

Birmingham City Council

City Council

18 April 2023



Subject: Something to Aim for: Scrutiny Inquiry on Employment and Skills for Young People

Report of: Cllr. Saima Suleman, Chair Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential: Not Applicable

1 Executive Summary

1.1 Birmingham has a persistently high unemployment rate and low skills which affects the opportunities for residents and the ability to grow the local economy and attract business to the city. The Scrutiny Inquiry established by the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee focussed on skills and employment for young people and built on the Breaking Down Barriers report that was produced by the Council and identified the issues faced by young people and the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. The Scrutiny Inquiry terms of reference set out 7 key lines of inquiry based on the recommendations from the Breaking Down Barriers report:

- Support young people to build confidence and resilience
- Develop a comprehensive city-wide mentoring scheme
- Facilitate accessible work experience opportunities
- Reshape careers advice and guidance services
- Deliver a locally designed scheme of employment support for young people and businesses
- How marketing and communication strategies are used to inform disenfranchised young people of the skills and employment opportunities available.
- How young people are supported to develop entrepreneurial skills?

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That recommendations R01 to R11, set out in Appendix 1, be approved and that the Executive be requested to pursue their implementation.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Inquiry on Employment and Skills for Young People was agreed as part of the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2022/23. This enabled members to look at this issue in more depth and engage with a range of organisations and meet with young people to understand their experiences and hear the views of others through an online survey. The report attached as Appendix 1 provides a summary of the evidence considered during the Inquiry.

4 Options considered and Recommended Proposal

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Inquiry identified the themes from the evidence set out below. A summary of the evidence received is set out in Sections 2, 3 and 4 of the report attached.
- Supporting Young People to Build Confidence and Resilience
 - Responding to Needs of Children and Young People and Addressing Structural Inequities
 - Complexity and Fragmentation of the Skills and Employment Ecosystem
 - Skills Funding
 - Work Experience
 - Mentoring
 - Apprenticeships
- 4.2 Section 7 of the report attached as Appendix 1 sets out the recommendations agreed by the Inquiry Task and Finish Group and members of the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The proposals set out in the Inquiry on Employment and Skills for Young People including those considered as part of the terms of reference and the recommendations create many opportunities for Birmingham's young population. The Council needs to ensure that in promoting these opportunities, we are inclusive to all and go through appropriate recruitment and selection processes. All proposals should comply with the provisions contained within the Equality Act 2010.

- 5.2 The Council and its partner organisations should continue to review trends and data to explore the impact these initiatives are having on employment and creating opportunities for young people and analyse how the proposals are being pursued.
- 5.3 In progressing any of the recommendations and providing opportunities for young people in Birmingham, legal advice will need to be sought in relation to the contractual status of their working practices and drafting the appropriate agreements.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 Birmingham City Council currently receives £3m of ESF Funding to support work undertaken within Careers, Youth and Employment & Skills Services. Birmingham has applied for £3.2m of SPF funding through the logic chain for People & Skills 2024/25 with a further £0.5m being proposed to be funded from the Business Support logic chain. Assuming the SPF application is successful there is not funding gap for the Council during 2024/25.
- 6.2 The transition between the two funding mechanisms leaves a 6-month gap in funding c.£1.5m during financial year 2023/24. As this funding gap was anticipated in 2021/22, an amount of £1.449m was set aside within the Council's Financial Resilience Reserve. It is now proposed that this amount be released for the Directorate to utilise during 2023/24 as part of the Financial Plan which was agreed by Full Council in February 2023.
- 6.3 The Council's HR Services will launch an Early Careers programme in 2023 and will procure refreshed apprenticeship teaching provision for staff. This will help to increase deployment of the Council's Apprenticeship Levy funds in support of new staff, and the Council will continue to support other employers to fund apprenticeship course costs through its Apprenticeship Levy Fund.

7 Public Sector Equality Duty

- 7.1 The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2 The Committee should ensure that it addresses these duties by considering them during work programme development, the scoping of work, evidence gathering and making recommendations. This should include considering: How policy issues impact on different groups within the community, particularly those that share a relevant protected characteristic; Whether the impact on particular groups is fair and proportionate; Whether there is equality of access to services and fair representation of all groups within Birmingham; Whether any positive opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and/or good relations between people are being realised.

7.3 The Committee should ensure that equalities comments, and any recommendations, are based on evidence. This should include demographic and service level data and evidence of residents/service-users views gathered through consultation.

7.4 During the Inquiry, evidence was received that set out the disadvantage that Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities, young people with additional vulnerabilities including Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and care experienced young people face in relation to skills and employment. A summary of this information is included in Sections 2 and 4 of the report attached as Appendix 1. Recommendations R04 and R05 address issues regarding access and use of data on race and gender to understand local need and to identify where resources can be targeted appropriately and to understand intersectional disadvantage in relation to race, gender, SEND, Free School Meals and pupils who are excluded, on reduced timetables and managed moves between schools. Recommendation R06 seeks to ensure that young people who have additional vulnerabilities and needs including SEND receive 1-1 careers support including during transition stages. Recommendation R07 and R08 seek to provide support to young people with additional vulnerabilities including a political commitment to treat care experience as a protected characteristic and that appropriate policies and procedures are developed to ensure that young people who are care experienced and / or have SEND have the appropriate support and opportunities for jobs, work experience and mentoring.

8 Other Implications

8.1 How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?

8.2 The strategic importance of addressing youth skills and unemployment is reflected in the Grand Challenges facing the City and City Council's Corporate Plan priorities:

8.3 Grand Challenges relevant to the Scrutiny Inquiry:

- Unemployment, skills and the economy
- Health and well being
- Community cohesion and living standards
- Opportunities for children and young people

8.4 The Corporate Plan strategic outcomes and priorities relevant to the Scrutiny Inquiry:

- A Bold Prosperous Birmingham
 - Support inclusive economic growth
 - Tackle unemployment
 - Attract inward investment and infrastructure
 - Maximise the benefits of the Commonwealth Games
- A Bold Inclusive Birmingham
 - Tackle poverty and inequality
 - Empower citizens and enable the citizen voice
 - Promote and champion diversity, civic pride and culture
 - Support and enable all children and young people to thrive

9 Background Papers

9.1 Birmingham City Council Corporate Plan [Council Plan and Budget | Birmingham City Council](#)

9.2 Breaking Down Barriers (2021) ([Breaking down barriers: working towards Birmingham's future supporting younger people into employment | Birmingham City Council](#)

9.3 City-REDI/ WMREDI Universities and Regions Forum Policy Briefing December 2022 ([Mobilising the Power of Universities in Levelling-Up: A new Universities and Regions Policy Forum – City REDI Blog \(bham.ac.uk\)](#)

9.4 Local Skills Improvement Plans, Statutory Guidance for the Development of a Local Skills Improvement Plan October 2022 ([Local skills improvement plans - statutory guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

- 9.5 Scrutiny Inquiry, Closing the Skills Gap (2012) [Closing the Skills Gap Scrutiny Report December 2012 | Birmingham City Council](#)
- 9.6 Princes Trust Nat West Youth Index Survey 2022 [One in four young people say they will never recover from the emotional impact of the pandemic, as confidence falls to an all time low warns Prince's Trust | News and views | About The Trust | The Prince's Trust \(princes-trust.org.uk\)](#)
- 9.7 Reports to Economy and Skills OSC: 12 October 2022, 9 November 2022, 7 December 2022, 11 January 2022 [CMIS > Committee > Overview and Scrutiny > Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#)
- 9.8 University of Birmingham [Autism Centre for Education and Research](#)

10 Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix 1: Something to Aim For: Scrutiny Inquiry of Employment and Skills for Young People.
- 10.2 Appendix 2: Executive Commentary