

# **Report to the Culture, Learning and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Cabinet Member's Update

**August 2014**

## **Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of this report is to give Members of the Culture, Learning and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee an overview of the new Skills, Learning and Culture portfolio. The report outlines our portfolio priorities for the upcoming year, and highlights potential challenges faced within this portfolio.

**Councillor Penny Holbrook**  
**Cabinet Member Skills, Learning and Culture**

## **Introduction**

The portfolio is focused on bringing together skills and learning opportunities across the city, with a focus on closing the skills gap and ensuring the citizens of Birmingham are best placed to access employment and education opportunities, ultimately reducing our historically high unemployment rates. There is also a focus on Culture, Heritage, Libraries and Museums, the intention being to enrich our cultural offer but also to better forge a link between culture and skills and employment.

In furthering this objective there is a close link between this portfolio, Development, Transport and the Economy and Children, Young People and Families.

### **Key Policy Priorities and objectives this year include:**

- Improving the youth offer to young people - integrated for all young people
- Creating a Skills and Training Investment Plan – Including District Jobs and Skills Plans
- Setting up the Birmingham Apprenticeship Agency
- Continuing the Birmingham Jobs Fund
- Expanding the Care Leavers Apprenticeship programme
- Bringing together a more cohesive approach across the sector of Skills and Training through a strategic youth commission.
- Championing and promoting the arts and culture sector
- Working with the councils Heritage Champion to seek long term solutions and protections for some of our most iconic buildings and social heritage

There are of course many challenges we face in the coming months and years, which do not place at risk our ability to deliver fundamental change, and put at risk some of our most treasured services.

### **Some of the key risks include:**

#### **Cultural Funding agreements post 2016**

#### **Safeguarding heritage priorities**

#### **Servicing the Library Budget**

## **The Youth Offer (See attached Venn Diagram)**

Birmingham has the youngest population of any City in Europe, with over 50% of its population under the age of 35, and over 37% under the age of 25. Whilst youth unemployment in Birmingham has been falling, Birmingham still has a youth unemployment rate twice the national rate, and is also the highest of all the core cities.

However it is important to note that Birmingham has been reducing youth unemployment quicker than another core city over the last 18 months.

We must tackle the high level of long term and youth unemployment in the City and open up employment opportunities to the people of Birmingham. There is huge potential for the future, and we want to ensure that both young people and adults, including graduates from Birmingham Universities, can access the wealth of employment opportunities that our City can offer. We are committed to closing the skills gap, opening up employment pathways, and building skills training for our citizens.

The world of skills and employment is extremely varied and complex and I see one of our fundamental roles as co-ordinating provision and decluttering the offer and access points to young people.

It is important that as a council we recognise that the vast majority of skills and learning is delivered by partners not ourselves, therefore our role is strategic and about influencing the provision and ensuring each citizen has easy access to the skills and opportunities they need., perhaps focusing our direct provision on those most in need.

The 2014/15 Birmingham City Council budget identified an additional £1m to create a more joined up offer to young people, which ensures that all services work better together, and can be easily accessed by all young people.

The Youth Offer review has mapped the current services available to young people in Birmingham and reviewed best practice examples both locally and nationally. The initial review has begun with a focus on education, employment and training, and will deliver recommendations for creating an effective and achievable Youth Offer for young people aged 14-25, and include options for use of the £1million.

## **Birmingham Skills Investment Plan**

The Birmingham Skills Investment Plan will focus on closing the skills gap, building employment pathways, and increasing the number of job opportunities available in Birmingham. We want to develop Birmingham as 'a City of a 1000 Skills', where people possess the skills that they need to access employment and training.

We are focusing on linking skills with the needs of the labour market, and publishing a Birmingham Skills Investment Plan will set out how schools, agencies, commissioners, and employers can work together to develop the skills necessary for future growth in the city.

## **Birmingham Internship and Apprenticeship Agency**

Internships and Apprenticeships are increasingly perceived as a route into employment and we want to build on the work of the Youth Unemployment Commission by launching a new Internship and Apprenticeship Agency which will bring businesses, colleges, and specialist training providers together under one umbrella, to accelerate and increase the number of apprenticeships available. Alongside this we will also expand the Care Leavers Apprenticeship scheme to provide more opportunities for young people leaving care to benefit from a wider range of work experience and training.

## **Birmingham Jobs Fund**

The Birmingham Jobs Fund was created in response to a recommendation from the Youth Unemployment Partnership, and demonstrates our determination to help young people find employment and training. We are committed to building on its first year of success and investing in the Birmingham Jobs fund. Despite removal of the government element of funding we remain committed to ensuring this is a key part of the offer to young people in Birmingham. Discussions are underway to agree proposals for the next phase of Birmingham Jobs Fund, building on experience to date and ensuring that we have a clear position for delivery in year two.

## **Birmingham Baccalaureate**

Discussion is underway about how we ensure that every young person has access to the BBacc and skills passport, following the pilot. The Intention remains that every young person in Birmingham has access to the careers advice and skills training passport that employers find so valuable to demonstrate work readiness.

## **District Skills Training and Jobs Plans**

Integral to the skills agenda is the role of devolution, district Jobs and Skills plans. It is my view that we can build on the good work done during the WNF era at district level. The role of districts in delivering

pre-skills and pre-work training is essential. Blockages to employment are different across the city and often interventions are best placed at a local level.

## **Creative Future**

Creative Future is Birmingham's Strategy for Children, Young People and Culture. The strategy aims to increase access to the arts, raise the quality of arts activities, and recognise the achievements of children and young people in the arts. It seeks to help young people build skills, knowledge and understanding, and engage with culture as creators, participants, audiences and leaders. The strategy links to a wider portfolio aim of encouraging the take up of arts and culture so that our young people can access employment and training opportunities in the creative industries.

## **Partnerships**

We continue to work and partnership on a number of key areas across the portfolio. The Museum Trust, Library of Birmingham Trustee's ( although service is entirely in-house), Birmingham Arts Partnership, Arts Council England , Heritage Champion – Councillor Phil Davis, Local Arts Forums and many more. These partnerships remain important to the council and service delivery for the citizens and the likelihood is that with future financial challenges partnerships are going to continue to grow in importance.

