

Briefing Note

Subject: **New Local Jobs and Skills Plans – North Birmingham, South, East and West & Central**

To: **Councillor Brett O'Reilly, Cabinet Member for Jobs and Skills**

From: **Steve Farr, Employment and Skills Manager**

cc: **Shilpi Akbar, Assistant Director for Employment**

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Four Local Employment and Skills Boards – North Birmingham, South, East and West & Central

1. Background

- 1.1 In 2015, 10 District Jobs and Skills Plans (DJSP) were developed for each of the Birmingham constituencies. These were led by the city council and developed in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions to provide a basis for local co-ordination and improved impact in the delivery of employment and skills projects and programmes within Birmingham. Local multi-agency partnerships were convened aligned to District geographies.
- 1.2 District meetings were initially convened by BCC with the intention that local, third party providers/agencies would take forward operational responsibility for bringing together partners, convening meetings and championing local priorities, rather than these being (pre-) determined by council officers. There were many positive outcomes from the DJSPs, and in particular Erdington and Yardley went on to sustained activity having established wholly independent groups which BCC is supporting and contributing to.
- 1.3 Under the leadership of the Cabinet Member for Jobs and Skills and release of the Birmingham Skills Investment Plan a renewed Birmingham Employment and Skills Board (BESB) – linking to the GBSLEP structures – can provide a city-wide governance framework for a localised approach to inclusive neighbourhood jobs and skills strategies.
- 1.4 Whilst a local Jobs and Skills body should not and will not solely be about young people, there is merit now in aligning the co-ordination of multi-agency responses on jobs and skills to the Youth Promise Plus (YPP) project and its four Birmingham geographical boundaries. This makes sense in strategic terms and in relation to travel-to-work and travel-to-service realities for local people. This note sets out the mobilisation schematic to migrate across to these new boundaries and bring new momentum to the involvement of a wide range of public, private and third sector delivery organisations in jobs and skills service delivery to benefit all of Birmingham's residents.

2. Four Areas

- 2.1 The city centre is vital to all areas of the local economy and each neighbourhood has a relationship with it. There are other Local Centres, major employment and key development sites, e.g. the NEC and Airport (East Birmingham), the Midlands Metropolitan Hospital (West), which also need to be taken into account when encouraging and planning for access to employment for local people. Integral therefore to the development of these plans and delivery partnerships will be to capture the ambition of the Economic Policy Statement and associated activities that will unlock opportunities for local employment.
- 2.2 The YPP project is in full flow with providers and local partnerships, including directly with all of the Birmingham and Solihull Job Centres for Day 1 NEET young people claimant referrals, and therefore using the momentum of this large scale youth employment initiative to re-energise a broader Jobs and Skills piece in the quadrants of the city makes sense from an 'economies of scale' perspective. YPP has another full 12 months to run. In addition a succession strategy to the project is being developed as it has represented a truly joined up multi-agency approach which is breaking down some of the historic service delivery barriers.
- 2.3 The intention is to establish 4 local employment and skills boards/partnerships for North, South, East and West & Central Birmingham.
 - NORTH – will cover the Perry Barr, Erdington and Sutton Coldfield Districts
 - SOUTH – will cover Selly Oak and Northfield Districts
 - EAST – will cover Hodge Hill, Yardley and Hall Green Districts
 - WEST & CENTRAL – will cover Edgbaston and Ladywood Districts

This arrangement mirrors the YPP 'Locality' commissioned providers, and conveniently aligns the relevant Jobcentre Plus (JCP) offices.

- 2.4 As with the existing 10 DJSPs, it will be possible in these new Local Jobs and Skills Boards to prioritise geographical areas of special need for more focussed attention and prioritisation of effort, e.g. on key Wards or sub-neighbourhoods within their areas of focus.

3. Scope and Purpose

- 3.1 It is proposed that plans, networks, meetings and any 'events' relating to the four areas will supercede the current approach of having 10 District Jobs and Skills Plans (DJSP). The purpose though will be the same, i.e. to bring local meaning to jobs and skills activity and build networks for the purpose of improved local services, impact and inter-agency joint working.
- 3.2 The Local Jobs and Skills Plans will be for all job seekers, communities, age ranges, gender, people with disabilities, communities of interest and employers linked to the neighbourhoods within that area. They will also make links to the city centre and neighbouring major employment sites.

- 3.3 A Local Jobs and Skills Board Terms of Reference can be crafted from the model DJSP terms of reference which already exists and following the consultation events.
- 3.4 An initial meeting or jobs 'summit' will be organised before the end of July 2017 in each of the four proposed areas to consult on ideas and long term priorities. The BCC Cabinet Member for Jobs and Skills will play a leading role in setting out the approach and making clear the council's intention to closely support (but not wholly run) this activity.

4. Links to YPP – and co-facilitation

- 4.1 To re-launch (evolve) the DJSP model we will build on the momentum of the major Birmingham and Solihull youth employment (ESF/YEI) initiative – YPP. This should enable the proper establishment of Local Area Jobs and Skills Plans, with buy-in from participating organisations and independence from the council.
- 4.2 Four commissioned YPP 'Locality' providers are in place and fully operational with staffing levels as indicated in the contract specification, and they will be invited to co-create the Local Area Jobs and Skills Plans (facilitating meetings etc.) due to the clear mutual interest. Thus the BCC Employment Team will play an equally key and leading role, through the stewardship of the Assistant Director for Employment.
 - **Prospects** has the contract for two areas, North and South Birmingham
 - **The Pioneer Group** has the contract for East Birmingham
 - **PeoplePlus** has the contract for the proposed 'West & Central' area

It is recognised there is some existing DJSP infrastructure which will need to be taken into account and ideally incorporated (through negotiation – particularly the Erdington and Yardley groups, since they still regularly meet) into this revised approach.

- 4.3 The clear goal to be achieved within 12 months is a self-sustaining, action-orientated and purposeful group, which involves BCC and JCP but is entirely independent from them, and which serves the geographic area (a quadrant of the city) and accounts to the BESB and other local fora to account for their activity.

5. Mobilisation

- 5.1 The transition from some currently active DJSP plans/networks and some dormant ones across to the four proposed Local Area-based Jobs and Skills Boards will take-up some BCC officer time – and this is acknowledged by senior officers and the Cabinet Member. However, maintaining a local jobs and skills link-up in neighbourhoods is seen to be a key BCC priority at this time. The YPP Locality providers have been engaged and have all already indicated a willingness to support the council in this ambition. Although timescales are tight, the intention is to hold initial meetings relating to this matter before the end of July 2017 so that we can 'hit-the-ground-running' from September onwards.

5.2 The outline timetable is therefore:

- Consolidating existing DJSP groups/membership lists – *June 2017* ✓
- Engagement of YPP providers – *June 2017* ✓
- Identification and alignment of new partners/participants – *July 2017*
- Outline Action Plans – *July 2017*
- Calling of first meeting/event – *July 2017*
- Labour Group Briefing – *10 July 2017*
- Inaugural meetings/events (four) – *24 & 25 July and 1 August (x2) 2017*
- Adoption of TOR – *September/October 2017*
- Detailing of Local Area Jobs Plans – *September to December 2017*
- Possible Full Council Meeting discussion – *September or October 2017*
- Two further Local Jobs and Skills Plans/Board meetings/events – *January to June 2018*
- Transition arrangements beyond YPP – *May/June 2018*

6. Major Benefits of the approach

- 6.1 Seeing the city as a series of inter-linked but different neighbourhoods enables the needs of differing job-seeking communities to be met. It also reminds the many agencies and service delivery partners that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach doesn't best serve Birmingham (and never has). Tailored services should be exactly that, and also operate within an accountability setting that puts the service user (the customer) first.
- 6.2 In the context of increasingly regional approaches (GBSLEP and WMCA) the case on the ground to evidence need and provide localised solutions has never been stronger.
- 6.3 Local Employment and Skills Boards may be well-placed to contribute evidence to advise and inform deployment decisions, such as those relating to the Adult Education Budget, Employment Support Pilot and other locality significant and focused employment and skills initiatives.