

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4 OCTOBER 2018

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

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Summary

On 6 February 2018, following an extensive review, the Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (including Apprenticeships) Task Group report was agreed by Cabinet. As a cross cutting review, the report had previously been presented to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The recommendations made by the Task Group aimed to bring together the wide range of national policy initiatives and activities undertaken across the Council and with regional and local partners to develop a more cohesive and collaborative approach to ensure the intended outcomes were achieved. This included securing closer links between education providers and business, supporting young people in the transition from education to employment and to developing effective interventions to bring down the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETS).

This report and attached progress schedule (Appendix 1) summarises progress against each recommendation.

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 review topic, 'Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year olds (including

apprenticeships)' is within the remit of each of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Membership of the Task Group was 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 December 2016, the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed a timetable and process for the selection of topics for the next round of in-depth scrutiny reviews. The topic of employment opportunities for 18-25 year olds was chosen for a review due to Medway's performance being poor when compared to other local authorities in relation to young people in employment (or education). Skills was recognised as a key agenda for the whole Council and was a cross-cutting theme supporting the Council's ambitions on regeneration and attracting good employers as well as supporting graduates and young people.
- 2.2 It was agreed that the Employment Opportunities Task Group should commence its work following the completion of a Dementia Task Group, with the former being reported to Cabinet in May 2017.
- 2.3 The findings of the Task Group were first reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for Children and Young People and Regeneration, Culture and Environment.
- 2.4 The report was presented to Cabinet in February 2018, with Cabinet having accepted all the recommendations.
- 2.5 The attached progress schedule (Appendix 1) provides an update on the progress made against the recommendations of the review thus far. The update will also be presented to Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 August 2018.

3. Key Findings and Analysis

- 3.1 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:
 - i) To consider the **NEET rate for 18-25 year olds** in Medway and the contributory factors.
 - ii) 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.
 - iii) To evaluate the Council's performance as an employer - 'leading by example'

- iv) 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 The Task Group 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 of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETS). The key finding of this review was that it was imperative to bring all the 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 was best placed to do this and the Cabinet referred a number of recommendations arising from this review to the Board for attention as a priority.
- 3.5 The full report of the task group can be viewed at the following link:
https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/file/2118/employment_opportunities_for_18_to_25_year-olds

4. Progress update

- 4.1 Since the initial report was published, Medway Council has further invested into Skills and Employability, by appointing a new Skills and Employment Manager in July 2018. A new Skills and Employability plan for Medway is being drafted, incorporating information and recommendations from the 16-19 strategy and the Employment Opportunities for 18-25 year olds task group. This plan will be overseen by the Officers and Members Skills Board. The Members Medway Skills Partnership Board has been established as a Cabinet Advisory Group, providing improved coordination and overseeing progress of skills and employability, ensuring the Council's objectives can be achieved.
- 4.2 All recommendations will be reflected in the Skills and Employment plan, which is to be published in November. Recommendations which have therefore been delayed moving forwards, will be progressed as a matter of urgency within the confines of the plan. The skills plan focuses on 4 priorities, the recommendations will all sit within a relevant skills plan priority. The priorities are:
- Matching Business Demand to Skills Supply
 - Developing Medway's Talent Pool
 - Establishing Routes to Employment
 - Transforming NEETs to EETs

5. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Lack of cross departmental cohesion	Co-ordination between a wide variety of departments is required. Lack of cohesion or activity from departments will reduce effectiveness of action.	One council approach to be taken. Cross departmental representation on skills board.	Medium
Lack of resources	If not properly resourced, activities may be ineffective, leading to reputational damage and missed opportunity	Key areas requiring resource to be taken to the skills board for consideration	Medium
National Policy	There have been substantial changes in government policy, creating both challenges and opportunities for education and business. There is a risk that policy may negatively impact skills and employment in Medway.	Keep up to date with government changes, maintain good relationships with key partners such as the Local Enterprise Partnership.	Medium
Stakeholder engagement	Without the support of stakeholders, this work will not be successful. This will lead to reputational damage and missed opportunity.	Regularly consult with, and have open lines of communication with stakeholders. Set up stakeholder representation within the skills board.	Low

6. Implications for Looked After Children

6.1 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 sought to improve the employment and training opportunities for this group.

6.2 The Council's Looked After Children Strategy 2015-18 and the SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2016 - 2020 also helped inform the findings of the Task Group.

7. Financial implications

7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this update report.

8. Legal implications

8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this update report.

8.2 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 was undertaken and attached to the report of the Task Group.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the progress made against the Task Group recommendations.

Lead officer contact

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Employment Opportunities for 18-25 year olds (including apprenticeships) Task group - Progress Schedule

Background papers:

None