

Update on progress on Pledge 18, Apprenticeships, Pledge 19, Higher Education and the Post 16 Review

Growing the Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 1st February 2017

Author:	Corporate Director of Economy, Regeneration & Skills
Wards:	All
Locality Affected:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report is in response to the request from Growing Economy Overview and Scrutiny committee to report on progress to date in respect of the following:
 - 1.1.1 'Secure a range of options to access higher education' (Pledge 19). To consider how the council is ensuring that more residents are able to progress to Higher Education and work to date to secure local University provision.
 - 1.1.2 Increase the number of businesses employing young people as an apprentice from 15% to 20% (Pledge 18). To consider how the Council encourages companies to provide meaningful apprenticeships resulting in jobs and how the Council engages with schools and colleges.
 - 1.1.3 An update on the Post 16 Review currently taking place in Swindon. The reviews are taking place nationally and are a review of how well post 16 education is meeting the needs of learners and employers with a focus on the sustainability of general further education and sixth form colleges.
- 1.2 The work falls within the scope of the Council's Priority Two, to 'offer educational opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right place. The draft updated Skills and Employment Strategy, which provides an overview of this work is attached as Appendix 1.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the contents of the attached report and appendices in terms of progress towards the Pledges and any issues arising.
- 2.2 Provide feedback and propose any additional approaches that should be considered in order to improve the outcomes for residents in terms of Post 16 Education, Higher Education and Apprenticeships.

3. Detail

- 3.1 Work on skills and employment is driven by the Skills and Employment Strategy, which is overseen by the Skills and Employment Board. The Strategy was

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updated in December 2016 following work with the Board and the sub groups. The sub groups were also reviewed and it was decided that they would be rationalised. There will now be three sub groups; Skills for Growth (skills driven by employers) which includes Apprenticeships, Skills for Inclusion (for residents not in employment) and Higher Education. The sub groups will agree the Action Plans to achieve the strategy. The draft updated strategy is attached as Appendix 1.

- 3.2 It should be noted that a paper has been prepared for the Children's Health, Social Care and Education Overview and Scrutiny on Young People's Participation in Education, Employment and Training for the meeting on 18th January 2017.
- 3.3 Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SW LEP) has identified skills as its number one priority and will focus on areas where it is considered advantageous to take a LEP wide approach. Taking forward the recommendations from the Post 16 Review, supporting the growth of apprenticeships and ensuring we have the higher-level skills to meet business needs are areas where the LEP is able to add value.

Pledge 19: Secure a range of options to access Higher Education

- 3.4 The evidence base for Higher Education (HE) outlines that in 2013/14, 24% of the working age population in Swindon had university level qualifications (Level 4 and above) compared to a national average of 31% and furthermore, that 27% of young people aged 18/19 progressed to Higher Education compared to 37% nationally.
- 3.5 Following Cabinet approval in December 2015, a Higher Education Project Manager has been appointed and started in post in June 2016 (Cabinet Minute 44, 2015/16 refers).
- 3.6 Work has focused on preparing an updated Higher Education Strategy. The strategy aims to:
 - 3.6.1 Increase the percentage of residents with a university level qualification.
 - 3.6.2 Increase the number of young people progressing to HE at 18/19.
 - 3.6.3 Increase the percentage of young people completing "A" levels or equivalent progressing to HE.
- 3.7 Key activity undertaken to progress the strategy has included the following:
 - 3.7.1 Commissioning an update of the evidence base outlining the learner need and the future demand by employers

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- 3.7.2 Undertaking an initial learner survey to inform the strategy.
- 3.7.3 Running a HE Stakeholder event in September with 70 delegates across education, public sector and Swindon businesses.
- 3.7.4 Strengthening membership of the Higher Education Sub Group, particularly in relation to schools and employers and setting up two Task Groups. The Task Groups will meet for the first time in January 2017 and are focusing on 'Learner preparedness & demand' and HE Provision and Pathways'.
- 3.7.5 Research and visits to other areas that have developed University provision and development of a Business Case for a University Centre in Swindon including a submission for funding through the SWLEP. In accordance with the SWLEP Assurance Framework, business cases from both Swindon and Wiltshire Councils underwent a prioritisation exercise using Independent Technical Advisors in order for the SWLEP Board to arrive at a list of schemes forming a bid for the government Local Growth Fund. We are currently awaiting the formal outcome of this process.
- 3.8 Significant funding has been secured to develop the 'Study Higher Programme' led by Oxford Brookes, which aims to raise aspirations and support an additional 360 young people to progress into Higher Education over the next 2 years.
- 3.9 Activity planned for the next 3 months includes:
 - 3.9.1 Finalising the Swindon Higher Education Strategy and carry out further engagement with officers and members as well as the wider partnership. The strategy will outline the options to secure additional university level provision in Swindon as outlined in the pledge.
 - 3.9.2 Developing a SWLEP Higher Education Strategy. One of the barriers to securing funding for the LEP bid is a coherent approach across the LEP area.
 - 3.9.3 Working with the Partnership Task Groups to develop action plans to improve learner preparedness and demand and HE provision in Swindon. This will include clearly outlining the options to increase University provision in Swindon and follow up to the SWLEP bid for a University Centre.
 - 3.9.4 Working with Oxford Brookes University to develop a formal agreement outlining ways of working between the University and the Council to deliver the Study Higher Programme

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3.9.5 Working with partners to outline opportunities for an Institute of Technology in Swindon. The concept of Institutes of Technology was announced by the government in 2015 and is focused on Technical pathways at levels 3 to 5 (A level to Foundation Degree level). Swindon has high numbers of young people on technical pathways not progressing beyond level 3 and this is an opportunity to work with partners to consider how the new institutes could support progression to university level provision.

Pledge 18: Apprenticeships

- 3.10 Pledge 18 – increase the number of businesses employing young people as an Apprentice from 15% to 20%, an additional 280 employers. Also, a target for the number of learners starting an apprenticeship has been agreed and we aim to deliver a total of 10,250 apprenticeships starts by 2020. There has been a strong growth in apprenticeships in Swindon over the last two years and we are on target to achieve 10,250 by 2020. This represents at least 9% growth annually and is in line with the growth expected to meet the government's target of 3,000,000 starts over the same period.
- 3.11 There were 585 employers taking on apprentices in 2015/16 (Academic year) and 360 of these employers were new to apprenticeship recruitment.
- 3.12 There were 360 Swindon employers who were new to apprentice recruitment in academic year 2015-16. This reflects the positive impact of national promotion and of the work of the Routes to Employment Team in raising employer awareness of the benefits of apprentices to their business as outlined in 3.10.
- 3.13 Of the 612 workplaces that had an apprentice start in 2014-15, 387 did not take on more apprentices in 2015-16. This is to be expected and encouraged as it is likely to mean that the apprentice was recruited to a 'real job' position and retained in that position once they had completed their apprenticeship. It may also mean that some apprentices are taking longer than 12 months to complete. 12 months is the minimum for any apprenticeship. During the same period 225 of the 612 workplaces during 14-15 did recruit new apprentices in 2015-16. This indicates that there is a proportion of employers that will start apprentices annually and others where recruitment will be less frequent. The size and type of business are two factors that will determine frequency. The Skills Funding Agency has now assigned a unique employer reference numbers to employers who started apprentices in 2014-15 and 2015-16. This base data will support further analysis in December 2017 for Year 2016-17.

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3.14

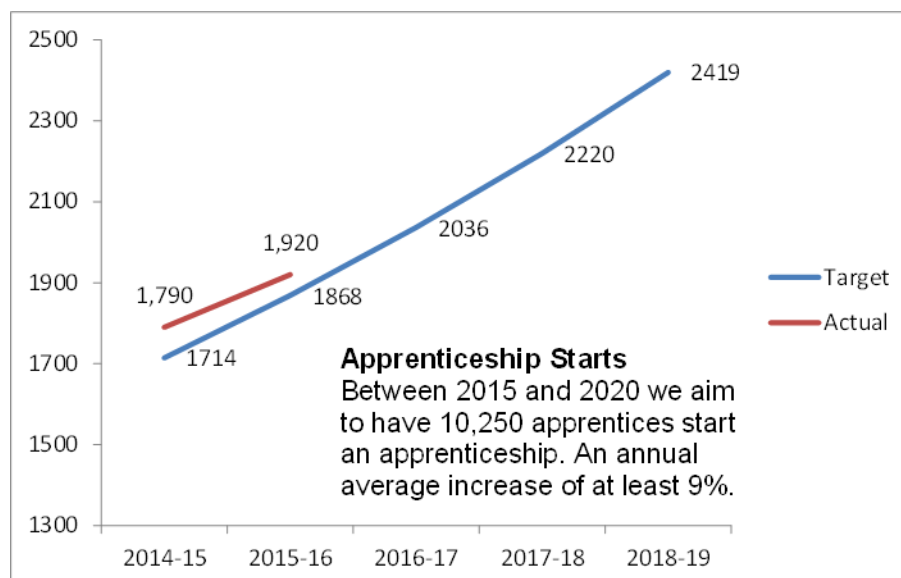


Table 1, Apprenticeship starts 2014-2020

3.15 The Skills for Growth Sub Group are working on the Apprenticeship Growth Strategy. The group is chaired by Nationwide Building Society. Key activity to date has included the following:

3.15.1 Promoting apprenticeships as a key route to grow talent for businesses. Business breakfasts took place in April and September to raise the profile of Apprenticeships and the Apprenticeship levy and over 40 employers attended both events. We also held an Apprenticeship Awards Ceremony at the football club during Apprenticeship week in 2016.

3.15.2 Jobfest in February 2016 at STEAM attracted over 70 employers and 500 young people with one of the main objectives to promote apprenticeships.

3.15.3 Promoting Apprenticeships as a route for young people and ensuring these are up to date on the Swindon.gov website.

3.15.4 Promoting apprenticeships with schools. We have attended secondary school head teacher meetings and commissioned work to run sessions in schools to ensure young people are aware of apprenticeship opportunities.

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There is now funding from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) to support this work.

3.15.5 The Higher Futures Programme is leading on work on higher and degree apprenticeships with employers. Higher Futures is a SWLEP programme delivered jointly by Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council to ensure businesses have the higher-level skills required.

3.15.6 Ensured that European Structural Investment Funding (ESIF) programmes are effectively set up locally to deliver the agreed outcomes. Programmes focus on raising aspirations, progression to employment and apprenticeships and reducing the number of young people not in education, employment and training (NEET).

3.16 Activity planned for the next 3 months:

3.16.1 Finalising the Apprenticeship Growth Plan and agreeing joint work across the SWLEP area. Funding through the LEP for a joint marketing campaign has been included in the plan. Other funding routes will also be explored.

3.16.2 Planning of Jobfest 2017 which will take place on 23 February. We are moving forward with a model of securing funding from employers to ensure the event is sustainable.

3.16.3 Further work with schools using SFA funding and ensuring apprenticeships are promoted to young people, staff and governors.

3.16.4 Reach more employers and ensuring that small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are able to access information and support through key intermediaries. Learn from work carried out in other areas to engage SMEs.

3.16.5 Ensure all Swindon partner events that aim to grow apprenticeships are co-ordinated into one overall plan including events run by colleges and training providers and the SFA.

Post 16 Review

3.17 Post 16 Area Reviews are part of the government's reform of post 16 education and training to ensure that further education colleges are financially viable, sustainable and efficient in order to deliver high quality technical and academic routes for young people which meet education and economic needs of the area. The reviews do not include sixth forms and training providers unless they choose to put themselves forward. Refer Appendix 2, Briefing Post 16 Area Review.

3.18 The review for our area covers Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Swindon and we are in wave 4 (waves 1 to 3 have already taken place). The review started in

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September 2016 and the final meeting confirming the recommendations is due to take place in February 2017. The Head of Education is the Council's representative on the Steering Group. Council officers have provided additional reports and provided input to Steering Group meetings to discuss potential changes in infrastructure during the review period. The Steering Group meetings are confidential. Recommendations agreed by the Steering Group will be shared as soon as they are agreed and published.

- 3.19 The role of LEPs and Councils are clearly outlined in the guidance. Their role is to provide information on how well the current educational offer meets the needs of learners and employers in the area. SWLEP, Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council commissioned a piece of work to collate the evidence required and set out a number of recommendations.
- 3.20 Appendix 3 is the summary paper for Wiltshire and Swindon prepared for the review. The key recommendations are as follows:
- 3.20.1 The need to reduce duplication in both academic and technical provision and ensure sustainability with the recommendation to merge Swindon College and New College. This approach will support the following:
- Enable long term financial viability of both colleges and a cost effective FE College offer in Swindon.
 - Ensure one high quality FE college technical and academic offer.
 - Enable strategic planning of one FE college offer which meets the needs of learners and employers in Swindon.
 - Rationalise and address duplication of the curriculum and duplication of business functions such as HR, Marketing, Finance, and Facilities Management.
 - Ensure that the curriculum arrangements outlined in the National Skills Plan can be delivered, including strong Apprenticeships delivery.
 - Maximise resources and strengths of the two colleges focusing on a strong employer engagement model, innovation in curriculum design including Higher Education and high quality delivery to improve outcomes and progression.
- 3.20.2 To improve attainment in technical subjects, particularly at level 1 and 2 and to provide learning that adds value. At level 3, to ensure that learners are able to achieve good outcomes across all provision and progress to higher levels. To drive up English and Maths attainment pre 16 and by 19 to give learners the foundations for progression.

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3.20.3 Improve attainment and raise aspirations of vulnerable young people including those with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Care Leavers. SEN includes a wide range of needs including young people with Social Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties (SEMH).

3.20.4 To build up the numbers of employers and learners engaged in apprenticeships, particularly at higher levels as a route to providing the skills the economy needs. There is also mileage in providers working collaboratively to agree opportunities for specialisms, building on current strengths.

3.20.5 Ensure the provision offered is employer led and that employers play a leading role in shaping and contributing to the curriculum to meet future needs

3.20.6 There is scope for greater specialisation and we want to see clear progression pathways to higher education and employment, particularly in STEM subjects to provide the skills that employers need. There is a need to consider whether an Institute of Technology would support the shift to higher-level skills provision.

Council officers have provided additional reports and provided input to Steering Group meetings to discuss potential changes in infrastructure during the review period. Recommendations agreed by the Steering Group will be shared as soon as they are agreed and published.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 There are a range of alternative approaches that could be implemented; however the partnership sub groups have worked to outline the actions and approaches that will support the outcomes desired.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 The Council is required to comply with the statutory provisions referred to in the report. All other legal and human rights implications have been considered in the preparation of this report.

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All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 The actions set out in this report will potentially increase the cohesiveness and capacity of the community, as its main objective is to enable more residents to access Apprenticeships and University level qualifications. This will increase their capacity to contribute to Swindon's economy and to better meet their employment needs.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 A Diversity Impact Assessment has been produced to support the Skills and Employment Strategy and is available from the author on request.

Risk Management

- 5.5 A risk assessment has been completed for the Skills and Employment Strategy. Two risks to be highlighted are:
- 5.5.1 Funding to develop University level provision in Swindon is not available.
- 5.5.2 Raising aspirations of young people takes time and we are not able to increase the number of young people choosing Higher Education routes in the short term.
- 5.5.3 Small and medium sized employers who make up over 80% of businesses in Swindon do not engage in taking on apprentices.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Interim Corporate Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 The Swindon Draft Skills and Employment Strategy 2017-2020
- 8.2 Briefing – Post 16 Area Review updated January 2017.
- 8.3 The summary recommendations of the Post 16 Area Review.