

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND SKILLS O&S COMMITTEE

1000 hours on 11th January 2023, Committee Room 2, Council House - Actions

Present:

Councillor Saima Suleman

Councillors Raqeeb Aziz, Katherine Iroh and Izzy Knowles.

Also Present:

Tim Boyes, Chief Executive, Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP)

Ruth Broome, Strategic Hub Lead - Birmingham Careers Hub, Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP)

Jenny Turnross, Director of Practice, Birmingham Children's Trust

Fiona Bottrill, Senior Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Baseema Begum, Scrutiny Officer

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The meeting began at 10.03

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

2. APOLOGIES

None.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

4. ACTION NOTES

(See Item No. 4)

The action notes of the last meeting held on 7th December 2022 were agreed.

5. EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS INQUIRY

(See Item No. 5)

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

Tim Boyes, CEO, Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) and Ruth Broome, Strategic Hub Lead, Birmingham Careers Hub were present for this item.

Tim Boyes spoke to the presentation circulated with the agenda and during a discussion with members the following were amongst the points made: -

- BEP, a charity, was launched in 2013 by headteachers with the support of the City Council to help keep the Birmingham schools family together as the Council's resource was diminishing due to an increase in school academies.
- BEP works with schools and does not provide careers advice directly to young people. Initially it received some government funding to partner with the Careers and Enterprise Company to act as a broker for supporting careers advice and transitioning of young people into employment for Birmingham schools. The other partner supporting this work is the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP).
- In 2015 the Council commissioned BEP to be the school improvement provider changing the focus of the work of BEP with the Council as its lead partner.
- There is a lack of co-ordination and strategy when it comes to a set standard of careers advice on offer with a wide variation noted between schools. There is a need for a co-ordinated approach across the city.
- BEP works with careers leads in schools to help support them in their priorities for their young people. Through the work of the Careers Hub there are 108 schools from a broad spectrum engaged on a careers programme. It was recognised however that Head Teachers are driven by examination results rather than careers advice and so it is not always the top priority. BEP's mandate is to help schools improve so this is where the focus is.
- BEP works with a range of employers to engage business volunteers including the Chamber of Commerce where there is a diverse makeup of employers in their network including smaller businesses.
- It was acknowledged that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) don't have the capacity and resource to engage with the process of offering an apprenticeship. This is something that BEP is aware of and will be looking to address in a strategy next year through the Careers Hub.
- BEP has worked with schools on careers advice to ensure that it is impartial and offers a package of options for young people. It is hoped that the number of apprenticeships on offer this year will be trebled and further research is being done to understand the barriers with the take-up in apprenticeships.
- In East Birmingham there has been a faster increase in those from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds in the progress made in attainment between primary and secondary school and is better than the national average. However, there is an issue with addressing mindsets and the needs of different communities to ensure that there is take up of the opportunities

available. This starts with educating young children and parents earlier and demonstrating successful role models to show that they too can take up different opportunities.

- BEP are keen to get more participation from young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) in mainstream schools to shape a strategy that will be launched next year looking specifically at those with SEND.
- Young ambassadors with SEND have met with employers to explain their needs and what employers can change and do to be more inclusive.
- Representatives from BEP told members that the 3 recommendations they would suggest for improving skills levels and employment opportunities for young people in the city would be: -
 - Strengthening the relationship between key partners involved in school improvement. The Council needs to provide more stability and continuity as there has been frequent change in senior management.
 - Recognising the unique needs of different areas in the city and what communities in those areas need to work with children at a younger age to create ambition and change mindsets.
 - The current landscape in careers advice and guidance is fragmented and difficult to navigate. It would be helpful for more joint up working between all partners to be more efficient and effective rather to add or duplicate to what is already there.

Jenny Turnross, Director of Practice, Birmingham Children's Trust (BCT) spoke to the report circulated with the agenda and during discussion with Members the following were amongst the points made: -

- The Council fund BCT with a core budget of £200m per year as they provide a statutory service. Opportunities to receive additional funding are taken up as resource is an issue.
- Members acknowledged the great amount of support provided to young people in care and were interested to learn that young care leavers have taken up many different jobs including vocational roles as well as more academic roles in schools and banks. Many of the young people are in apprenticeship roles due to their age range of between 18-21. Those who may be on a lower wage are subsidised by BCT.
- BCT works with the DWP in supporting young people with their CV's and confidence building to enable them to take up opportunities and navigate challenges especially those who may be struggling to take the first step into employment. However, from the main cohorts of care leavers for those young people in care who are seeking asylum or are unaccompanied asylum seekers the main challenge is their emotional health and wellbeing. This responsibility often falls to their social worker however building relationships and having connections with their own communities would be beneficial. In addition, those young people who have suffered considerable trauma (mental health/self-harm/offending) and have additional issues are provided with a dedicated support team. This additional resource supports the young person as they transition into adulthood. It is worth noting that with this one-to-one support 98% of these young people have stayed in contact.

- Care leavers who are parents are provided with dedicated support through one-to-one meetings where these young people are able to talk about their aspirations and challenges and further through supported group work. Young people who find themselves as new parents can require emotional support and a social worker is nominated to support the young person on this journey. A plan is usually put in place to support the young person in taking account of all the issues that they may face including the cost of childcare and returning to work/finding employment.
- Financial assistance is also provided to young parents to allow them to go back to work however BCT has found that the biggest issue for these care leavers is having the emotional support and positive connections to do this, and this is an area that needs further work. Government legislation advocates for more work with care leavers to ensure that these young people are ready to become parents.
- The Corporate Parenting Board is open to all members to join. Elected Members as corporate parents can take the opportunity to support vulnerable young people in care. One example is a Member being asked to mentor or champion a young person (into employment) however this does require clear management.

The Chair thanked the attendees for their contributions and outlined details of future evidence gathering sessions.

RESOLVED: -

1. The report was noted.
2. A list of qualifications available to young people in the city to be provided by BEP.
3. The number of roles secured by care leavers within the public sector to be provided by Jenny Turnross.
4. Further information on the reverse mentoring scheme and how Members can get involved to be provided by Jenny Turnross.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

(See Item No.6)

Fiona Bottrill, Senior Overview & Scrutiny Manager outlined details for future meetings and a general update in relation to the Employment and Skills Inquiry.

It was agreed that the Committee's February meeting would be used to look at the evidence received for the Inquiry to date.

A link to the Inquiry Survey on BeHeard to be sent to all meeting attendees and shared on the Scrutiny Twitter page.

RESOLVED: -

1. The report was noted.
2. An invitation to be sent to all Members of the Committee for the Task & Finish Group meeting scheduled for 13 January.

7. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Noted.

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

None.

9. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

10. AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS

Agreed.

The meeting ended at 11:57 hours