

REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 JANUARY 2018

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR 18-25 YEAR OLDS (INCLUDING APPRENTICESHIPS)

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment
and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive

Ian Sutherland, Director of Children and Adult Services

Author: Michael Turner, Democratic Services Officer

Summary

This report asks the Committee to consider the final report of the in-depth Task Group review on Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (including apprenticeships).

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 Under Chapter 4 of the Constitution (Part 5 – Overview and Scrutiny Rules - paragraph 21.1 (xviii), each overview and scrutiny committee has the responsibility to appoint time limited Task Groups to undertake in-depth reviews within the overall programme of reviews agreed each year by the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to make recommendations to the Council and Leader and Cabinet as appropriate. The topic of this review is within the remit of this Committee and the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Membership of the Task Group has been comprised of Members drawn from each of these committees.
- 1.2 The recommendations arising from the review are consistent with the Council's Policy Framework.

2. Background

- 2.1 In June 2011 the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to exercise a more pro-active role than previously in prioritising the programme of in-depth scrutiny review work. This followed a Council decision that a maximum of three reviews or themed meetings can be undertaken annually across all four Overview and Scrutiny Committees, in light of shrinking capacity across the organisation. This represented a shift from the previous position of multiple Task Groups, with no fixed timelines, running at any one time.

2.2 In line with best practice, the Committee also decided to adopt a more systematic approach to the selection of topics, with nominations submitted by each Committee, taking into account suggestions and advice from Directors and Deputy / Assistant Directors.

2.3 In December 2015 the Business Support O&S Committee agreed the following programme of Task Group topics:

- Review two (to follow the Task Group on Housing) - **How far has Medway gone in developing a dementia friendly community?**

This review reported to Cabinet in May 2017.

- Review three - **Employment Opportunities for 18-21 year olds (including apprenticeships)**

It was subsequently decided that the age cohort should be extended from 18-21 to 18-25 to better ensure the needs of vulnerable young people (who are supported up to the age of 25) are appropriately reflected in the work of the Task Group.

2.4 The Membership of the Task Group comprised Councillors Royle (Chairman), Gilry, Josie Iles, Johnson and Williams.

3. Scope of the Review

3.1 On 19 June 2017 the Task Group met to set the scope and determine the key lines of enquiry for this review. The Task Group had been set up to consider progress made by the Council in working with local and regional stakeholders to deliver a joined up approach to supporting young people aged 18 to 25 into employment and apprenticeship opportunities. In addition it evaluated the Council's progress in developing a "One Council" approach to promoting and delivering the skills and employability agenda in Medway.

3.2 The Task Group agreed four key lines of enquiry:

1. To consider the **NEET rate for 18-25 year olds** in Medway and the contributory factors.
2. To evaluate the **Council's role as community leader** in terms of a Medway Skills agenda working with partners locally and regionally to encourage the growth of the local job market and deliver outcomes around skills, training and employment for 18-25 year olds.
3. To evaluate the Council's **performance as an employer - 'leading by example'**.
4. To consider action required to address the particular **needs of vulnerable young people** including looked after children and those with disabilities in the 18-25 age range.

4. Methodology

- 4.1 The Task Group was briefed on the context for the review in terms of the legislative background, current national policy and the landscape at a regional and local level. In addition Members were provided with a range of background reading.
- 4.2 The Task Group was fortunate to be able to draw on the high quality evidence already recently gathered through extensive stakeholder engagement in the preparation of the Council's 16-19 Strategy, much of which was relevant to this review. The report of the recent Task Group on Support for Care Leavers was also valuable.
- 4.3 The Task Group met with a number of senior officers, young people from the Young People's Disability Group and also with apprentices currently working for the Council and former apprentices. The Task Group also spoke with representatives from the Department of Work and Pensions, Mid Kent College, Skillnet, Bradfields Academy and the Medway Parent and Carer's Forum. In addition, evidence relating to quality of careers advice in Medway's secondary schools was invited from the Regional Schools Commissioner.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations of the Task Group

- 5.1 The Task Group has reviewed the wide range of national policy initiatives and the significant level of activity underway across the Council and with regional and local partners to secure closer links between education providers and business, to support young people in the transition from education to employment and to develop effective interventions to bring down the number young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETS). The key finding of this review is that it is imperative to now bring all these plans and initiatives together and develop a more cohesive and collaborative approach to ensure the intended outcomes are achieved. The Task Group concluded that the soon to be established Medway Skills Board is best placed to do this and the Cabinet is asked to refer a number of recommendations arising from this review to the Board for attention as a priority.
- 5.2 The recommendations of the Task Group are set out in full in the Appendix.

6. Comments from the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 6.1 The Children and Young People O&S Committee considered the report at its meeting held on 11 January 2018.
- 6.2 The comments of the Committee will be set out in an addendum report and circulated separately.

7. Risk Management

- 7.1 There are no risks arising from the report. However, adoption by Cabinet of the recommendations would lead to various options being explored and, at that point, any risks would need to be assessed.

8. Implications for Looked After Children

- 8.1 One of the review's key lines of enquiry was to consider action required to address the particular needs of vulnerable young people including looked after children. Several of the Task Group's recommendations seek to improve the employment and training opportunities for this group.
- 8.2 The Council's Looked After Children Strategy 2015-2018 and the SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2016 - 2020 also helped inform the findings of the Task Group.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1 Any service improvements as a result of the recommendations of this report will need to be delivered from within existing budgets. The work of the Task Group was supported by Democratic Services and officers from the Children and Adult Services and Regeneration, Culture and Environment Directorates.
- 9.2 There is a small budget held by Democratic Services to meet the cost of any visits, stakeholder events or expenses incurred by expert witnesses associated with the review. There were no costs incurred during this review.
- 9.3 Task Groups are advised to formulate recommendations in the context of the prevailing financial climate. The work of this Task Group was framed to complement rather than duplicate work already underway.

10. Legal implications

- 10.1 Medway Council has a legal obligation under section 149 Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality, and foster good relations between those with a protected characteristic (pregnancy and maternity, age discrimination, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it. To assist the Council in fulfilling these legal obligations a Diversity Impact Assessment is attached to the report of the Task Group.
- 10.2 There are no other legal implications arising from the recommendations. However, officers may need to consider the legal implications of some recommendations as the proposals are developed.

11. Equality

- 11.1 A Diversity Impact Assessment is attached to the report of the Task Group.

12. Recommendation

- 12.1 The Committee is asked to consider the report and recommendations made by the Employment Opportunities Task Group set out at Appendix A and agree to recommend it to Cabinet on 6 February.

Lead officer contact

Michael Turner, Democratic Services Officer
Telephone: 01634 332817 E-mail: michael.turner@medway.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix A – Report from the Employment Opportunities Task Group

Background Papers:

The background papers relied on in producing the report from the Task Group are set out within the main report.