

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

Cabinet Member for Skills, Learning and Culture Update Report

12th February 2015

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update the Culture, Learning and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress of policy priorities within the Skills, Learning and Culture portfolio.

Recommendation

That Members note this report.

Councillor Penny Holbrook
Cabinet Member for Skills, Learning and Culture

CABINET MEMBER SKILLS, LEARNING AND CULTURE: UPDATE REPORT TO THE CULTURE, LEARNING AND SKILLS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 12 FEBRUARY 2015

1. Introduction

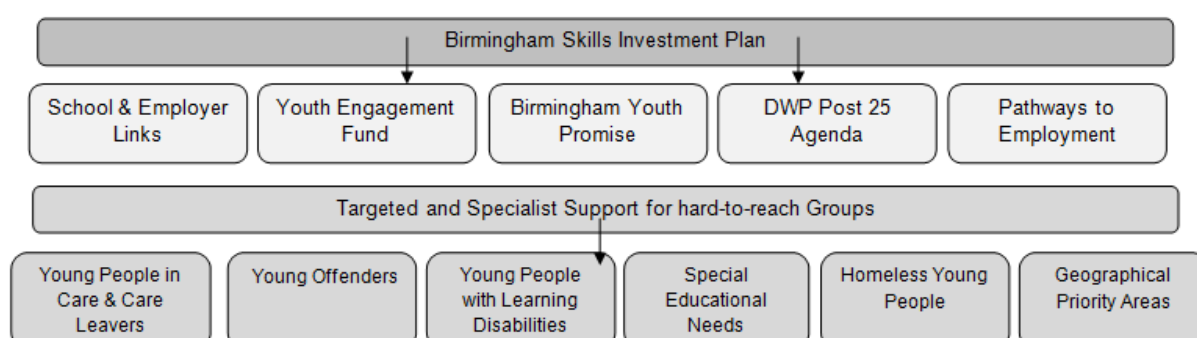
The current climate of increasing pressures and financial difficulties has presented the Council with a number of difficult decisions, and since my last report to you in August 2014, significant challenges have presented both within this portfolio, and across the Council as a whole. Despite this however, we remain committed to tackling the high level of long term and youth unemployment in the City, and opening up the wealth of employment opportunities to the people of Birmingham. To this end, we have launched a number of initiatives which guarantee a positive change for our city, and ensure that skills, learning and culture are firmly embedded as a priority.

2. Skills Strategy

Addressing youth unemployment and closing the skills gap remains a priority for the City Council. We recognise that this is the biggest issue that the City faces and we are not short of opportunities to offer citizens, whether these are employment vacancies, college places or apprenticeship opportunities. The challenge however is addressing the need for qualifications and skills, and ensuring that people have all the tools necessary to access these opportunities and develop a career. The City Council is one of many key partners in addressing skills and unemployment, and our role is one of leadership and influence; coordinating and coproducing the strategies and planning to ensure there is clear coherence around pathways to employment and training in the city.

Furthermore, the barriers faced by people in accessing employment and training are inherently local and varied across the City, and we recognise that these also need to be addressed on a local level. In response to this, detailed employment and skills plans are being developed by each of the ten Districts in Birmingham to support people locally to undertaking 'pre-skills training', and support individuals to overcome the barriers that they face at a local level prior to navigating the pathways and routes into employment.

The Skills Strategy is outlined below:



3. Birmingham Skills Investment Plan

The employment and skills needs of a local labour market are inherently local issues, and tackling these problems requires a locally co-ordinated approach. The Birmingham Skills Investment Plan will be clearly rooted in an employer led statement of current and future skills needs in the City of Birmingham, linked to jobs and economic growth but more positively to identify ways in which further or better investment in skills would make better use of the human resource in a city with the youngest population profile of any city-region.

This will include: better articulated employment and skills needs captured through the broader activities of the Growth Hub; co-investment in skills development by businesses, service providers and schools in order to upskill the existing workforce; an employer led approach to addressing youth unemployment; encouraging businesses to provide meaningful work experience and promote links with schools; and facilitating improved pathways into employment.

We recognise that gaining the skills to develop a route to meaningful and sustainable employment begins at school, and we therefore seek to work alongside schools and employers to develop these relationships and equip young people with the work based skills that businesses require.

The Skills Investment Plan is currently being developed, working with Birmingham FE Colleges which have clustered into a LEP wide consortium. Whilst there are a number of stakeholders who will need to be fully consulted and involved in the development of the Plan.

a. Birmingham Apprenticeship & Internship Agency

Linked to the Skills Investment Plan above, the Birmingham Apprenticeship and Internship Agency seeks to create more opportunities for young people, expose our young people to the world of work, and develop connections between schools and businesses. We want to make it much easier for young people to make the transition from education to employment or training. At the moment if a young person falls out of employment or training from 14 onwards, it can be very difficult for them to get back on track. We will focus on providing our young people with transferable skills and pathways which can be easily navigated.

b. District Skills Training and Jobs Plans

District Jobs and Skills Plans are currently being developed by each of the Districts across the City with many in their final stages. These Plans set out the background of each District, economical and statistical data, skills gaps, local priorities, and existing provision, and will also include an action plan individual to each District.

4. Birmingham Youth Promise

Birmingham's Youth Promise is our ambitious desire to put young people back at the heart of the future of our great city. Birmingham's Youth Promise guarantees that all of Birmingham's young people from 14 years up to the age of 24 years (25 for those covered by statutory responsibilities) will be guaranteed access to employment, education, training, apprenticeship or experience of work within four months of leaving a job, education or training.

The promise will be delivered through a combination of both new and existing initiatives, including a new Birmingham Careers Service with a primary aim of targeting youth unemployment for 16-19 year olds, providing careers advice and guidance, and tracking the destinations of all 16-19 year old NEET young people in the city. For vulnerable young people who face the biggest barriers, specialist support/mentoring will be made available to support them to access employment, education or training, and universal digital access point will be made available to every young person across the city where they can find out about opportunities matched to their skills and aspirations.

a. Digital Access Point

A universal Digital Access Point will be made available to every young person across the city where they can find out about opportunities matched to their skills and aspirations. Work is currently underway developing a specification for Phase One of the Digital Access Point, and it is envisaged that this first phase of the Digital Access Point will be live and available across the City in summer 2015.

b. Birmingham Careers Service

The new Birmingham Careers Service has a primary aim of targeting youth unemployment for 16-19 year olds, providing careers advice and guidance, and tracking the destinations of all 16-19 year old NEET young people in the city. To date, the Birmingham Careers Service has successfully reduced the backlog of Not Known young people in the City from 11,108 in August 2014 to 3,178 in January 2015 – with a further target of reducing to this 1,000 by the end of March 2015. Alongside tackling the original backlog of Not Known's, the Birmingham Careers Service is now also looking at the 'live' figure for Not Known young people, with an ambition to also drive this down to an initial figure of 9%.

c. Specialist Mentoring

For vulnerable young people who face the biggest barriers, specialist support and mentoring will be made available to support them to access employment, education or training. The Birmingham Careers Service is leading on this strand of work and has made links with procurement, with a view to securing suppliers who will begin delivery of this specialist mentoring from approximately May 2015.

d. Targeted Funding

As part of the Youth Promise, targeted funding will be made available for local areas to spend on those who need it the most. The criteria and application process for this funding is currently being prepared.

e. Transport

Conversations are currently underway to begin scoping a transport offer as part of the Youth Promise, with an ambition to develop an offer which will support young people to access opportunities across the City.

5. Pathways to Employment for Young People

The Council recognises that it should be offering more opportunities for young people, and is currently developing a model through which the Council as an employer can offer young people a menu of long term and meaningful in-house experiences and learning opportunities, which will prepare them for progression towards future sustainable employment, either within or outside the Council, in order to contribute to the Youth Promise. It is our ambition that this model will include 'Have a Go' sessions, job tasters, work experience, traineeships and apprenticeships, and aims to equip young people with the skills and resilience they need to compete for apprenticeships, sustain their employment and develop a career route. Furthermore, this will support the Council's wider ambition to tackle levels of youth unemployment in the city, and the need for the Council workforce to reflect Birmingham's demographic and meet the Council's future skills needs.

6. Working with the DWP

As a City Council we are positioned alongside the primary strategic employment and skills investment partners: the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Skills Funding Agency and the National Apprenticeship Service. We envisage working closely with the DWP in developing a post 25 skills agenda for the city; upskilling those who are already in employment and supporting others to access the world of work.

a. Project 20,000

Work has begun on developing a new strategic partnership between Birmingham City Council and Birmingham and Solihull DWP to make a difference to the unemployment rates in our area. It is envisaged that a new project, titled Project 20,000, will mobilise and in 12 months capture 20,000 job opportunities and provide access to jobs for up to 5,000 unemployed residents.

7. The Birmingham Jobs Fund

The Birmingham Jobs Fund (BJF) is a multi-agency initiative led by Birmingham City Council in response to the recommendations of the Birmingham Commission on Youth Unemployment, published in January 2013. The overall aim of the fund was to stimulate employment and apprenticeship job opportunities through the alignment and enhancement of available incentive packages for employers, and to directly match unemployed 16-24 year old Birmingham residents into those jobs.

At the end of the first full year of operation, Birmingham Jobs Fund had exceeded its original target of 1,000 job starts, and given this success, a further £2 million commitment was identified to support continued activity in 2014/15.

As at 14th October 2014, the total job starts achieved by the fund since its inception in April 2013, had reached 1,761, and it is envisaged that Birmingham Jobs Fund activity will continue to be supported into 2015/16.

The attached Appendix A lists the Birmingham Jobs Fund targets by ward for 2014/2015.

8. The World post-Kerslake

Sir Bob Kerslake recently conducted an independent review of the governance and organisational capabilities of Birmingham City Council. One of his recommendations included the creation of a new locally-led high powered partnership board focused on increasing employment and improving skills, starting from the most deprived parts of Birmingham. In response to this recommendation, plans are being developed to create this Skills Board.

9. Adult Education

Adult Education continues to perform well and has achieved 'good' by OFSTED. It is working to expand on its current offer by delivering bespoke services in the world of work, traineeships linked to the apprenticeship agency programme and is working to develop a specific work support programme for people with mental health support needs.

Culture

10. Creative Future III

A Creative Future, Birmingham's strategy for children, young people and culture, reflects a shared vision for what cultural provision for children and young people in our city can and should be. The framework was developed in close collaboration with a wide range of partners, agencies, young people, parents and carers from across the city and it embraces everything from pre-school experience of the arts and culture through to creative employment. The strategy considers the needs of young people of all backgrounds as well as recognising the enormous value and potential of their cultural contribution to the future of our city.

Creative Future III is the third iteration of the strategy, and builds on the strengths and achievements to date and extends the age range to include young people up to the age of 25 years. This reflects an increased emphasis on supporting young people into training and employment, linking to Birmingham's Youth Promise.

11. The Library of Birmingham

The Council's budget white paper for 2015/2016 has outlined the proposals to reduce the number of staff and services at the Library of Birmingham, the opening hours and the support given to community libraries. We will continue to ensure that the impact for all concerned is minimised, but given council's current and future budget issues we can no longer leave any service untouched.

12. Heritage Week

The city council has nominated 2015 as a 'Year of Culture on Your Doorstep' (title to be confirmed) and one of the key objectives for this year will be to encourage increased citizen engagement and participation in a range of cultural activity and co-design at a local level. As part of this 'Year of Culture', it is envisaged that Birmingham Heritage Week will take place in Birmingham in September 2015, and will be one of the major opportunities for our residents to engage in cultural activity.

13. Birmingham Museums Trust

The Birmingham Museums Trust continues to develop its business plans for future and has this increased visitor numbers despite budget cuts. In recognition of the difficulties the cuts both from BCC and the Arts Council have caused, BCC applied one off relief of £600,000 this financial year to help with redundancy cost.

14. Birmingham Arts Partnership

The Birmingham Arts partnership is working to develop a local offer around Community arts, and have secured some external funding to develop a proposal. We will continue to work with them on this and in the context of the Birmingham Cultural Pound.

15. Cultural Pound

As we have seen this year with the Library of Birmingham, no service can remain protected against cuts given the scale of the challenge. In future years we will be looking at future reductions to the arts funding and major events. With this in mind we have developed the concept of the cultural pound. This indicates that to continue Birmingham's cultural offer at its current rate will cost £8.8M, with council contribution falling in coming years. We will have to look to other sectors in Birmingham to help meet this need.

16. Conclusion

When we look into the future, we are faced with increasingly grim news, as budgets will continue to reduce whilst the needs of people in Birmingham will continue to grow. Therefore we must be honest about what councils can and cannot do in the future. But we will continue to work with partners across the sector to redesign how we effect change in Birmingham.

Our vision remains one where every citizen has the best outcomes both economically and culturally that Birmingham can provide.

Appendix A – BJF targets by ward for 2014/2015

Ward*	Number of JSA claimants aged 18-24	Youth Claimant Proportion**	Proposed target for BJF	Number of claimants in ward as a proportion of total
Washwood Heath	596	15.20%	92	6.1%
Aston	500	10.10%	77	5.1%
Sparkbrook	488	12.00%	75	5.0%
Bordesley Green	481	12.60%	74	4.9%
Lozells and East Handsworth	466	12.00%	72	4.8%
Nechells	448	5.70%	69	4.6%
Soho	339	9.10%	52	3.5%
Stockland Green	316	11.90%	49	3.2%
Springfield	313	8.60%	48	3.2%
Shard End	310	11.80%	48	3.2%
Hodge Hill	300	10.70%	46	3.1%
Kingstanding	283	10.80%	44	2.9%
Weoley	264	10.10%	41	2.7%
South Yardley	261	8.60%	40	2.7%
Tyburn	261	10.50%	40	2.7%
Handsworth Wood	253	7.70%	39	2.6%
Bartley Green	241	9.60%	37	2.5%
Brandwood	230	10.10%	35	2.4%
Acocks Green	219	7.70%	34	2.2%
Stechford and Yardley North	210	8.10%	32	2.2%
Billesley	209	8.40%	32	2.1%
Kings Norton	207	9.40%	32	2.1%
Longbridge	205	9.20%	32	2.1%
Northfield	202	8.20%	31	2.1%
Quinton	193	9.10%	30	2.0%
Ladywood	190	2.50%	29	2.0%
Erdington	186	9.20%	29	1.9%
Moseley and Kings Heath	180	8.00%	28	1.8%
Perry Barr	178	5.80%	27	1.8%
Bournville	163	7.70%	25	1.7%
Oscott	159	7.10%	24	1.6%
Hall Green	149	6.40%	23	1.5%
Selly Oak	138	1.10%	21	1.4%
Edgbaston	135	1.80%	21	1.4%
Sheldon	125	6.40%	19	1.3%
Harborne	124	4.70%	19	1.3%
Sutton Trinity	78	4.10%	12	0.8%
Sutton Vesey	62	3.60%	10	0.6%
Sutton Four Oaks	40	2.60%	6	0.4%
Sutton New Hall	36	2.30%	6	0.4%
Birmingham	9,735	7.30%	1500	100.0%