

Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel

1 December 2015

Report title	Skills and Employment Commission	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor John Reynolds City Economy	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Keren Jones, City Economy	
Originating service	City Economy	
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Report to be/has been considered by	City Board	

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

1. The Scrutiny Board is recommended to endorse the framework and priorities for the Wolverhampton Skills and Employment Action Plan, that form a key strategy for managing the City of Wolverhampton Council's Corporate risk of "Skills for Work".

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel on the progress by the Council, and its partners, to develop and deliver a Skills and Employment Action Plan for the City to take forward the recommendations emanating from the work of the Skills and Employment Commission, led by Professor Tony Travers.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In October 2014, the Leader of the City of Wolverhampton Council Leader, Roger Lawrence made it clear that tackling unemployment and skills shortages in Wolverhampton is a top priority. Whilst the economic success of the City in creating new employment opportunities is apparent, the City also has considerably higher unemployment levels and a lower skills base than the national average. Employment growth alongside a low skills base presents challenges and opportunities for the City that need to be addressed so that Wolverhampton can be confident and optimistic about its future.
- 2.2 To help understand and address this issue the creation of an independent Skills and Employment Commission was announced, the purpose of which was to ensure that Wolverhampton had the appropriately skilled workforce to support the City's economic growth. This would encompass supporting the sustainability of businesses in the city and critically to ensure that Wolverhampton residents and young people have access to the right skills provision and employability support to give them the best chance of securing employment.
- 2.3 The Skills and Employment Commission was set up as an independent Board, with its membership drawn from businesses, higher education and the voluntary sector, and a balance between capitalising on local knowledge alongside sufficient challenge from outside Wolverhampton and the Black Country.
- 2.4 The Commission had five key lines of enquiry:
- Entering and leaving the labour market
 - Employer demand and churn in the labour market
 - The employment and skills system in Wolverhampton
 - The connectivity between schools, colleges, providers and employers
 - Policy development
- 2.5 The Commission met on six occasions to receive a wide range of information and evidence from employers, providers, the local authority and the community and voluntary sector. This included drawing from the substantial

evidence base that the Council compiled during the earlier Skills and Employment Scrutiny Review.

- 2.6 The Commission's findings have now been reported to the Wolverhampton City Board which comprises of the Council, leading business figures, the voluntary and community sector and key public sector organisations charged with overseeing the on-going regeneration of Wolverhampton. A copy of the full report can be found on the Wolverhampton Skills and Employment website: <https://wolvesskills.wordpress.com/>
- 2.7 In summary, the report advised that the city should prioritise interventions that were focused on the following five key themes:
- **Holistic careers advice:** Providing an improved joined up approach to careers advice for people of all ages
 - **A city skills system:** Improved use of resources and clearer roles across institutions and organisations concerned with education, training and skills development
 - **Ready for work:** Improving soft skills and addressing wider barriers to work.
 - **Moving up:** Working with employers to address under-employment and in-work progression.
 - **Cross sector collaboration:** Improving communication and collaboration with employers
- 2.8 The Commission's findings and recommendations were as presented to the City Board in July 2015, and at Wolverhampton Business Week 2015 in September 2015.

3.0 Skills and Employment Commission

- 3.1 The City Board identified a need to rationalise and consolidate the activities to a few projects or interventions that had the potential to be transformational. The Board requested that the Strategic Director for Place establish a steering group, with the objective of finalising the Skills and Employment Action plan, and overseeing its implementation. This includes membership drawn from across the Council, University of Wolverhampton, the College, Hospital Trust and Voluntary Sector.
- 3.2 Alongside the main steering group, a forum for businesses to contribute to this agenda will also be developed, building on the core membership of the former Skills Board. This will be championed by the City Growth Board and

Wolverhampton Business Champions. The Economic Growth Board has already agreed to contribute by developing an education/business partnership mentoring and awards scheme.

- 3.3 This report sets out in more details the background and recent development, and a revised framework for the Action Plan, taking account of the City Board's instructions. These documents capture the current position, following the first meeting of the Steering Group and recent discussions at Strategic Executive Board.
- 3.1 Given that Wolverhampton is part of a broader sub-regional and national economy the Commission emphasised that intervention was required at three levels: local, sub-regional and national – and that some actions may be taken more effectively at a sub-regional (or national) scale than locally.
- 3.2 In respect of wider context, the priorities for action are:
- **Influencing the Wider West Midlands agenda for Skills and Employment.** The City of Wolverhampton is playing an active role through the Public Sector Review Board, which forms part of the operational structures of the shadow West Midlands Combined Authority.
 - **Securing additional funding from Black Country European Union Structural Investment Funds.** The City of Wolverhampton Council and its local partners have been active in preparing and submitting bids, the results of which will be known shortly.
- 3.3 **City Level Action:** The main thrust for the Skills and Employment Action plan is working with partners at the city level, making better use of our current resources through a more joined up approach. Appendix A sets out the revised framework for the City of Wolverhampton's Skills and Employment Action Plan, agreed with partners at the meeting of the Steering group on 12th November. There are two main drivers:
- A customer focused approach for the individual
 - Strategic working with employers
- 3.4 **The City Job Box.** The City Board is keen to develop a Flagship Project for the Action Plan that delivers against all five Skills and Employment Commission priorities:
- **Holistic careers advice**
 - **A city skills system**
 - **Ready for work**
 - **Moving up**
 - **Cross sector collaboration**
- 3.5 The City Economy Team have explored a number models of operation established in other Local Authority areas in particular, Telford Job Box and Coventry One Stop Shop.

- 3.6 The Job Box is in effect a virtual one stop shop for information and support on job vacancies, training and employment. It aims to provide residents with links to the support on offer through a single portal. The Telford model initially aimed to tackle Youth Unemployment, but its success has included an improved web based approach to market a range of services supported by better internal alignment of skills and employment services. The model brought services together under one brand but part of its success was a senior manager having oversight of the brand and the service delivery under its banner. Internally services were supported by having access to a single client information system.
- 3.7 The One Stop Shop model in Coventry takes the virtual model into a physical entity by having a highly visual presence within a City Centre location. The One Stop Shop provides a drop-in facility for job seekers but also has an Employer Hub actively working with local employers to generate opportunities for local people. The model has the ability, as in Coventry, to bring partners together including the Chamber, the NHS Trust, the Growth Hub and local colleges. It is also a model that provides a natural opportunity to align/merge services under a Skills & Employment Team type approach.
- 3.8 Both the Telford and the Coventry models provide the delivery vehicle to achieve the priorities outlined above, as follows:
- Provides an integrated offer both internally and externally and provides clients with single point of service access.
 - A better aligned and marketed service creates the building blocks to promote and develop all age Information Advice and Guidance provision.
 - An aligned or merged service improves the use of limited resources and makes clear the roles of individuals and organisations and allows for effective targeting.
 - Improves our engagement and relationship with employers
- 3.9 Building on this research, it is proposed that a City of Wolverhampton Job Box model consist of the following elements:
- **Marketing and engagement**
 - **Individual assessment**
 - **Informed choices**, with information and guidance based on employer intelligence and economic research.
 - **Right route**, either mainstream, or bespoke
 - **Right support**, including mainstream provision that is enhanced by specific projects and programmes.
- 3.10 This customer focused approach will sit within a wider system that key partners have committed to supporting. The proposed system recognises that not only mainstream providers have a role to play, but there are key stakeholders that can make significant contributions. The key components of the wider system will be:
- A robust evidence base:**
- Current and future employment and self-employment opportunities

- Labour market analysis

Creating “active” stakeholders:

- The family
- The school, education and employment providers
- The employer
- The community

Making the system work:

- Research and intelligence
- Marketing , communications and engagement
- Performance management – both provision and progression
- Review, strategic direction and governance

- 3.11 It is proposed that a City Job Box for Wolverhampton could be developed through a number of phases:
- **Phase 1 - Virtual Job Box**, presentation of the Council’s own integrated model through a single platform and range of e-communication channels
 - **Phase 2 – Virtual Job Box with partners**, presentation of the Council’s own integrated model through a single platform and range of e-communication channels
 - **Phase 3 – A one stop shop**, as part of the City Centre Regeneration Education Estate Programme. Phase 3 would also link with the development of the Combined Authority and the proposed devolution of various budgets.
- 3.12 Taking such a phased approach allows the development of a virtual model to internally align services and externally market services more effectively.
- 3.13 A key aspect of the service delivery will be our engagement with employers and the management of that relationship. A good, user friendly client relationship management system is key to success in this area, as well as a pro-active connection to the Growth Hub.
- 3.14 Another key component of the Job Box model is integrating, in a coherent way, the wide range of specific projects and initiatives that enhance mainstream and bespoke delivery. This includes the active participation of key stakeholders e.g. schools, employers, families and communities. For example:

Project or Intervention	Skills and Employment Commission priorities
<p>Schools Improvement project: focusing on every Child Counts A cross cutting programme by the City Education and City Economy Departments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holistic careers advice • Ready for work:
<p>Education Business partnership mentoring and “Reaching for Gold” style awards ceremony Sponsored by the Economic Growth Board and Wolverhampton Business Champions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holistic careers advice • Ready for work • Cross sector collaboration

<p>Enhanced Youth Employment Initiative. Using new resources available through the EU Structural Funds,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holistic careers advice • A city skills system • Ready for work • Cross sector collaboration
<p>WV Creative Intermediate labour Market Being developed as part of the Civic Halls Improvement Programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving up • Cross sector collaboration

3.15 Alongside the flagship City Job Box programme, the other main programmes for inclusion in the Action Plan are:

- **Skills for Growth**
 - City Support for the employer
 - Integration with the Growth Hub
- **Centre Education Estate – One City Campus**
 - The University, College and Council are working together under the auspices of the City Centre Education Estate Programme to consolidate post 16 education provision within the City Centre. This also includes specialist provision, such as the UTC and Elite Centre
- **Strategic Influencing**
 - Combined Authority and Devolution Deal
 - Area review process
 - Opportunities for regeneration
 - Wider quality of life offer (graduate and skills retention)

3.16 It has been agreed that partner task and finish groups will be set up to develop the details of each of the four main programmes. They will be supported by a Development Officer employed for a six month period by the City of Wolverhampton Council. A detailed implementation plan will be completed for implementation in 2016/17, alongside on-going work to refine and develop the approach.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 There will be initial costs of £30,000 to employ a Skills and Employment Development Manager for 6 months to develop the virtual offer. This will be met from the LPSA reserve. The Commission's report endorses the better use of existing resources including Central government transferring more skills and training programmes to the city or city regional level, employers providing apprenticeships and schemes and the Council supporting businesses to move into Wolverhampton. The Economic Inclusion team is currently funded to support residents into employment working closely with partners. The Council

has been involved in influencing the priorities in the Black Country European Structural and Investment Fund strategy in terms of the Black Country's European Social Fund allocation fund will be allocated including Skills for the Unemployed and Workforce Skills. In addition, additional external funding will be sought to deliver of the recommendations. ES/19112015/Z

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. RB/20112015/Z

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 The report will have positive equalities implications since many disadvantaged groups are excluded in the labour market facing additional barriers to participation. Therefore recommendations will have a positive effect on equalities.

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 There are no environmental implications to this report.

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 Recruitment of a Skills and Employment Development Manager to support the Strategic Director of Place and the Service Director City Economy in driving forward this agenda.

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

9.1 There are no corporate landlord recommendations.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

Skills and Employment Commission Final Report