

CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL

Economy and Growth Scrutiny Panel

21 June 2023

Report title	Education, Skills and Employment Strategy 2030	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Louise Miles	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable Director	Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families	
Originating service	Policy and Strategy	
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Report to be/has been considered by	Strategic Executive Board	2 May 2023

Recommendation(s) for decision:

Economy and Growth Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

1. Consider and comment on the Education, Skills and Employment strategy 2030, at appendix 1, as pre decision scrutiny.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the development of a new Education, Skills and Employment (ESE) strategy which sets out the Council's approach to supporting local people into good quality careers and work.

2.0 Background

2.1 We want to ensure local people can access new opportunities in our city, and that employers have access to a talent pipeline which meets their needs and helps the city to grow. A key priority in Our City: Our Plan is to 'Support local people into good jobs and training'. Across the city's education, skills and employment system there are many encouraging signs and much to be positive about.

- 89% of the city's schools are rated good or outstanding by OFSTED.
- We are delivering first class learning facilities with a seamless learner offer through the City Learning Quarter.
- There are growing sectors in digital, creative industries and professional services bringing new jobs as well as established clusters in advanced manufacturing and aerospace.
- Thousands of fantastic employment opportunities in our foundational sectors of health and social care, hospitality and retail, and logistics which provide vital services to local people.
- The city is a national leader in low carbon research and development through the new National Brownfield Institute at the University of Wolverhampton.

2.3 However, some of our residents find it harder than others to access learning and work opportunities in our city. There remain areas of challenge, many of which are not unique to Wolverhampton and arise from a legacy of deindustrialisation and more recently the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and cost of living crisis. This strategy sets out how working alongside our partners we can leverage our collective influence to improve skill levels and employment outcomes for local people.

3.0 Education, Skills and Employment Strategy 2030

3.1 Across our communities, employers and partners there is a common desire to build a system where children, young people and adults thrive, which adopts a whole life approach to learning and work, where children are ready to learn, achieve well and attain good numeracy and literacy skills. A system which recognises achievement and provides opportunities for progression and the development of highly skilled individuals, with fulfilling careers and employment prospects for local people. To deliver on this the strategy will focus on five overarching priorities.

- Children have the best start in life

- High quality education which prepares young people for work
- Post 16 provision which meets the needs of city employers
- Lifelong learning and employment pathways to good quality work
- A new employer support offer

3.2 Our priorities are supported by the three cross cutting principles.

- **Climate Conscious:** Harnessing the potential of the transition to a green economy by equipping local people with the skills they need to access jobs in low carbon sectors.
- **Driven by Digital:** Ensuring that every resident has the digital skills they need to gain, retain and progress in work.
- **Fair and Equal:** Inclusive and accessible lifelong learning and employment opportunities for all in our city.

4.0 Strategic Framework

4.1 The plan focuses on aligning strategic objectives with operational delivery and performance. Each of the five overarching priorities includes:

- A policy position outlining the Council's key areas of focus, challenge, and opportunity under the priority.
- Key activity highlighting planned projects, investment and activity which will support delivery of the priority areas.
- Key indicators which demonstrate how we will develop evidence-based activity and measure our impact.

5.0 Consultation and Engagement

5.1 The ESE strategy builds on already extensive engagement with residents and key stakeholders. Including:

- In depth work with young people through our Wolves at Work 18-24 programme to understand barriers to employment.
- Education and skills providers through our recently completed review of post 16 provision in the city.
- Employer perspective from the development of the West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan
- Wider engagement with residents through our Cost Living support, Healthy Lifestyles survey and other citywide engagement.

5.2 A consultation process on the strategy will be held throughout June, July and August 2023 to gain further input on our proposed priorities. This will include focus groups and workshops with young people and Youth Council, refugees and migrants, equality groups, adult learners and public sector partners. In addition, there will be a digital survey to give all residents and stakeholders opportunity to provide their views.

6.0 Performance Framework

6.1 The Council continues to use a variety of means in which to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of operations against organisational strategic priorities and statutory requirements. Using data and analysis across all areas of the business, the Council actively encourages a golden thread of performance monitoring throughout all parts of every service.

6.2 Contained within the draft strategy is an emerging city performance framework which aligns key indicators to each of the five overarching priorities. Further work will be undertaken to refine these throughout the consultation period. The final framework will also be aligned to the Our City: Our Plan performance framework.

6.3 The framework will provide high-level city data on key priorities, benchmark city performance against national and regional data, highlight the impact of targeted interventions and inform strategic decision-making.

7.0 Evaluation of alternative options

7.1 Option 1 would be to not to develop an overarching framework for the Council which sets out key priorities relating to education, skills and employment. This could mean that local people are not able to access the existing and emerging opportunities in our city and local business do not have access to a talent pipeline which supports their growth.

7.2 Option 2 and the chosen option is to develop an Education, Skills and Employment strategy for the Council which will provide a framework to maximise economic prosperity for local people.

8.0 Reasons for decision(s)

8.1 The priorities and activity identified in the strategy have been developed through a robust evidence base and engagement with residents and city stakeholders.

9.0 Financial implications

9.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with the strategy itself although the subsequent actions, projects and programmes will have financial implications. Any further budget approvals will be sought in line with the Financial Procure Rules.

9.2 All costs associated with engagement and the preparation of the plan will be accommodated within existing resources.

10.0 Legal implications

10.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

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11.0 Equalities implications

11.1 An equalities analysis for the strategy will be undertaken and mitigations to any negative impacts identified. Fair and Equal is one of the three cross cutting principles of the refreshed plan. All activity noted in the plan will also be subject to individual equalities analysis.

12.0 All other Implications

12.1 The strategy has implications across the Council, including climate change, health, and wellbeing and digital which will continue to be considered and managed as part of the delivery of this plan.

12.2 Health and wellbeing is an important part of everyday life. It is integral to leading a happy and healthy lifestyle. There is an inextricable link between health and employment prospects. Through this strategy and Our City: Our Plan priorities we will ensure that our communities are stronger, healthier, and thriving places to live.

12.3 The plan is aligned to the Digital Wolves strategy setting out how as a city and as a council we can support local people to develop the digital skills they need to gain and sustain employment.

1.1 The performance framework for each thematic area of the plan will enable continued oversight of the indicators that underpin the central commitment to Wulfrunians living longer, healthier lives.

13.0 Schedule of background papers

13.1 N/A

14.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Education, Skills and Employment Strategy 2030