their organisation will be liable, how much the organisation will have to spend on apprenticeships and how much government will contribute to the cost of training.
- 6.3. It is important to note that levy funds in a DAS account will expire 24 months after they are added to an account. The Government is proposing to allow funds in the DAS to be used in their supply chain and also to allow underspend on the levy used in other areas.
- 6.4. Employers who pay into the levy and participate in apprenticeships will receive a 10% top-up on their Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS) Account. Each employer will get an annual allowance of £15,000 to offset against their levy. The levy funds can be used for apprenticeship training and assessment, but **cannot** be used for wages, travel, management, traineeships and or work placements costs.
- 6.5. The aim of the policy change is to support employers to increase the number of and quality of apprenticeships in their own workforce. CWC has registered its DAS account. The training provider will be paid 80% of the price of the training in equal monthly instalments according to the planned duration of the apprenticeship.
- 6.6. The remaining balance will be paid when the apprentice has undertaken all the mandatory elements of the framework or taken the end-point assessment. The deductions from the employer's DAS will mirror these payments where funds are available.
- 6.7. All levy-paying employers will have to report annually to Government on progress in meeting their annual target for apprenticeship starts. In published guidance, public sector

bodies liable for the levy are required to have regard to the 2.3 % apprenticeship target; in practice an organisation will have the opportunity to explain the factors that has prevented them meeting the target in their annual information return.

- 6.8. The CWC has the responsibility for reporting the number of apprenticeship starts annually completing an apprenticeship activity return – this will include the number of apprenticeship starts in schools. In published guidance public sector bodies will have to explain how they have had regard to the target. This may include describing actions they have taken to challenge obstacles preventing them from meeting the target.
- 6.9. The apprenticeship target total for City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) is 193 apprenticeship starts for first year ending April 2018 - the target for CWC is 110 and the 83 apprenticeships across the maintained school workforce where the Council is also the employer. The figure for schools based on 2.3% of the maintained schools' workforce will be affected by subsequent (and potential future) academisation. The total target figure will be reviewed annually and adjusted for the year based on the headcount figure.
- 6.10. There is an expectation that public sector bodies will actively consider recruiting an apprentice or converting an existing post to an apprenticeship as part of career development for existing staff. This work would typically be done following a skills audit to assess the future needs of the business and how best to respond to any challenges – leading to improved organisational performance.
- 6.11. In evidence presented to the review group the following comments were made about the specific challenges facing maintained schools in recruiting apprenticeships
- The viability and length of completion for individuals working on part time hours.
 - Apprentices must work towards achieving a current approved 'apprenticeship standard' or a new 'apprentice framework'. At the date of drafting, many of the new apprenticeships standards related to schools are still in development and relatively limited (Teaching Assistant & School Business Director).
- 6.12. It should be noted that the target figure for CWC is based on an estimate of a headcount of its workforce and the available information on number of staff in maintained schools. Maintained schools are under no obligation to provide a headcount figure to the Council. The Council has not been asked by Government to formally submit a headcount figure that it will report progress against until after April 2018.

7.0 Apprenticeship – local policy background

- 7.1. CWC has published an apprenticeship strategy which is aligned to its corporate plan 2016-2019. The strategy details plans for improving and growing the current apprenticeship offer from CWC.
- 7.2. CWC has a key role in developing and improving the apprenticeship offer – as a strategic partner and as an employer. CWC has set up the City Apprenticeship Group. The group has representatives from the main delivery partners such as University of Wolverhampton, City of Wolverhampton College and Connexions.
- 7.3. The priorities of the City Apprenticeship Group are as follows:
 - **Supplying skills for growth** – developing apprenticeships to drive and respond to local business growth
 - **Higher apprenticeships** – expanding the higher apprenticeship offer and developing pathways between levels and across provision
 - **Improving accessibility** – developing traineeships and supporting maths and English
 - **Improving awareness** amongst young people, parents, careers advisers and teachers
 - **Improving access and opportunities** for young people with special educational needs

8.0 Key Findings

- 8.1. The review group shares the view that historically academic studies as a route to future employment have been more popular than vocational studies. Ideally, the review group would like to see a greater level of parity, particularly when the Government recognises the scale of skill shortages and future demand for people with higher qualifications and knowledge in non-academic areas of study.
- 8.2. Parents, grandparents, teachers and advisers are often unaware of what apprenticeships can offer and do not fully trust that the process will lead to sustained and well played employment in the future; particularly when compared to more traditional A level route to University. As a result, many young people feel that apprenticeships are a sign of having failed in achieving the 'gold standard' of A levels.
- 8.3. The evidence from apprentices does paint a different, more positive picture; there is general agreement that the apprenticeship route has been the right decision for them and they gained considerably from their experience. The competition for apprenticeship

vacancies is strong in certain sectors and is a reflection of the quality of the training on offer.

- 8.4. The provision of traineeships as a pathway to meet the apprenticeship standard offers a route for people to improve or learn the new skills that are required to meet job requirements
- 8.5. A report from the Children's Commissioner has highlighted the findings from a [review](#) published in 2016 and concluded that children in care and care leavers were not being encouraged or supported into apprenticeships, despite the fact that they can provide routes into long-term employment. The report stated that around 3% of 16-18 year olds in care were on apprenticeships last year compared to around 10% of this age group in the general population. A key recommendation from the commissioner was for local authorities to guarantee every care leaver who would like one, an apprenticeship that meets their aspirations.
- 8.6. There is general agreement that recent policy changes have added layers of complexity to a system which already presents challenges to organisations that do not have the necessary structures and resources to effectively administer apprentices in order to make full use of the funds in their DAS account. The Government have set strict conditions to be met for payments to be drawn down from the DAS account each month.
- 8.7. The introduction of the levy and other policy changes presents both challenges and opportunities to employers to ensure that allocated funds are fully used.
- 8.8. The requirement by Government to offer 20% off-the-job training to do things that are not part of their normal job for apprentices has been highlighted as an issue by training providers. There is a concern that there is not the necessary structure or people with the skills and experience to deliver this effectively. The salary levels for the roles were not considered by witnesses to be sufficiently attractive to persuade people with the necessary skills and experience in the numbers required. The evidence presented by witnesses suggests that organisations are adopting a flexible approach to meeting this requirement – for example, the option to shadow or to attend meetings or to change working patterns to meet this requirement.
- 8.9. There is evidence of a strong commitment across the Council to match or better the performance in increasing the number of apprenticeship starts when compared to that of neighbouring authorities, who have, to date, been more successful.
- 8.10. It is important to better understand the reasons why smaller employers in particular have not engaged with the new apprenticeship policy. The Skills Funding Agency publishes annually an [Employer Satisfaction Survey 2015 – 2016](#).

- 8.11. The survey questions could provide a baseline to monitor the impact of policy changes and provide local intelligence that could be used to inform changes that can contribute to increasing the number and quality of apprenticeship starts.
- 8.12. The review group agreed that it is important to find out the views of employers, apprentices and other groups about the changes to national policy and what changes are needed make to the apprenticeship offer more attractive.
- 8.13. Schools do not receive any extra funding to meet their statutory responsibilities to deliver independent career services and guidance to young people – there is concern about the priority given by schools to this issue. The review groups accepts the reality of the financial challenges facing schools and efforts made to encourage students, particularly the more academically able, to stay on to study at sixth form rather than leave. CWC has adopted an approach of positively engaging schools and highlighting the benefits of closer partnership working.
- 8.14. Schools and colleges have a duty for “securing access to independent careers guidance” for their students. The Government has published guidance to schools about how they can meet their responsibilities – the following is an extract from the guidance about Government expectation of schools
- 8.15. The guidance states that “.. individual students are signposted to different career guidance activities at the relevant stages of their development and decision-making. It is based on the premise that not all students need the same level of careers guidance at the same time and that schools themselves understand best the individual needs of their students.”
- 8.16. The review group has expressed concern about the quality of careers advice given to young people and support efforts to improve the situation. A report by Ofsted has made a series of recommendations following a review of the quality of careers advice offered to young people.
- 8.17. Schools have flexibility about how they meet their responsibilities to provide impartial, independent careers advice to young people based on the needs of their particular schools.
- 8.18. The review group were concerned about the issues presented in witness evidence about the restrictions being placed on training providers by schools to discuss the opportunities offered by apprenticeships as part a wider discussion about career options.
- 8.19. The Government’s recent guidance recommends that all schools should work towards achieving the CEIAG Quality Award to improve the quality of careers advice.

- 8.20. Wolverhampton Connexions Service is working with a number of schools who are registered on the programme to get accreditation for achieving the CEIAG Quality Award. The schools involved in the programme were given financial support to meet the cost of registration for the CEIAG Quality Award programme. At present Wolverhampton Connexions Service is not able to roll out the programme to other schools as there are no funds available to contribute to help schools meet the costs of registration.
- 8.21. Wolverhampton Connexions service is funded to provide a targeted service to schools. In addition, Wolverhampton Connexions also offer a traded service package to schools. The Connexions Service is performing well against key indicators which are reported to the Department of Education
- 8.22. Wolverhampton Connexions Service provides support and information to young people to progress into apprenticeships. Wolverhampton Connexions produces a weekly 'opportunities newsletter' which gives information about apprenticeship opportunities and support to overcome barriers into work, education or training. The Connexions service also provide support and advice through the newly launched [Wolverhampton Workbox](#) website.
- 8.23. The plans by Government to widen participation and promote alternative pathways to employment is welcome, but more needs to be done to reach those groups currently underrepresented and those who do not have the necessary qualifications in English and maths at Level 3 - a Government policy driver for raising skills standards and future economic performance.
- 8.24. The Government have actively promoted opportunities offered by apprenticeships through a range of publicity media and the changes, such as the graduate apprenticeship, to challenge perceptions that it is not an alternative pathway for people wanting to gain an equivalent degree qualification, without going to university.
- 8.25. Despite local and national publicity events about the changes to apprenticeships and the potential to help organisations meet skills shortages there has been a low attendance at locally arranged information events from local employers. In evidence, training providers have reported a struggle in trying to raise awareness of the changes before it was introduced and later encouraging levy paying businesses to register their DAS.
- 8.26. The evidence presented suggests that there is a need to regularly review the current approaches to promoting apprentices and developing different ways of engaging with young people, parents and small businesses that do not yet see apprenticeships as a solution to their needs.

- 8.27. The performance of the Skills and Employment Action Plan 2016-17 is monitored by Wolverhampton Skills and Employment Board. The Board is chaired by David Danger. The members of the Wolverhampton Skills and Employment Board supports the City's economic growth and recovery by focusing on worklessness (unemployment and economic inactivity) and raising skills levels across the City.
- 8.28. The current Skills and Employment Action Plan is being redrafted and will be replaced with a five-year skills action plan for Wolverhampton.
- 8.29. The review group support the Government policy of creating alternative pathways and wanting to raise skills levels. The review group want a focus on quality and not simply achieving the numbers; an apprentice should not be employed to meet a target. There should be a realistic expectation that there will be the opportunity of a genuine job offer at the end of their training.
- 8.30. There is an issue about the ability of businesses to convert existing posts into degree apprenticeships who want to meet their target - there was concern that there not enough people available to be able to fully use the levy allocation.
- 8.31. Locally, City of Wolverhampton College offers a range of support courses and promotional events to help people to improve their skills and knowledge and help them become 'job ready' – as part of its extensive [Get Ahead Programme](#).
- 8.32. The Government has raised the minimum standard for maths and English required for apprenticeship vacancy which presents a challenge to those areas that currently perform poorly academically. Traineeships offer a pathway to meet the standard for maths and English, but there is evidence that some employers remain concerned about the ability of candidates who completed the course.
- 8.33. There is more work needed to determine how current provision supports progression pathways between qualification levels.
- 8.34. In evidence presented by representatives of training provider organisations there was also concern about the impact of the policy requirements and that the structures needed to deliver it were not properly developed and the implications for businesses and individuals who may be interested in offering or applying for an apprenticeship vacancy . For example, the financial implications for applicants aged 16 living in household on benefits – the household will lose entitlement to child benefit and will often have to find extra money to meet the cost of travel if a young person applies for an apprenticeship.
- 8.35. There is evidence that small and large employers alike are weighing up the administrative and financial implications of recruiting and support an apprentice - some

concluding that it does not fit with their workforce planning strategy or current skills needs and therefore not offering the vacancies.

- 8.36. Skills levels in Wolverhampton are low when compared to regional neighbours. Wolverhampton is making progress in increasing the number of apprenticeship starts, but there is evidence of a reluctance among smaller employers to consider recruiting apprenticeships to meet gaps in skills and to engage positively with the new policy to grow their business.
- 8.37. There is anecdotal evidence from witnesses to suggest that smaller organisations will need more direct support to 'sell' the idea that additional costs and demands involved in managing an apprenticeship as part of the scheme will help to fill skill shortages – people outside of Wolverhampton are being recruited to fill gaps which means higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of household income locally.
- 8.38. The review group supports the range of local and regional initiatives aimed at reducing the skills gap and improving pathways for employment in the future. However, there is a need for better information about what is successful in persuading employers to consider creating an apprenticeship vacancy and what further changes are needed to bring the performance of Wolverhampton in line with local and regional comparators.

The overall aim of implementing national policy locally in Wolverhampton should be that it should deliver high quality apprenticeships that improve skills of local people and lead to sustainable employment in the future.

9.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 9.1. The review group were presented with a range of options for consideration. The options listed were those agreed by the review group at their final meeting.

10.0 Reasons for Decision(s)

- 10.1. The review group are seeking reassurance about the local response to national changes in apprenticeship policy and the introduction of the apprenticeship levy. There is a skills gap in Wolverhampton which has been the subject of previous reviews.

11.0 Financial implications

- 11.1. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Any costs associated with the executive response to the scrutiny review will be met from existing safeguarding budgets.

12.0 Legal implications

- 12.1. There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.
[RB/09082017/J]

13.0 Equalities implications

- 13.1. There are no direct equalities implications arising from the findings or recommendations in this report. However, the equalities implications of the recommendations will be considered throughout the municipal year. The review group has considered those minority ethnic groups and the challenges facing other groups who are underrepresented in several apprenticeship starts. The review group recommendations are intended to improve the current offer and to address specific barriers which limit opportunities for people to consider this as an option to improve their knowledge and skills. In addition, data on the profile of work placements will be also be reviewed.

14.0 Environmental implications

- 14.1. There are no environmental implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

15.0 Human resources implications

- 15.1. The introduction of the apprenticeship levy has implications for CWC and other public bodies to contribute towards achieving the national apprenticeship. The target for CWC is 193 apprenticeship starts annually. The report includes a specific recommendation on importance of monitoring progress towards the target for CWC of 50 apprenticeship starts will only be relevant for some reports but will be significant in those cases.

16.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 16.1. There are no corporate landlord resource implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

17.0 Schedule of background papers

- 17.1. Wolverhampton Skills and Employment Commission Final Report – August 2015
17.2. Wolverhampton Skills and Employment Action Plan 2016/17 – Revised July 2016
17.3. City of Wolverhampton Council Apprenticeship Strategy 2017

Appendix 1- Executive response to review recommendations

Review Recommendations	Lead	Accept/ Reject	Milestone
1. Approve the Skills and Employment Board ¹ to drive the delivery of plans aimed at improving the number of Wolverhampton residents starting quality apprenticeships through the work of the City Apprenticeships Group.	Chair of Skills and Employment Board	Accept	December 2017
2. Approve the Head of Skills to present a report on progress against the review recommendations on apprenticeships as part of the overall Skills and Employment Action plan for 2018/19. This will include an update on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers of new apprenticeship starts Improvements in access Assessment of the impact of the apprenticeship levy on the current offer 	Head of Skills	Accept	June 2018
3. Approve the Wolverhampton Skills and Employment Board to oversee the current model of preparing young people for the world of work.	Chair of Skills and Employment Board	Accept	June 2018

¹ *The Skills and Employment Board is the key skills and employment stakeholder partnership for the city; it is business led and includes all key providers such as the City of Wolverhampton college, University of Wolverhampton, Department for Work and Pensions, Adult Education Wolverhampton and Wolverhampton Connexions Service.

<p>This should include a review the effectiveness of activities aimed at developing school/employer engagement, work readiness and ensuring that all young people have the offer of high quality impartial information, advice and guidance (IAG).</p> <p>The next draft of the Skills and Employment Action plan 2018/19 to include a list of specific activities aimed at supporting underrepresented groups for example, young people with learning disabilities or disabilities and looked after children, to improve their skills and qualifications and compete for apprenticeship vacancies.</p>	<p>Young People's Skills manager</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>June 2018</p>
<p>4. Approve the City Apprenticeship Group to present a report on progress made to create successful pathways to future employment and to make apprenticeships more accessible to all as part of the joint development work with Shropshire Council.</p>	<p>City Apprenticeship Group</p>		<p>December 2017</p>
<p>5. Approve the Wolverhampton Connexions Service to report on lessons learnt following the assessment in December 2017 and June 2018 of those schools that have taken part in Quality in Careers Standard (QICs) programme.</p> <p>Interim findings to be presented to the City Apprenticeship Group in March and further update after the assessment in June 2018. The findings to consider any issues raised during the preparation of the portfolio used as evidence during the assessment process.</p> <p>The Director of Education to present proposals to encourage all local schools to work towards achieving the QICs. The Director of Education to secure funds to meet registration costs for the QIC</p>	<p>Wolverhampton Connexions Service</p> <p>Director of Education</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>Accept</p>	<p>March 2018 and June 2018</p> <p>March 2018</p>

programme, of those schools who have agreed to take part.			
<p>6. Approve the Apprenticeship Co-ordinator to outline plans to support City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) to be an exemplar of good practice in offering quality apprenticeships and report progress on the delivery of the apprenticeship strategy action plan 2017-18.</p> <p>Approve the Apprenticeship Co-ordinator to report on progress in recruiting a minimum 50 CWC apprenticeships annual starts after six months and at end of the April 2018. The report to include details of action taken or planned to meet the apprenticeship total target for CWC and commentary of those issues which have influenced progress, and an update on national apprenticeship policy relating to public sector bodies.</p> <p>Approve the Apprenticeship Co-ordinator to present report on detailed projected spends for CWC Digital Apprenticeship Service Account at the end of 12 months of operation.</p>	Apprenticeship Co-ordinator	Accept	May 2018
<p>7. Approve the Head of Skills to review the current schools work experience placement offer within the Council and make recommendations to the Skills and Employment Board that contribute to creating a more positive experience for all involved. The report to include an annual analysis of work experience placements based on gender, ethnicity and disability and progress towards achieving the target of 100.</p>	Head of Skills	Accept	September 2017
<p>8. Approve the Young People's Skills Manager to encourage all those on schools work experience placements and apprenticeships to complete a short survey at the start and end of their scheme to</p>	Young People's Skills Manager	Accept	September 2017

capture their experiences. The findings to be shared with City Apprenticeship Group and used to further improve the quality of the current induction process.			
9. Approve the Apprenticeship Co-ordinator and Young People's Skills Manager to deliver regular joint briefing sessions to council managers on work experience placements and apprenticeships in order to develop consistent approaches and links between the two schemes.	Apprenticeship Co-ordinator and Young People's Skills Manager	Accept	September 2017
Approve the Head of Skills to set a target for the number of work experience placements to be offered by CWC annually and managers to be required to give specific reasons for not accepting a request for a schools work experience placement. A report on progress to be reported to the Skills and Employment Board.	Head of Skills	Accept	March 2018
10. Approve the Head of Skills to consider amending the current work experience placement application form to include an option 'taster session's section - the aim is to give students the option of working in different areas of the Council, if they are unsure of their career pathway.	Head of Skills	Accept	September 2017
11. Approve the members of the review group to reconvene to comment on progress against recommendations. The review group to visit Walsall or Sandwell Councils to talk to representatives about work being done to increase number of apprenticeship starts above regional and national averages. The findings to be reported to Scrutiny Board.	Scrutiny Team	Accept	March 2018

<p>12. Approve the Cabinet Member for City Economy to encourage Councillors to become Apprenticeships Ambassadors.</p> <p>Approve the Head of Skills to encourage employers who have signed Wolves@Work Pledge to also be become Apprenticeship Ambassadors.</p> <p>Approve the Apprenticeship Coordinator to invite current or former apprentices of CWC to consider taking on the role similar to that of the Apprenticeship Ambassadors</p> <p>Approve an amendment to the Apprenticeship Strategy Action Plan 2017-18 to include reference to preparing publicity material to celebrate the work being done by CWC to promote the apprenticeships offer and key achievements in improving the current offer. This work should be linked to local and national promotional and or celebratory events, for example, *National Apprenticeship Week 2018 and The Skills & Apprenticeship Show Wolverhampton 2018.</p> <p>A report on progress to be reported to the Wolverhampton Skills and Employment Board.</p>	Cabinet Member for City Economy	Accept	September 2018
	Head of Skills	Accept	
	Apprenticeship Co-ordinator	Accept	March 2018
	Apprenticeship Co-ordinator	Accept	September 2018

Appendix 2: Evidence Sessions

Date	Theme	Witness(s)
5.1.17	Theme – Economic Perspective - evidence on the current apprenticeship policy and practice in Wolverhampton and an overview of national policy changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Angela McKeever, Head of Skills, City of Wolverhampton Council
26.1.17	Theme – Provider Perspective Providers of Apprenticeship Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Julie Fearn (Operations Director) and Nadine Allen (Apprenticeship Sales) - Nova Training Chris Luty - BCTG Sharon Thompson, Apprenticeship Development Manager, University of Wolverhampton Performance Through People (PTP) Kirk Hookham, Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality, City of Wolverhampton College LearnPlay Foundation
	Wolverhampton Apprenticeship Profile Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tony O'Callaghan, City of Wolverhampton Council
22.2.17	Theme – People Perspective Visit to Connexions Service to meet staff and to take evidence from apprentices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rosemary Robbins, Operations Manager, Connexions Helyna Hrebinec, Team Manager, Connexions
2.3.17	Theme – People Perspective The Apprenticeship Journey - A group discussion with young people who undertaking apprenticeships with Wolverhampton Homes.	
16.3.17	Theme – Provider Perspective Visit to West Midlands Construction UTC, Springfield Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tom Macdonald, Principal, West Midlands Construction UTC
4.4.17	Theme – Provider Perspective Visit to The Skills & Apprenticeship Show Wolverhampton 2017 – this is a free event open to people leaving school, students, graduates, the	

	unemployed, or employed people looking to retrain or upskill, or find out about job and career opportunities available in and around Wolverhampton	
13.4.17	<p>Theme – Council Public Sector response - Discussion about the response from City of Wolverhampton Council to the challenges and opportunities to achieving the Government public sector target for apprenticeship starts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denise Pearce, Head of Human Resources, City of Wolverhampton Council • Susan Serventi, Workforce Development Manager, City of Wolverhampton Council
	<p>Theme – Economic Perspective Apprenticeship Baseline Data - update 2015/16</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tony O'Callaghan, City of Wolverhampton Council
22.5.17	<p>Improving Wolverhampton's Apprenticeship Offer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Claire Darke, Cabinet Member for Education • Kate Howard, Post 16 Reviewer, City of Wolverhampton Council • Angela McKeever, Head of Skills, City of Wolverhampton Council

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