



Cabinet Meeting

11 March 2015

Report title	Scrutiny Review of Employability and Skills
Decision designation	AMBER
Cabinet member to give management response	Cllr Peter Bilson, Economic Regeneration and Prosperity Cllr Phil Page, Schools, Skills and Learning Cllr Elias Mattu, Leisure and Communities
Key decision	No
In forward plan	No
Wards affected	All
Review Chair	Cllr Ian Angus
Review Members	Cllr Payal Bedi Cllr Jasbinder Dehar Cllr Mark Evans Cllr Christopher Haynes Cllr Arun Photay Cllr John Rowley Cllr Stephen Simkins Cllr Tersaim Singh Cllr Martin Waite Cllr Daniel Warren Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman Youth Councillors
Lead Officer	Dr Keren Jones, Service Director City Economy Tel. Office 01902 555410 Keren.jones@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Link Officer	Sheila Collett, Head of Service, Economic Inclusion Tel. Office: 01902 551848 Email: Sheila.collett@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Scrutiny Review Officer	Deb Breedon, Scrutiny Officer, Governance Tel. Office: 01902 551250 Email: Deborah.Breedon@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Strategic Executive Board - 10 February 2015 Executive Team - 25 February 2015

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Receive the report of the review group (Appendix 1) and consider the following recommendations:
 - R1. 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.
 - 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.
2. Approve the executive response to the review recommendations (Appendix 2).
 3. Refer the Cabinet response to Scrutiny Board for it to track and monitor the implementation of the agreed recommendations.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The report presents the findings and recommendations of the scrutiny review of Employability and Skills. Cabinet is requested to receive the report and agree the executive response.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The review group met on five occasions to gather evidence in relation to employability and skills in Wolverhampton, with particular focus 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 Key questions of the review:

- 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 group worked with Dr Keren Jones, Service Director, City Economy and Sheila Collett, Head of Service, Economic Inclusion.

3.0 Current position

- 3.1 The review group considered the draft report on 29 January 2015. Cabinet Members attended to hear the conclusions and draft recommendations of the review group. The draft report was agreed subject to amendments being incorporated and it was agreed to delegate sign off of the final report to the Chair, working with the Service Director and Head of Service.

- 3.2 The scrutiny review report and executive response are appended to this report.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 The recommendations 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. The approach will also seek to capitalise European Structure Funds and any other further funding coming through Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership.
[ES/19022015/N]

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 There are no direct legal implications associated with the recommendations.
[RB/16022015/U]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 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.

7.0 Environmental implications

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

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 There are no human resources implications as a result of this report.

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

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

10.0 Risk Implications

10.1 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 Phil Page.
Current score red in the Risks Update to Audit Committee 15 December 2014

11.0 Schedule of background papers

11.1 The Scale of the Challenge presentation slides (Appendix to the report)