

Report title	Wolves at Work 18-24 – Youth Employment	
Decision designation	RED	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Ian Brookfield Leader of the Council	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	No	
Wards affected	All Wards	
Accountable Director	Tim Johnson, Chief Executive	
Originating service	Chief Executive	
Accountable employee	Mark Taylor Tel Email	Deputy Chief Executive 01902 556609 mark.taylor@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Regeneration Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board Leader's Briefing Cabinet Member Briefing – Education & Skills Cabinet Member Briefing – Children and Young People	5 October 2021 7 October 2021 11 October 2021 11 October 2021 11 October 2021

Recommendations for decision:

Cabinet is recommended to approve (subject to the support and endorsement of Full Council on 3 November 2021):

1. The launch of a new Wolves at Work 18-24 Programme of targeted interventions which puts our young people at the centre of activity and urgently delivers the step change needed in our City to give unemployed young people opportunities for secure, sustainable employment, apprenticeships, education or training.

2. An initial £3 million budget, from a combination of the Recovery Reserve and Covid Emergency Grant, to deliver Wolves at Work 18-24 and galvanise a 'One City' approach to create opportunities for our young people.
3. The establishment of a £100,000 'City Ideas Fund', initially (funded from the £3 million available), for City employers and partners to bid for and put forward ideas that will get more young people into sustained employment, apprenticeships, education or training.
4. The delegation of authority to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance, to approve:
 - a. Wolves at Work 18-24 targeted interventions and the allocation of the associated budget (from the £3 million available).
 - b. The scope and governance arrangements for the 'City Ideas Fund'.

Recommendations for noting:

Cabinet is asked to note that:

1. Delivering Wolves at Work 18-24 is the Council and City's number one priority and needs a coordinated and sustained response from the Council, City employers and partners, the West Midlands Combined Authority and Government Departments, as a result:
 - a. The Leader of the Council will be the Lead Cabinet Member.
 - b. The Chief Executive will fulfil the role of Accountable Director, with day-to-day responsibility being delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, who will fulfil the role of Senior Responsible Officer (SRO).
2. The Council is committed to holding a Wolves at Work 18-24 City Summit to bring together a range of key partners (local, regional and national) and employers to forge a 'One City' approach to tackling the underlying issues which transcend organisational boundaries.
3. The progress and impact of Wolves at Work 18-24 will be reported to Councillors as part of the established corporate performance and budget monitoring arrangements.
4. The existing Governance arrangements relating to youth unemployment within the Council and across the City, will be mapped and reviewed to ensure that they are making a positive contribution towards Wolves at Work 18-24.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This Cabinet report seeks approval for the council to lead on developing and resourcing a comprehensive programme of targeted intervention – Wolves at Work 18-24 - to support young people currently claiming benefits and aged 18 to 24 into sustainable employment, apprenticeships, education or training.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Children and young people, and youth employment, has always been a focus and priority for the Council and City. It features heavily in the Council's Relighting Our City plans.
- 2.2 Although youth unemployment has historically been a significant issue in our City, regrettably, since launching the Relighting Our City plan, unemployment figures have been further exacerbated by the ongoing impact of the pandemic. The City of Wolverhampton currently has the highest unemployment rate for 18-24 year olds in the UK, equating to 2,660 young people (NOMIS September 2021). This is despite the City being in the top quartile for 16-17 year olds for NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training).
- 2.3 The Council, however, remains resolute and committed to working with partners, employers and young people, to actively increase the levels of youth employment, especially as city employers are reporting high levels of vacancies.
- 2.4 With the end of the furlough scheme likely to further exacerbate this challenge, urgent intervention and action is required. It is clear that the Council cannot address this challenge in isolation, it is therefore absolutely essential that the Council leads and drives a coordinated and sustained response with City employers and partners, the West Midlands Combined Authority and Government Departments – a 'One City' Response, with young people and their voices at the centre of every element of the response.

3.0 A 'One City' Response

- 3.1 Despite the fact that there are already extensive and ambitious programmes and interventions in place to tackle this challenge, they are not having the desired impact. Therefore, a reinvigorated and comprehensive programme of targeted interventions will now be developed to support young unemployed people aged 18 to 24, into sustainable jobs, apprenticeships or training – Wolves at Work 18-24. As already stated, Wolves at Work 18-24 will ensure that young people and their voices are at the centre of every element of the response
- 3.2 These interventions will provide enhanced and targeted support to meet individual needs which will be backed up by a city-wide marketing and communications campaign to raise awareness and connect young people to opportunities.

- 3.3 Through a 'One City' response, Wolves at Work 18-24 will also aim to tackle inequalities within the City and disparities between different wards - the highest youth unemployment rate is currently in Bushbury South & Low Hill (18.7%), the lowest is Tettenhall Wightwick (7.9%). However, the urgent need to respond to this issue is highlighted by the fact that all of Wolverhampton's wards are above the English youth unemployment rate of 6.5% (NOMIS September 2021).
- 3.4 The first ambitious Wolves at Work 18-24 initiative will be a 'City Ideas Fund', this will be established from the approved budget of £3 million, with an initial allocation of £100,000. Set to be launched in the very near future, City employers and partners will be able put forward ideas and bid for funding to get more young people into sustained employment, apprenticeships, education or training. The focus will be to support new and innovative community-based activities and projects which will connect young people to job and learning opportunities. Delegated authority is being sought in this report to develop this approach.
- 3.5 The Council will also take the lead to set up a Wolves at Work 18-24 City Summit which will bring together a range of key partners and employers to forge the 'One City' approach required. This will be set up as a high priority, will involve young people to provide the opportunity for the City to 'step up' and collectively take action.
- 3.6 As this is the Council's and City's number one priority, the Leader of the Council will be the Lead Cabinet Member for Wolves at Work 18-24 and the Chief Executive will fulfil the role of Accountable Director. Day-to-day responsibility will be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, who will fulfil the role of Senior Responsible Officer (SRO).
- 3.7 A key component to any successful programme is effective governance, therefore, the existing governance arrangements relating to youth employment within the Council and across the City, will be mapped and reviewed to ensure that they are making a positive contribution towards Wolves at Work 18-24. Progress and performance of Wolves at Work 18-24 will be reviewed and analysed regularly to understand the impact of the programme and this will be reported to Councillors as part of the established corporate performance and budget monitoring arrangements.

4.0 Options Considered

- 4.1 There is only one real option to tackle this problem - adopting a 'One-City' approach with the Council taking on a City and system leadership role.

5.0 Reasons for decision(s)

- 5.1 This is the recommended option for decision as the council is in a unique position to lead on developing and resourcing a comprehensive programme of targeted intervention – Wolves at Work 18-24 - to support young people currently claiming benefits and aged 18 to 24 into sustainable employment, apprenticeships, education or training.

6.0 Financial implications

- 6.1 Approval is sought to establish an initial budget of £3 million, from a combination of the Recovery Reserve and Covid Emergency Grant, to fund the Wolves at Work 18-24 Programme.
- 6.2 As the work of Wolves at Work 18-24 develops, and the required initiatives and interventions start to emerge, it will be possible to estimate whether the £3 million will be sufficient to deliver this key priority for the Council and the City.
- 6.3 The initial £100,000 allocated to the 'City Ideas Fund' will be established from the approved budget of £3 million.
[CN/07102021/P]

7.0 Legal implications

- 7.1 The decision being recommend to Cabinet falls within the definition of an Amber Decision, as it is within the budget and policy framework approved by Council.
- 7.2 However, due to the significant financial resources being committed to Wolves at Work 18-24, the Leader of the Council felt it was important that the Cabinet secured the endorsement and support of Full Council with this important decision, as such the decision is being made by Cabinet and the endorsement of Full Council will be sought at the next meeting on 3 November 2021.
[DP/07102021/A]

8.0 Equalities implications

- 8.1 As stated above, Wolves at Work 18-24 will aim to tackle inequalities in the city given big disparities between different wards - the highest youth unemployment rate is in East Park (19.5%), the lowest is Tettenhall Regis (8.8%).
- 8.2 In addition, an equality analysis will be undertaken for all Wolves at Work 18-24 activity and targeted interventions.

9.0 All other Implications

- 9.1 Wolves at Work 18-24 will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the city's residents as it will support for young people into sustainable employment, apprenticeships, education or training.
- 9.2 There is a risk that the City will go into another lockdown, this may impact the delivery of Wolves at Work 18-24.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

- 10.1 There are no schedule background papers.