

# **Update on Skills and Employment Strategy (Higher Education and Apprenticeships).**

## **Growing the Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

**Date: 31<sup>st</sup> January 2018**

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Author: Corporate Director, Children's Services  
Wards: All  
Parishes Affected: All

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### **1. Purpose and Reasons**

- 1.1 This report is in response to a request from the Growing the Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee for officers to report on progress on key elements of the Skills and Employment Strategy relating to Higher Education (HE) and Apprenticeships.
- 1.2 This report supports Priority Two of the Vision to "Offer educational opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right places" and Pledge 18 (increase the number of businesses employing an apprentice) and Pledge 19, (secure a range of options to access Higher Education in Swindon).

### **2. Recommendations**

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the contents of the attached report and appendices in terms of progress on Apprenticeships and Higher Education.
- 2.2 Provide feedback and propose any additional approaches that should be considered in order to meet the needs of residents and employers in relation to Apprenticeships and Higher Education.

### **3. Detail**

Skills and Employment Strategy.

- 3.1 The Skills and Employment Strategy for 2017 -2020 was endorsed by Cabinet in September 2017 (Cabinet Minute 32, 2017/18 refers). The strategy was developed to summarise the skills and employment priorities and activities that need to take place to achieve the vision and overall aims for skills as outlined in the draft Economic Strategy. The Skills and Employment Board oversees the implementation of the strategy. Sub groups (Skills for Growth and HE) are in place to support development of HE and Apprenticeship activity across employers, providers, schools and other stakeholders.
- 3.2 It should be noted that the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) has Skills as its number one priority in its Strategic Economic Plan. Its focus is on ensuring that employers have the skilled workforce needed for

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economic growth. SBC is working closely with the SWLEP to ensure resources and activities are complementary. The SWLEP has provided resources to support Higher Education and Apprenticeship work.

### Higher Education

- 3.3 The Strategy outlines the key activity to secure a range of options to access Higher Education in Swindon that is responsive to employer need, contributes to narrowing the participation gap and makes sustained improvements in participation rates of young people whilst offering an opportunity for up-skilling for residents in employment.
- 3.4 Key data sources confirm that the percentage of Swindon residents with a university level qualification has increased by 3% between 2014 and 2016. The number of young people progressing to Higher Education remains below the national average but continues to increase.

Measure	Date	Swindon	National
% of residents with a level 4+ qualification (University level)	2014	31%	36%
	2015	29%	37%
	2016	34%	38%
% of 18/19 year olds progressing to Higher Education	2012/13	27%	37%
	2013/14	27%	37%
	2014/15	30%	38%
% of students completing a level 3 qualification progressing to HE	2013/14	33%	48%
	2014/15	33%	48%
	2015/16	36%	51%

**Table 1, Key Data Summary.**

- 3.5 Work to develop a LEP-wide Higher Education Strategy is underway with the aim of the draft strategy being in place by May 2018 and the strategy finalised by September 2018. The work will include options to develop Higher Education provision across the area. The development of the SWLEP response to the Industrial Strategy will also take place during 2018, informed by evidence for higher level skills including technical skills and university level provision. There are funding streams linked to the Industrial strategy which could potentially support HE activity.

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- 3.6 The strategic aims of the Higher Education Strategy are as follows:
- 3.6.1 Meet the skills needs of employers;
  - 3.6.2 Raise aspirations of learners/residents and increase progression to higher education; and
  - 3.6.3 Deliver fit for purpose Higher Education (HE) provision in the area (The strategy will include the options and recommendations to achieve this).
- 3.7 Work completed has included the following:
- 3.7.1 The evidence base and the narrative for the strategy has been commissioned and will be completed by the end of March 2018. This has been funded by the SWLEP.
  - 3.7.2 An employer survey and a learner survey has been developed as part of the commission and will be completed by the end of January. All schools and colleges are engaged in this process to ensure a good response from young people.
  - 3.7.3 The evidence base will be finalised by the end of March and all key stakeholders will be invited to a workshop in April with wider consultation on the strategy during the summer.
- 3.8 Work to support more young people to progress to Higher Education and raise aspirations has focused on ensuring schools and colleges are engaged in Study Higher, a £1.3M Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) project led by Oxford Brookes University and aimed at working with young people individually and in groups to provide information and advice and increase the understanding and awareness of university level study options. The programme has a target of progressing 361 additional young people into HE by 2020. Since May 2016, the project has worked with over 500 young people.
- 3.9 Funding has also been obtained for this project by Villiers Park and the Education, Business Partnership (EBP). Villiers Park has a good record of working with young people to improve progression to HE and are working with a larger cohort of young people to replicate their successful model. The EBP project focuses on raising awareness of university opportunities in specific employment sectors, e.g. Healthcare, IT/Technology. Study Higher will get confirmation on whether they will be funded for an additional 2 years until 2020 in spring 2018. An impact and evaluation report will be published in July 2018.
- 3.10 The Higher Education provision in Swindon is growing. Both Swindon College and New College have developed strategies to increase provision. Oxford
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Brookes has moved to new premises in West Swindon and plans have been confirmed for the University of Wales Trinity St David to deliver a Cultural Heritage Hub from the Carriage Works. SBC continues to work with providers and employers to support the development of provision, including the work of Higher Futures, a SWLEP funded programme which aims to broker solutions to up-skilling the workforce to gain higher level skills. Higher Futures is supporting the development of Degree Apprenticeships, working with local employers and Universities across the country. There has been significant growth in the number of higher apprenticeships delivered (70 in 2015/16 and 130 in 2016/17).

- 3.11 Work is progressing to submit a bid for an Institute of Technology (IoT) meeting the needs of Swindon, North Wiltshire and South East Gloucestershire. The Post 16 Area review identified the need for higher level technical education and recommended that a bid is submitted for the SWLEP area. The Department for Education (DfE) has allocated £170M of capital funding nationally to develop a network of IoTs which will provide higher level technical education, particularly linked to Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). Provision needs to be employer led, new and innovative and with a focusing on targeting groups of residents who are not currently participating in Higher Education. If the bid is successful, the IoT will contribute to the overall strategy to grow HE provision in the area and raise aspirations.
- 3.12 Swindon College are leading the co-ordination of the bid and the Stage 1 bid will be submitted by the end of February. If the stage 1 bid is successful, a Stage 2 bid will be submitted in the summer of 2018. The first Steering Group meeting overseeing the development of the bid took place on 9<sup>th</sup> January and was well attended by key stakeholders. At least one 'anchor' Further Education provider. One University and two anchor employers are required for the bid and work to confirm roles is currently taking place. Councils and LEPs cannot bid but have a role to champion the needs of learners and employers. Locally it has been agreed that the SWLEP and councils will support engagement and collaboration of key partners and the development of the bid.

### Apprenticeships.

- 3.13 The Government has set a national apprenticeship growth target of 3 million additional apprenticeship starts by 2020 as part of the policy drive to ensure employers have a skilled workforce to improve productivity. There have been significant policy changes with employers now developing the apprenticeship standard for their sector and in April 2017, the apprenticeship levy was introduced and requires employers with an annual payroll of more than £3million to pay a 0.5% levy which is ring fenced for apprenticeship training. This policy has significantly changed the role of employers and training providers.

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- 3.14 The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), part of the Department for Education are responsible for the implementation of the reforms. The ESFA resources to work with employers and schools on apprenticeship growth has reduced but they have focused resources on information and promotion, account management of all levy paying employers, the commissioning of specific activity to raise awareness and understanding of apprenticeship in schools and the co-ordination of a network of employer ambassadors. The ESFA works with LEPs to ensure local and national activity are complementary.
- 3.15 A SWLEP wide Apprenticeship Growth Strategy has been drafted and will be presented to the Swindon Skills and Employment Board on the 31 January 2018. The strategy includes an Action Plan, outlining actions for all key stakeholders with the SWLEP Skills and Talent sub group, supported by the two local authorities being responsible for co-ordination and monitoring of the plan.
- 3.16 SBC set a target of 10,250 apprenticeship starts by 2020. After good annual growth from 2014, there has been a 7% drop in apprenticeship starts in 2016-17. This dip occurred in the months following the Central Government's introduction of the levy, after which employers were repositioning their recruitment and workforce development strategies. The number of apprenticeship starts fell nationally during this period by 4%. The table below summarises the key data for Swindon.

**Table 1, Apprenticeship Data.**

Year	16-18	19-24	24+ year	Starts Actual	Starts Target	% change on previous year
2013-14	450	590	530	1,570	1,570	
2014-15	450	580	760	1,790	1714	14%
2015-16	540	550	860	1,950	1868	9%
2016-17	530	470	820	1,820	2036	-7%
				5,560	5,619	

- 3.17 The draft apprenticeship strategy outlines the key issues to address as follows:
- 3.17.1 Employers not realising the benefits of employing apprentices to grow their talent (over 80% of employers are not employing apprentices and the majority of apprenticeships are within a small number of sectors (IT, retail, business admin, Engineering/Manufacturing, Health and Care). Some small businesses report an issue with capacity to set up and support apprentices.

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- 3.17.2 Young people not having the information about Apprenticeships and understanding the range and level of opportunities.
- 3.17.3 Large employers not being able to commit to the number of apprenticeships anticipated following the levy.
- 3.18 Activity to support Apprenticeship Growth and to address the risks is focusing on the following
  - 3.18.1 Worked with the SWLEP Skills and Talent Sub Group and the Swindon Skills and Employment Board to develop a strategy and action plan. Officers are working with key partners including training providers, schools, businesses, business intermediaries to ensure commitment to the plan.
  - 3.18.2 Commissioned a SWLEP wide apprenticeship campaign, funded by the LEP to target employers who don't currently have apprentices, young people and parents. This will include promotion of apprenticeships to up-skill current staff as well as new recruits.
  - 3.18.3 Commissioned a data source that will provide us with employer data so that we can better understand the profile of employers taking up apprenticeships to enable targeting of interventions.
  - 3.18.4 Worked with Swindon secondary schools to ensure learners in each setting have access to the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge for Schools (ASK) programme which aims to raise the profile of apprenticeships with young people, parents and teachers. Work is planned to review data on progression to apprenticeships by school and to share best practice to increase the number of young people progressing to apprenticeships.
  - 3.18.5 Worked with three Swindon Employers (GWH, Excalibur, Zurich) to develop three 60-second videos that celebrate the diversity of apprenticeship, the benefits to the individual and the benefits to the employer. These will be used in a social media campaign that links to SBC social media. The campaign will run January – March 2018
  - 3.18.6 Jobfest is being planned and will run on March 6<sup>th</sup> 2018, aimed at raising awareness of employment and apprenticeship opportunities for young people and supporting recruitment. For the second year employer sponsorship is being secured. It is aiming to secure attendance of 45 employers, 15 training providers and 600 young people.



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3.18.7 Higher Futures, a service jointly managed by SBC and Wiltshire Council and funded by the SWLEP has worked with employers to provide advice, support and brokerage on meeting skills needs with apprenticeships as a core focus and 225 learners starting a range of skills courses including apprenticeships. The team are working with Universities and employers to support the development of Degree Apprenticeships.

3.18.8 There is further work planned as part of the apprenticeship growth strategy to review current take up of apprenticeships by vulnerable young people and identify specific activity that will support more young people progressing including Care Leavers and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

#### **4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1 Although there is a range of alternative approaches that could be implemented, 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 financial implications arising directly from this report.

##### Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Legal and Human Rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. It is considered that the recommendations of this report are compatible with Convention Rights.

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

- 5.3 There are no other implications arising from this report,

##### 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 Assessments has been completed for the Skills and Employment Strategy. The following risks are noteworthy for this report.

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5.5.1. Capital funding to develop University level provision is currently available for the development of an IoT but funding routes are generally limited

5.5.2. Raising aspirations and attainment of young people takes time and requires a longer term view to address this issue, particularly in communities where participation is very low.

5.5.3. 80% of businesses in Swindon are small or medium sized enterprises and capacity to take on Apprentices is often an issue.

### **6. Consultees**

- 6.1 The Director of Finance (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 None