

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND SKILLS O&S COMMITTEE

1000 hours on 7th October 2020, Online Meeting – Actions

Present:

Councillor Lou Robson (Chair)

Councillors Nicky Brennan, Maureen Cornish, Chaman Lal, Simon Morrall, Julien Pritchard.

Also, Present:

Julie Nugent, Director of Skills & Productivity, West Midlands Combined Authority

Cllr Brigid Jones, Deputy Leader

Cllr Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills & Culture

Lloyd Broad, Head of European Affairs

Ozge Iskit, Brexit Programme Manager

Ilgun Yusuf, Interim Assistant Director, Skills & Employability

Kam Hundal, Employment Manager

Tara Verrell, YEI Project Manager

Amarjit Sahota, Culture Change Manager

Ceri Saunders, Acting Group O&S Manager

Baseema Begum, Scrutiny Officer

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chair advised those present that the meeting would be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site and that Members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

2. APOLOGIES

Councillors Zaheer Khan and Lucy Seymour-Smith.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

4. ACTION NOTES

The action notes of the meeting held on the 23rd September were agreed.

5. UPDATE ON BREXIT

(See item No.5)

The Chair welcomed attendees and noted the presentation circulated to Members.

The Deputy Leader Cllr Jones then added the following points: -

- Although the UK left the EU earlier this year transition arrangements in place are due to run out at the end of the year. There is still hope that a deal will be negotiated.
- The Council has been preparing as best it can in uncertain times and has appointed Ozge Iskit as Brexit Programme Manager who has been working with service areas to help them to prepare for the impact of Brexit. The council has also been working with local businesses, but it has been difficult to prepare specifics and target our efforts as guidance from government has been minimal since March due to Covid-19.
- The biggest concern is the loss of EU funding as funds are received for job creation and skills (£100m in last 5 years) and currently there is no detail on how this will be replaced and the impact on local people. There has been talk of a UK Prosperity fund but there is no detail on how this will be targeted and run.
- There is the additional worry of the wider impact that Covid is having on the economy and the added pressure that businesses are facing to be able to prepare adequately (for example purchasing extra stock) as many will not have the financial liquidity to do so.
- The council has seen extra pressure placed on its resources namely staff that were preparing local services in relation to Brexit are now deployed to deliver key services in relation to Covid as the council has been operating under its Emergency Plan.
- Roadshows were planned to ensure that as many EU citizens as possible were reached so that they could apply for the right to remain however due to Covid these were cancelled, and this has had a knock-on effect on the number of people directly contacted.

In reply to questions and comments from Members the following responses were made: -

- Research has shown that Birmingham is the second city most likely to be impacted by Brexit and the same factors make the area economically quite likely to be affected by Covid. There is an added pressure with a lack of certainty on funding to help people who have lost jobs as most of that came from the EU and so some key sectors of society will be hit by twice.
- The West Midlands has been identified at higher risk to Brexit than other areas primarily because of the manufacturing and industrial industries that operate within the region and because of the 'just in time' nature of the supply chain and the source of their supplies will result in additional costs and impact.
- The Brexit readiness programme will be integrated into the economic recovery programme of the council. Focus on Birmingham businesses and supply chains is a primary priority and this will be embedded in the governance of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).
- Funding from government has been received to prepare for Brexit so there has been no cost to the council. However, the council continues to lobby for ongoing resources as unsure what will happen after 31st December.
- So far 76,000 applications have been made from the 94,000 EU citizens in the city. The remainder of 18,000 who are yet to apply are being specifically targeted and this is being supported with a grant from the Home Office of £149,000 with additional support from the WMCA of £80,000. There are approximately 1000 applications that have either been refused, rejected or duplicated.
- Letters have been sent to EU citizens on the settlement scheme and a dedicated page on the council's website has been set up that includes signposting to government sites. A social media campaign was started to reach out to more people using council staff experiences however this was stopped as the focus of council campaigns has moved to deal with the pandemic. Additional funding received from the WMCA will allow for printed materials to be distributed through churches, community centres, doctors' surgeries etc.
- There has been a lot of work done by other bodies on the impact on other sectors such as arts and culture.

RESOLVED: -

1. The report was noted.
2. A written response to be provided on the following: -
 - (i) What is being done to support EU citizens who have made an application that has been rejected or not completed to make a successful application to stay.
 - (ii) In reference to the EU citizens that have not been reached as the deadline draws nearer what will be done to support late applications to ensure as many people are reached as possible?
 - (iii) The short-term implications on the repatriation of UK citizens – how much risk is there of this happening?

- (iv) Further information on the figures mentioned on p.21 of the report highlighting the amount of £14.6bn received by the UK (2014-20) and any available data on how much money the UK had paid in the same time.
 - (v) Details on the Government's replacement fund – do we know when this will be received and how much is expected for Birmingham?
3. Cllr Robson noted that communication and the effect on citizens was a key issue and requested a short note to be distributed to all councillors on how they can best deal with queries in relation to Brexit such as those raised in the meeting.
 4. A further update to be scheduled in the new year.

6. SKILLS, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING IN THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY FROM COVID-19

(See item No.6)

Julie Nugent, Director of Skills & Productivity, WMCA and Ilgun Yusuf, Interim Assistant Director, Skills & Employability outlined the key points from their respective presentations circulated as part of the agenda pack. The following key points were added: -

- A Covid recovery delivery plan will feed into wider Council objectives.
- The use of IT will be key. A piece of work on digital inclusion is currently in progress with support from the Council. Two of the key issues are ensuring people have access to hardware (PC/laptop) and connection to the internet.
- The need to focus on demand as well as supply to ensure that people are brought together to make the most of the opportunities and get good jobs, not just jobs. This relates to all the opportunities in the city for example around the Commonwealth Games, HS2 and NHS.

In response to queries and discussion with Members the following comments were made: -

- The location of youth hubs has been in response to where young people already congregate. There is the opportunity to discuss how gaps are addressed through for example pop ups.
- Where opportunities are coming into the region like HS2 or Commonwealth Games there is a need to make sure wherever possible that those jobs go to local people by equipping them with the right training and access to opportunities.
- Since the budget was devolved to the WMCA there has been a particular focus on training providers in the region from an initial 400+ operating in the West Midlands to 200 now. This has been reduced in Birmingham too.
- Training providers are not targeting disenfranchised young people directly, but work is taking place with community networks to address certain groups with the Council.

- The Violence Reduction Unit undertook some work last year looking at those at risk of criminality however there is very little provision outside of the urban city centre. There is a need to address this and put provision in deprived neighbourhoods outside of the main core.
- The careers service along with the Youth Service offers a more interventionist approach early on and more work is needed on this going forward and linked to young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- Currently the careers service model is a one size fits all. It would be helpful for it to be devolved to regions rather than managed nationally.
- The issues of employability with different information on options such as entrepreneurship and setting up a business would be helpful to offer on the school curriculum.
- The Adult Education budget is currently allocated on an annual basis. It would be better if this was done on a 3-5-year basis so that spend could be focussed and targeted on sectors that it is required an in the right localities.
- 25% of apprenticeship levy can be gifted to SME's where it can add value, and this is being looked at.

Amarjit Sahota, Culture Change Manager highlighted the key points from his presentation on the Council's use of the Apprenticeship Levy.

Due to a constraint on time the Chair requested that members submit questions in writing.

CLlr Robson added that it would be useful to invite someone who had been on the apprenticeship programme to talk about their experience at a future update.

RESOLVED: -

1. The reports were noted.
2. A further update to be scheduled in the new year.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

(See item No. 7)

The Chair outlined items for discussion in the November and December meetings.

CLlr Robson also highlighted that the Economic Recovery Strategy was currently being consulted on and that Members may wish to discuss this at a separate meeting.

RESOLVED: -

1. Members noted future items for discussion.
2. The item for discussion in December on the leisure/night-time economy to be broadened to allow for wider discussion on sectoral impact

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

None.

9. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

10. 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 ended at 12:18 hours.