

ENTERPRISE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**Thursday, 7th April, 2022**

Present:-

Councillor Dyke (Vice Chair in the Chair)

Councillors Dyke
Coy
Hollingworth

Councillors Snowdon
Brittain

Councillor Amanda Serjeant, Deputy Leader +

Emily Williams, Senior Economic Development Officer +

+ Attended for Minute No. 33

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

No declarations of interest were received.

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Caulfield and Flood.

33 DEPUTY LEADER - SKILLS ACTION PLAN REFRESH

The Deputy Leader of the Council introduced a briefing from the Skills Delivery Officer on the Skills Action Plan and skills elements of the Economic Recovery Plan.

The committee heard that the action plan was launched in response to reforms to apprenticeships and significant planned investment. It had been acknowledged that key regeneration projects within the borough required support and activities such as Apprentice Town, My Future and the Chesterfield and North Derbyshire Skills and Employability Conference were developed with this in mind.

There had been an increased focus on green and digital skills and the Government's Skills for Jobs White Paper, published in January 2021, prioritised jobs growth and sought to place employers at the heart of the skills system to deliver a more responsive system aligned with the needs of the labour market. Increasing apprenticeship participation, raising skills levels, addressing youth unemployment and maximising investment had become key aims.

Successes so far included;

- Local labour clauses enabling 832 local jobs, 131 apprenticeships and over £43m of contracts in the local supply chain since March 2020
- The successful progression of two business cases from the Towns Deal funding including the Construction Skills Hub and Derbyshire Rail Industry Innovation Vehicle (DRIIVE)
- The establishment of a Chesterfield Apprenticeship Provider Network
- Supporting the delivery of the Kickstart Scheme
- Creating the My Future platform
- Key account management support for local businesses looking for support with skills and employment related issues

Significant challenges were highlighted, such as youth unemployment levels and difficulties recruiting to vacant positions. A mis-match between skills supply and demand existed and talent retention had also been exasperated by the pandemic. Activities were often driven by available funding and national policy which limited the Council's potential impact.

The borough continued to see high levels of investment and the housing trajectory is positive. Changes to government policy could present opportunities in the future as the employee led system proposed in the White Paper would be more responsive. The Net Zero scheme and CBC's own Climate Change Action Plan could offer scope to increase green skills in the workforce.

Two questions were posed to the committee as follows;

What are the key challenges and what should the key priorities be for the refreshed Skills Action Plan?

What is the Council's role in skills and employment and where can we add value?

The committee discussed the questions and the following points were raised;

- Low wages paid to apprentices and the attraction of higher paid low skilled jobs in emerging sectors such as online shopping providers. It was noted that funding was available to employers, which could be used to subsidise salaries but that incentives were low (typically £3k grant incentive with a £1k top up for specified cohorts) and did not cover the cost of wages and other costs associated with supporting an apprentice.
- The reluctance of businesses to training staff members who may then leave the organisation and how Chesterfield can retain people. The need to entice tech businesses into the town and the difficulties faced when trying to predict what skills will be required by the workforce in 10-15 years' time.
- The use of agency staff by businesses to cope with the problems caused by fluctuating demand levels, particularly throughout the pandemic.
- The historical legacy of children in Derbyshire receiving less educational funding than others.

- Marketing Chesterfield to draw people in as an excellent place to live; lower house prices, access to the Peak District, a good location to raise a family.
- The constraints of the Council. In relation to skills delivery, the Council primarily plays a facilitation role, seeking to ensure that programmes are delivered effectively at the local level and acting as a conduit between businesses and the skills providers.
- The role of the annual skills conference as a way to make local businesses aware of funding streams available and strengthen relationships between businesses and schools, which might otherwise be diverted into the big cities and to strengthen relationships with key partners.
- The support offered to new businesses and businesses relocating to Chesterfield by working with Destination Chesterfield, Chesterfield College and Derby University.
- The difficulties encountered when trying to engage with schools and subsequently school leavers not having an awareness of the opportunities available.

The Skills Delivery Officer thanked members for their input. A second workshop was planned with local businesses to seek their views on the Skills Action Plan.

RESOLVED –

1. That the update be noted.
2. That the Skills Delivery Officer submit a report to the committee at the next stage of consultation on the Skills Action Plan.

34 SCRUTINY MONITORING

The Committee considered the Scrutiny recommendations monitoring schedule.

In response to a question raised at the previous meeting regarding the financial subsidies paid by the council in support of the leisure centres an update was provided verbally. The committee were advised of the subsidised access via a concession scheme – Change4Life. An email containing information on both these items was to be sent to all committee members.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Scrutiny monitoring schedule be noted.
2. That the subsidy information pertaining to the leisure centres be noted.

35 FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan for the four month period 1 May, 2022 to 31 August, 2022 was presented for information.

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be noted.

**36 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.

37 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

The Minutes of the meeting of the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held on 10 February, 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.