

<b>Report title</b>	Education, Skills and Employment Strategy	
<b>Decision designation</b>	RED	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Louise Miles Skills and Jobs	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families	
<b>Originating service</b>	Strategy	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Laura Collings Tel Email	Head of Policy and Strategy 01902550414 Laura.collings@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Economy and Growth Scrutiny Panel Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel Strategic Executive Board	21 June 2023 27 July 2023 16 August 2023

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**Recommendations for decision:**

That Cabinet recommends that Council:

1. Approve the Education, Skills and Employment Strategy (appendix 1) to deliver a whole life approach to learning and work which support children, young people and adults to thrive.
2. Approve the budget from the remaining uncommitted balance of £1.2 million, from the original £3 million programme reserve budget approved by Cabinet on 20 October 2021 for the Wolves at Work 18-24 programme to deliver Wolves at Work Transformation programme.
3. Delegate authority to the relevant Director to approve targeted interventions and the allocation of the associated budget (from the £1.2 million available).

**Recommendations for noting:**

The Cabinet is asked to note:

1. That the priorities set out in the Education, Skills and Employment Strategy have been co-produced with communities and partners across our city.
2. That a presentation and draft Education, Skills and Employment Strategy was considered by Economy and Growth Scrutiny Panel on the 21 June 2023 and by Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel on the 27 July 2023.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to approve the new Education, Skills and Employment (ESE) Strategy which sets out the Council's approach to supporting local people into good quality careers and work.
- 1.2 To receive an update on the outcome of formal consultation process undertaken.
- 1.3 To highlight that the ESE Strategy will be delivered through the Wolves at Work Transformation Programme.

## **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'.
- 2.2 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 Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). We are delivering first class learning facilities 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. In addition to, 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 There is still more to do to support local people to access the new 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.
- 2.4 This item was considered as pre-decision scrutiny by Economy and Growth Scrutiny Panel on 21 June 2023 and on 27 July 2023 by Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel and will therefore not be available to call in once a decision is made by Cabinet. Both scrutiny panels scrutinised the content of the strategy, which included commentary on the key priorities, activity and city indicators within the strategy.

## **3.0 Education, Skills and Employment Strategy**

- 3.1 We know that there is a shared desire across residents and city partners to develop a whole life approach to learning and work which enables children, young people and adults to thrive and achieve their full potential. To do this we need a system which ensures children are ready to learn and attain good numeracy and literacy skills which

puts them on the right track to excel at school. We also need a system which provides guidance and support for residents to identify progression routes to develop and access high skilled jobs which lead to fulfilling careers and employment. To deliver on this strategy we 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 Each priority is supported by a strategic narrative outlining why the priority is important to deliver the Council's vision, areas of focus informed by robust evidence and key activity showing the project and programmes we will deliver to achieve the aims of the strategy.

3.3 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 City Indicators**

4.1 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.

4.2 Contained within the strategy are a suite of city indicators aligned to each of the five overarching priorities. The framework is aligned to the Our City: Our Plan performance framework. Moving forward 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.

4.3 Quarterly reports on the framework will be developed and reported into the Wolves at Work Transformation Programme. Reporting on the city metrics will also be taken to relevant Scrutiny panels as part of the annual refresh of this strategy. This process helps

to embed the golden thread of data flowing between all levels of Council activity ensuring data driven decision making.

## **5.0 Consultation and Engagement**

- 5.1 The strategy has been developed through regular, continued engagement with key stakeholders and communities. It builds on the previous in-depth work through our Wolves at Work 18-24 programme which engaged with 894 young people and our wider Wolves at Work employment support programme. Feedback gained through both programmes has shaped our understanding of the barriers residents face to learning, training and employment.
- 5.2 A formal consultation was also undertaken for the strategy and held between 27 June and 18 August 2023. This included focus groups with young people, city partners, equality groups education and training providers. Key themes which came from the consultation were the importance of all age careers information, advice and guidance, creating more work experience opportunities for young people, flexible lifelong learning opportunities and greater support to navigate the complex skills and training system. In addition to the focus groups a post 16 review group was formed of Council representatives, West Midlands Combined Authority colleagues, schools and education and training providers from the city. The group met for six months to consider how the post 16 offer in the city could be further developed to meet the needs of residents and businesses. The findings from the review and wider consultation have been incorporated into the strategy.
- 5.3 An online digital survey was also conducted through the Council's Citizen Space platform. There were 110 responses to the survey and the findings are attached to this report as appendix 2.

## **6.0 Wolves at Work Transformation Programme**

- 6.1 In November 2022 Full Council approved the launch of the Wolves at Work 18 – 24 Programme in response to the challenging levels of youth unemployment in the city. Key achievements from the programme include:
- Over 151 City events delivered, attended by over 894 young people, often in some of the wards most impacted by youth unemployment.
  - 142 young people have been supported into employment by the WAW 18-24 team from October 2021 to June 2023.
  - The Council employed 111 young people aged between 18-24 into roles since Sept 2021.
  - 24 companies/organisations offered schemes through the City Ideas Fund, with engagement from 187 young people of which 79 young people entered employment, education or training opportunities.

- 6.2 The Wolves at Work 18 – 24 programme provided invaluable insight into the challenges and opportunities facing residents trying to find employment and training opportunities. It also demonstrated that tackling the unemployment figures and raising skills levels in the city required a holistic all age approach with increased support at key transition points in a resident's life.
- 6.3 To support delivery of the strategy the Wolves at Work 18-24 programme has been transitioned to an all-age Wolves at Work programme. The programme will provide a clear governance route for delivery, reporting and monitoring of the strategy implementation as well as deliver six cross cutting transformation projects.

## **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 improve learning and employment outcomes for residents, increase economic prosperity and drive local inclusive growth.

## **8.0 Reasons for decision(s)**

- 8.1 As noted in 5.0 of this report the ESE strategy has been developed through close engagement with communities and city partners to shape its priorities. A robust evidence base has helped to inform the areas of focus and key activity within the strategy. The strategic framework will help us to galvanise city partners, target interventions in the right places and deliver Our City: Our Plan.

## **9.0 Financial implications**

- 9.1 Spend incurred during 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 from the original agreed Wolves at Work 18-24 Programme reserve of £3 million totalled £554,400. The approved committed spend for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 totals an estimated £1.2 million based on current cost assumptions.
- 9.2 The new programme seeks approval that the remaining balance of approximately £1.2 million be re-allocated to fund the new programme reserve. The monitoring of this reserve will continue using the same approach that was put in place for the 18-24 programme, with all decisions and approvals recorded and completed in line with Financial Procedure Rules.

[LD/21082023/F]

## **10.0 Legal implications**

- 10.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.  
[JB/21082023/L]

## **11.0 Equalities implications**

- 11.1 Fair and equal is a cross cutting principle of the ESE Strategy and delivering a more inclusive and accessible learning and work opportunities for all people in our city is at the heart of our new approach. An equalities analysis for the ESE Strategy has been undertaken and mitigations to any negative impacts identified. All activity noted in the plan will also be subject to individual equalities analysis.

## **12.0 All other implications**

- 12.1 The ESE 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. As only 20% of a person's health outcomes are attributed to the ability to access good quality health care, the wider determinants of health, made up of the diverse range of social, economic, and environmental factors which impact on people's health, play a crucial role in the health and wellbeing of communities and local people. Through its focus on improving economic prosperity for local people the ESE Strategy will help to address these wider determinants which impact the health and wellbeing of local people.
- 12.3 We will continue to contribute to the delivery of the Council's climate change action plan to meet our commitment to be next carbon neutral as a Council by 2028, with regular progress reports to Cabinet.
- 12.4 The plan is aligned to the Digital Wolves strategy approved by Cabinet in March 2022, setting out how as a city and as a council we can harness the benefits of digital and technology for local people.
- 12.5 The performance framework for each priority 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**

14.1 Appendix 1: Education, Skills and Employment Strategy

14.2 Appendix 2: Education, Skills and Employment Strategy Online Survey Consultation Response