

## **CABINET**

**5 MARCH 2019**

### **SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY PLAN FOR MEDWAY**

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| Portfolio Holder: | Councillor Rodney Chambers OBE, Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships               |
| Report from:      | Richard Hicks, Director Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive |
| Author:           | Daniel Ratcliff, Skills and Employment Programme Manager   |

#### **Summary**

This report outlines the progress made in developing the Skills and Employability Plan for Medway, and seeks Cabinet approval of the Plan.

With a growing economy, Medway needs a skilled workforce to match both current and future demands. Skills is an area of focus for central government, as laid out in both the Industrial and Careers Strategies. It is also an area of focus for the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, who have launched a new Skills Strategy in 2018.

Local need has been recognised and acted upon by Medway Council through employing a Skills and Employment Programme Manager and the subsequent development of the Skills and Employability Plan for Medway.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1 The Skills and Employability Plan for Medway is consistent with the provisions of the Council Plan and is also referred to in Medway 2035. In 2035, skills and employment is included under 'Matching Business Demand to Skills Supply'. Skills is also referred to in both the Council Plan foreword and is a strand of the 'Maximising Regeneration and Economic Growth' priority. The relevant Council Plan outcome is 'residents with jobs and skills' with the objective to 'equip people with the skills needed to secure opportunities in Medway's future economy'. This therefore this is a matter for approval by Cabinet.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 Providing people with the skills they need to be able to make a positive contribution to all levels of Medway's economic future is critical to delivering economic growth. Medway will need a pool of skilled and employable staff to

ensure the long-term growth of high economic value contributors, such as the businesses likely to locate at the Innovation Park Medway. As Medway Council encourages existing businesses to grow and new businesses to move to Medway, it is vital that there is a suitable workforce ready to meet business need.

- 2.2 An Officers Skills and Employability Board first met in August 2017 to begin defining emerging skills priorities, which were then discussed at the first Members Skills and Employability Board in November 2017. Since then the Members Board has become the Medway Skills Partnership Board and has been established as a Cabinet Advisory Group. The group has overseen the development of the Skills and Employability Plan for Medway and will oversee the action plan delivery.
- 2.3 In 2018, funding was agreed to recruit a dedicated skills resource. In July 2018 a new Skills and Employment Programme Manager was appointed, who has led on the drafting of the Skills and Employability Plan for Medway, reporting to the aforementioned boards.

### **3. Advice and analysis**

- 3.1 The Skills and Employability Plan is essential and central to driving skills forward in Medway. In a complex and ever-changing arena, it unites stakeholders in their vision for skills growth and acts as a call to action for educators, trainers and employers alike.
- 3.2 The Plan sets out the Council's vision for skills and employment, outlines the current local skills picture and sets out Medway's priority sectors. It details national policies and the skills opportunities that are provided to Medway through them. It ensures that the business voice is heard and that support is in place for our priority groups.
- 3.3 The plan sets out four priorities. Each priority promotes growth for all and will ensure that no adult or child is left behind as we head towards the outstanding Medway of the future. The four priorities are:
  - Matching Business Demand with Skills Supply
  - Developing Medway's Talent Pool
  - Establishing Routes to Employment
  - Transforming NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training to EETs (Education, Employment or Training)

Behind each priority is a suite of objectives with short, medium and long-term actions, all designed to make the priority a reality. There are a total of 18 objectives in the action plan.

- 3.4 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has been completed and is attached to this report as Appendix B. The Plan is for all residents and will help to advance equality in Medway.
- 3.5 A further round of data verification will be required prior to publication and there may be some minor content amendments to be made as a result. As such, it is recommended that the Cabinet agree to delegate authority to the Director Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Inward

Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships to approve minor changes to the Skills and Employability Plan prior to publication for the purpose of correcting minor data variances, presentation, and to improve clarity. Should any significant changes be made, a further report will be bought back to Cabinet.

#### 4. Risk Management

| <b>Risk</b>                         | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Action to avoid or mitigate risk</b>  | <b>Risk rating</b> |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|--------------------|
| Lack of cross departmental cohesion | With no Skills and Employability Plan, co-ordination between a wide variety of departments will be difficult. Lack of cohesion or activity from departments will reduce effectiveness of action.                                       | One council approach to skills has been taken. Cross departmental representation on skills board will contribute to Plan delivery.         | D2                 |
| Lack of resources                   | If not properly resourced, activities may be ineffective, leading to reputational damage and missed opportunity.   | Key areas requiring resource will be taken to the skills board for consideration.  | D3                 |
| 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.           | C2                 |
| Stakeholder engagement              | Without the Skills and Employability Plan we will be unable to effectively influence stakeholders. 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. | E2                 |

#### 5. Consultation

5.1 Partners and stakeholders have been consulted widely and extensively. Their input has helped to shape the Plan throughout development. All of those consulted have been keen to engage further and response to the Plan has been unanimously positive. Below is a list of partners and stakeholders who have been consulted:

- A wide range of Medway businesses
- All Medway Universities

- Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce
- The Federation of Small Businesses
- Kent Association of Training Organisations and members
- Locate in Kent
- MidKent College
- Medway Education Partnership
- South East Local Enterprise Partnership
- Thames Gateway Kent Partnership
- Kent and Medway Skills Commission
- Medway Schools
- Kent County Council
- Medway Council Colleagues

## **6. Financial implications**

- 6.1 There are no immediate financial implications for consideration. The implementation of the action plan will be met from with existing team and resources as required. As the action plan is developed further, funding may need to be sought to deliver particular elements. This may include seeking external funding.

## **7. Legal implications**

- 7.1 The Skills and Employability Strategy for Medway supports the statutory duties around tracking and supporting NEETs. It is also in line with national strategies such as the Careers Strategy and the Industrial Strategy.

## **8. Recommendation**

- 8.1 The Cabinet is asked to:

8.1.1 approve the Skills and Employability Plan for Medway set out at Appendix A to the report; and

8.1.2 agree to delegate authority to the Director Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships to approve minor changes to the Skills and Employability Plan prior to publication for the purpose of correcting minor data variances, presentation, and to improve clarity.

## **9. Suggested reasons for decision**

- 9.1 Approving the Medway Skills and Employability Plan will:
- create a one Council approach to skills and employment;
  - unite stakeholders and partners for a more effective Medway; and
  - create a call for action for educators, trainers and employers.

### **Lead officer contact**

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**Appendices**

Appendix A – Skills and Employability Plan for Medway 2035

Appendix B – Diversity Impact Assessment

**Background papers**

None