

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

ECONOMY, SKILLS & TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE –

PUBLIC MEETING

1630 hours on 22nd January 2020, Committee Room 2, Council House – Action Notes

Present:

Councillor Lou Robson (Chair)

Councillors Maureen Cornish, Chaman Lal, Simon Morrall and Julien Pritchard.

Also Present:

Councillor Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member Education, Skills & Culture

Anne Ainsworth, Assistant Director, Skills & Employability;

Kam Hundal, Employment Manager, Skills & Employability;

Amarjit Sahota, Culture Change Officer, HR & Organisation Development

Rew Shears, Programme Manager, Change Grow Live

Tara Verrell, YEI Project Manager, Skills and Employability;

Baseema Begum, Research & Policy Officer

Rose Kiely, Group Overview & Scrutiny Manager

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chairman advised the meeting to note that members of the press/public may record and take photographs.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Morrall declared a non-pecuniary interest as owner of a marketing/PR business.

3. APOLOGIES

Councillor Lucy Seymour Smith.

4. ACTION NOTES

The Committee agreed the action notes for the meeting held on the 6th November 2019.

5. CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, SKILLS & CULTURE - PORTFOLIO UPDATE ON SKILLS ISSUES

(See document No. 1)

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and explained the purpose of the session.

The Cabinet Member, Cllr Francis highlighted the key areas of activity as set out in the presentation circulated as part of the agenda pack. Cllr Francis then added the following points: -

- The Youth Service is actively involved in working with young people on post-14 skills choices. The Adult Education service is preparing for the new T-levels for the city. Both services are working to ensure that young people and parents are aware of post-16 options including those with special education needs and this is led by the Preparation for Adulthood Board. The Board is also looking at self-employment and new business start-up options support for young people.
- A strong Post 16 Forum Partnership is also in place with a wide membership including colleges and training providers who look at the quality of offer for young people, peer to peer support and the support on mental health issues.
- In September 2019 the Adult Education budget was devolved to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) as part of the devolution agreement the Council continue to work closely with the WMCA to evidence the impact of delivery across the city.
- The Youth Service is linked into the delivery of the Youth Promise Plus (YPP) initiative and continue to work with significant numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). NEET levels continue to decrease in comparison with core cities.
- Further work is continuing with those that are NEET and funding is in place to support a further 2000+ 16-19 years olds for 2019/20. This support is due to increase over the next 10 years.
- The Council retains a strong involvement in careers advice for young people, to assist them in making choices that are right for them post-16 and the Careers Service of the Council retains a strong focus on working with NEET young people, to ensure that they are able to re-engage with employment, education or training as quickly as possible. The Careers Service retained its Matrix Accreditation after an external inspection. This reflects the quality of the advice provided to young people.

- The Assistant Director for Employment and Skills is also a Board member of the Careers and Enterprise Company Enterprise Advisor Network project which aims to work with all secondary schools in the city, providing careers audits and linking schools to local companies.
- Work on the Commonwealth Games development at Perry Barr has afforded some good employment opportunities to local businesses and people and a visit to the Employment Training Hub at Perry Barr can be arranged if members are interested.
- The Skills and Employment team are also part of the Council's internal Brexit working group that includes working across the region with the WMCA and neighbouring local authorities to support local businesses and employees.
- There is a range of skills, enterprise & innovation activity at the Library of Birmingham to support initiatives including new business start-ups and enterprise.

Members then received a presentation from Amarjit Sahota on the Apprenticeship Levy. The presentation was included in the agenda pack and the following points were made: -

- The Council's Organisational Development team has recently embarked on a culture change programme with a set of 10 workstreams. One of these workstreams is focussed on apprenticeships and the wider educational offer and this includes graduates, work placements apprenticeships, internships, traineeships and T-Levels (when these come into effect).
- Since the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2017 apprenticeships have changed and evolved compared to how they were historically delivered.
- Employers including the Council with a £3m+ wages bill pay towards a monthly levy that covers the full cost of training and assessment and supports any apprentice to complete their apprenticeship.
- Apprenticeships are available at a variety of levels from GCSE equivalent through to masters' degree level and training is delivered suited to business need including a lot of on-line learning.
- The Council has been utilising the levy to recruit and replace existing staff where key staff retire, or vacancies arise. It is also being used to retain the current workforce through investment and development to build skills and knowledge for the future. There are opportunities to tie an apprenticeship to a role and the opportunity to develop a new apprenticeship where there is a need.
- Work to promote the apprenticeship scheme across the Council is underway including work with schools and ring-fencing new opportunities in the future to Birmingham residents.
- A number of local universities, colleges and training providers are involved in the delivery of courses and apprenticeships.

- The Council is also working with the Local Government Association (LGA) on apprenticeships. The Culture Change Officer is a West Midlands Apprenticeship Ambassador and is working with private and public sector organisations to raise and promote the apprenticeships agenda across the region.
- The Apprenticeship Levy fund is constantly increasing due to the amount of levy the Council must contribute each month (0.5% of the wage bill based on the total number of employees). Providers are paid over the duration of the apprenticeship rather than a lump sum.
- Work is on-going on to raise awareness and encourage employees to take up the offer and numbers are increasing. Furthermore, work is taking place with the WMCA on how to drive up the apprentice agenda across the city including how the Council is able to 'gift' part of the levy to SME's. This would be based on creating new apprenticeships and providing job retention.

Members then raised the following points and questions: -

- Concern about how much is being spent on apprenticeships and not using the resource to the fullest. For example, it could be used on the creation of skills and jobs to tackle the climate emergency declared by the Council. It could also be used to provide skills and employment support at community libraries.
- Birmingham is struggling to meet the apprenticeship quota and is lagging other local authorities. Are there any additional plans to address this and improve and what is the pathway after an apprenticeship has been completed if full time work is not available and how is this being monitored?
- Development of 14-19-year-old career pathways in enterprise and entrepreneurship in schools is very positive.
- Concern that businesses may use apprenticeships as a mechanism to pay these employees a lower wage therefore are there any safeguards in place?
- What marketing and communication has been done to tell people about these opportunities to make them more wide reaching? Important to tell people that opportunities on doorstep in a more wide-ranging manner.
- Are we prioritising the current skills gap not just at the City Council but in the wider city e.g. to address social care shortages?
- Monitors the quality of providers and ensuring that there are other ways the levy can be spent for example in increasing staff capacity.
- Are there part-time opportunities to access the offer for example those who are considering a career-change, women and those not working full-time?

In response to the queries raised and points made the Cabinet Member and officers stated that: -

- Spend is forecast and accounted for up to 12 months in advance and this covers the varying length (from 12-24 months). In terms of using up this resource it can be gifted, and this is being investigated.
- Further investigation can take place to look at how the fund can be expanded to support community libraries in providing business support and to help people develop skills for people with reference to the climate emergency.
- Gifting can be used to support particular sectors that need specific skills and where there is difficulty in recruitment. It can also be used to support the region which has a lot of SME's that may have specific skills needs.
- Actively working with all directorates on current and future needs by using a skills analysis so that the fund can be used to best effect. Individual tailored presentations have been made to management teams focussing on succession planning, talent management and investing in individuals.
- Working with the LGA and looking at best practices elsewhere and how they can be used in Birmingham.
- Significant work to be done to dispel myths and stigma on what apprenticeships are. There is a need to shift thinking and promote the benefits not only externally but also to council directorates. Working with partners on this to raise profile and its benefits.
- A job evaluation is done so apprentices are paid against the appropriate pay grade for jobs at the Council. The Council is limited on what it can do in terms of safeguards for external businesses. The framework around apprenticeships (and likewise with gifting) is much clearer and helping with ensuring the levy is being used to deliver a job on completion.
- Awareness raising of the apprenticeships levy is the main objective work being done with the LGA as currently this is by word of mouth. Bristol City Council have approached Birmingham and will be visiting to see what is being done here.
- Working with WMCA looking at data and research into particular industries and where the skills gaps are and how this might affect specific areas with particular reference to Brexit.
- A flexible approach is in place to accessing apprenticeships. It should be noted that 20% of any role is dedicated to training so the employee would need to be able to commit to that time. Private providers are already doing this.
- Meet regularly with the Education and Skills Funding Agency on monitoring the quality of providers. An update can be provided at a future meeting if the Committee is interested in further information.

RESOLVED: -

1. In future reports to the Committee an update should include: -
 - (a) the use of the apprenticeship levy to support SME's and support being provided to community libraries;

- (b) Equality monitoring; and
- (c) Inviting some apprentices to a future meeting.

6. YOUTH PROMISE PLUS – 6 MONTHLY UPDATE

(See document No. 2)

Prior to the report on Youth Promise Plus (YPP) programme being presented Tara Verrell, YEI Project Manager introduced Rew Shears, Programme Manager from Change Grow Live (CGL) a delivery partner of the YPP programme to give an appraisal of how the project works on the ground.

Rew Shears, CGL explained that her organisation work with two groups of young people that face significant barriers; those that are in the care system and those at risk of offending. Referrals for the latter are received from the Police and Youth Offending service. The support provided is based on a mentoring model focussed on building trust and a relationship with the young person to build their confidence and independence. Two case studies were shared with members giving an insight to the types of young people that have been dealt with, their issues and the key role of an intervention worker in working with the young person to provide the appropriate support to enable them to access training and employment opportunities. It was highlighted that support is catered to on an individual basis.

Tara Verrell added that the YPP programme allowed additional resource for flexibility; diversity of approach in working with diverse partnership providers, brings additional time to work with a young person and through this gives the young person resilience. 600 young people will be supported by CGL and are those experiencing the most barriers.

In reference to the report circulated to members it was highlighted that: -

- Birmingham has the higher unemployment levels compared to other areas in the West Midlands. Birmingham has lower levels of young people reaching NVQ levels 1&2 and higher levels of young people with no qualifications.
- The Careers and Youth Service do a lot of intensive work with young people and families and specialise these to NEET young people. Work takes place across Birmingham and Solihull local authority areas.
- Variety of partners involved in the YPP include the Princes Trust who are a major partner and University of Birmingham hospital.
- Also work with the Children's Trust, youth offender teams, care leavers, virtual schools and care leavers team.
- The delivery challenges remain in reaching inactive young people that are not linked into any service and are not actively seeking work. Work taking place to improve generic marketing to reach these young people.
- Aiming to understand and reach more young women. Do well in reaching BAME and disabled young people.
- Future targets include reaching equality goals and reaching set targets.

Kam Hundal, Employment Manager then spoke to Members about the work of the Council's Employment Access Team (EAT) that work with employers who make best use of the Council's procurement policy framework for jobs and skills and the planning protocol for jobs & skills. This includes pulling in contract clauses within the section 106 planning agreements with strategic partners making sure we develop progression pathways that enable individuals with no or low skills to access skills that are required by employers and industry and move them into accessing work experience. Support provided includes CV development and confidence building to help with interviews.

Working closely with Lendlease on the development of Perry Barr village and through this the team has been able to maximise best use of the Business Charter for Social Responsibility (BCSR) and establish an on-site engagement and training facility supporting skills development for the sector and for employers and the supply chain on the project.

Also work closely with WMCA on their construction gateway programme and of the 7 local authority areas Birmingham is spending the most and getting the most people through those skills pathways. BCC has committed through the BCSR a 1000 pre-employment training places to be delivered through that project and training hub. Lendlease have bought forward new jobs to be created on the project which includes 50 apprenticeships and 30 paid summer intern placements in Perry Barr in various disciplines.

The EAT runs 3 projects – YPP, World of Work and Pure that allows a supply of people to be bought forward and target those individuals who are not in an economic activity and support them through a pathway into an interview and sustainable employment.

Since the EAT has been in operation for the last 10 years over 10,000 residents have been helped to access employment and training opportunities.

Members then made the following points: -

- It would be worthwhile to investigate this area further and understand how local councillors can influence projects ensuring that there are links with the Planning department.
- What are the actual numbers of people that are eligible and those that benefit and those that had participated in the scheme and the positives outcomes against the actual figures?
- Concern also that despite best efforts Birmingham still has twice as high unemployment rates amongst its young people.
- How does CGL compare with the rest of YPP due to the intense input with those referred to CGL? Where is the funding coming from? How can you increase the numbers and scale up without losing the quality?
- Support to care leavers was emphasised and as particularly vulnerable young people and how long does it continue for?
- How are prison leavers and young offenders linked in with and those that are placed outside of the city?

In response it was confirmed that: -

- The total numbers are 4,400+ young people have been assisted as part of the YPP. 2,375 have gained employment; 993 have secured apprenticeships and 177 have obtained traineeships. Further details on particular wards can be shared on request.
- Claimant count continues to rise in part due to benefit changes to Universal Credit making it wider range and this has an effect on the unemployment figures being shown (these are now showing to have increased with this effect). Figures have gone up across all core cities and this is a national trend.
- The Youth Service provides some intensive work with young people. There is an issue with support as funding is limited to those living in Birmingham. Young people are linked to similar services in the region (if living outside boundary) and work with the care leavers team on this. CGL work with the care leavers team to ensure care is extended as far as it can be for those vulnerable young people.
- Supporting young people released from a youth offenders institution as intervention workers are based in youth offending teams and referrals are made quite quickly.
- CGL attend police meetings where high risk prison leavers due for release are discussed. These young people are identified for referral to YPP and PURE projects.
- The PURE project is run by Adult Services and provides similar provision to YPP focussing on supporting those who are affected by homelessness and those who are currently homeless.

RESOLVED: -

1. Further information and data on specific wards or areas can be provided to members directly.
2. Future updates to include figures relating to participation by boys.
3. Cllr Cornish asked for an update on the latest figures on 'not known' under NEET data and direction of travel with the national average to be presented in advance of the next update.

7. INITIAL DISCUSSION: PROMOTING AND COMMUNICATING EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS OPPORTUNITIES TO RESIDENTS

Cllr Morrall explained to officers that it would be helpful to know how all the employment and skills opportunities available in the city are being promoted to residents. Youth unemployment is a huge issue as discussed earlier. Direct communication and social media needs to be used more to target young and disenfranchised people. More joint up work is needed with a number of stakeholders involved in putting together a strategy for the whole city in promoting the opportunities available.

The Chair then requested the Cabinet Member, Cllr Francis and the Assistant Director, Anne Ainsworth to respond to this with a plan on areas for discussion and who to involve at a future meeting.

8. WORK PROGRAMME DISCUSSION – NOVEMBER 2019

(See document No. 3)

The Chair requested that members postpone the discussion on the work programme to the meeting next week (29th Jan) where it would be discussed in more detail. It was also confirmed that a deputy chair would also be selected at this meeting.

RESOLVED: -

1. Discussion is deferred to the meeting on the 29th Jan

9. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL-IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)

None.

10. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

11. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

Agreed.

RESOLVED: -

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

The meeting finished at 18:26 hours.