

ENTERPRISE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 2nd December, 2021

Present:-

Councillor Flood (Chair)

Councillors Caulfield
Dyke

Councillors Hollingworth
Brittain

*Matters dealt with under the Delegation Scheme

17 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' INTERESTS RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

No declarations of interest were received.

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Coy.

19 APPRENTICESHIPS

The Deputy Leader of the Council introduced the report on apprenticeships by commending Chesterfield Borough Council's successes in this area. The quantity and quality of promotional work undertaken by the Economic Development Team and the positive feedback it receives from employers, providers and learners were highlighted to the committee.

The Senior Economic Development Officer outlined some of the key findings of the report. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on apprenticeships, but it was not the only contributing factor in the decline in numbers. Government policy had changed significantly, which affected the availability of apprenticeships, delivery methods had been altered and a decline in Level 2 options were also possible causes. The Government's Plan for Jobs announced in 2020 included the Kickstart scheme and it was thought that a proportion of employers and learners may be taking advantage of this opportunity rather than an apprenticeship.

There had been recruitment challenges due to the pandemic and as a result of Brexit. In contrast to this, there had been more jobs than ever advertised in the e-commerce sector, with hourly rates of pay that were more attractive to young people than those offered by employers taking on apprentices.

The Senior Economic Development Officer advised the committee that the council's Skills Action Plan was under review and as part of the planning for the refresh it might be useful to hold a session for members to input on what they think the areas of focus should be. This could then be followed up with a second session to look at the draft documentation.

It was suggested that one possible focus could be on older people acquiring skills, such as armed forces veterans, who might be eligible for a wage supplement. Feedback from employers suggested that it was increasingly difficult to find good candidates and the veterans link would be pursued via the armed forces lead at Jobcentre Plus.

Discussions took place around the increase in the number of Level 3 apprenticeships available in the care sector and whether this was as a result of the shortfall of trained staff caused by the pandemic. It was explained that this could be due to the move away from the apprenticeships frameworks, to standards, and also the arrival of Derby University in the town, which delivers a multitude of higher level health sector qualifications.

Questions were asked about the data provided on learners that had taken a break from their learning due to the pandemic and drop out rates in general. This data was only available to providers however, whereas the data the council had access to concerned achievement rates. Redundancy data was not widely reported but it was accepted that the furlough schemes may have impacted on some learners.

The Deputy Leader concluded by congratulating the Senior Economic Development Officer for the Apprenticeship Ambassador of the Year Award that she had recently been presented with.

The Chair thanked the Senior Economic Development Officer for attending and for a very informative report, presented in a concise and user-friendly format.

RESOLVED –

1. To note the report.
2. To accept the offer of scrutiny involvement in the Skills Action Plan, starting with a briefing session early in the new year.
3. To request an update in a year's time to determine the long term impact of COVID-19.

20 SCRUTINY MONITORING

The Committee considered the Scrutiny recommendations monitoring schedule.

RESOLVED -

That the Scrutiny monitoring schedule be noted.

21 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan for the four month period 1 December, 2021 to 31 March, 2022 was presented for information.

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be noted.

22 **WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE ENTERPRISE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The 2021/22 Work Programme for the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee was reported for information.

RESOLVED –

That the work programme be noted and updated to include the decisions of the current meeting.

23 **MINUTES****RESOLVED –**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held on 14 October, 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.