

BARNSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is not a Key Decision within the council's definition and has not been included in the relevant Forward Plan.

**Report of the Director of Human Resources,
Performance and Communications.**

SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP (TFG) REPORT ON HIGHER LEVEL SKILLS AND JOBS

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To report to Cabinet the findings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) from the investigation undertaken on its behalf by the Higher Level Skills and Jobs Task & Finish Group (TFG) regarding how we can increase the availability of higher level skills and jobs in Barnsley.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That Cabinet considers the conclusions and recommendations set out in section 6 as a result of the TFG's investigation into what is being done to: assist residents to obtain higher level skills; make suitable employment opportunities available; as well as consider what barriers may be faced in obtaining these jobs.**

3. Background

- 3.1 Barnsley Council's Employment and Skills Strategy: More and Better Jobs, recognises the importance of people 'getting ready for work', 'getting into work' and 'getting on in work'. Therefore, during 2014/15 one of the OSC TFGs undertook an investigation into what provision is available to enable young people in the borough to be 'work-ready'. This was followed by an investigation during 2015/16 regarding what is in place to enable adults in the borough to be 'work-ready'.
- 3.2 It is noted that aside from academic attainment and the ability to carry out tasks in the workplace, employers need 'work-ready' employees who: have the right attitude; are reliable and will turn up on time; are able to communicate effectively and provide good customer care; and can work well as part of a team. In addition to this, the TFG recognises that the quality of jobs and availability of a skilled workforce is important for the borough's economic growth. Therefore continued this theme of investigations to consider how we are facilitating our communities to 'get on in work' and the provision of higher level skills and jobs in the borough, with this being defined as qualification Level 3 and above.
- 3.3 The members of this TFG included: Councillor Wayne Johnson (TFG Lead Member), Councillor Phil Birkinshaw, Councillor Gail Charlesworth, Councillor Malcolm Clements, Councillor Robert Frost, Councillor Joe Hayward, Councillor Phillip Lofts, Councillor Margaret Sheard, Councillor Sarah Tattersall and Councillor John Wilson, together with Co-opted Member Mr John Winter.

4. What the Task & Finish Group (TFG) looked at

- 4.1 Initially, the TFG met to consider the scope of the investigation. This included discussing a variety of contextual factors such as Economic Development, Brexit, education provision in the borough, Devolution, our local business context as well as services the TFG would like to engage with.
- 4.2 The TFG undertook a number of 'check and challenge' sessions regarding work being carried out and future plans. This involved asking questions regarding work undertaken, involvement and partnership working with other agencies including the impact of this on Barnsley residents. This included meeting with: Council representatives working at both a strategic and operational level in the Place Directorate as well as a representative from Sheffield City Region (SCR) and making contact with local businesses.
- 4.3 In addition to these sessions, the TFG were due to undertake a review of the Council's Adult Skills and Community Learning Service (ASCL) Self-Assessment Review (SAR). However, during the timescales of the TFG's investigation, the service underwent an Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) inspection which negated the need for the TFG to review the SAR at this time.
- 4.4 Similarly, the TFG were also scheduled to engage with the Barnsley Bus Partnership (BBP) which has recently been formed so the relevant organisations can work together to improve local bus services. The organisations involved are the Council, SYPTE (South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive), Stagecoach Yorkshire, Watersons Coaches and Globe Coaches. Unfortunately due to the timescales the different groups were working to, this was not possible.

5. What the Task & Finish Group found

- 5.1 Through undertaking the 'check and challenge' sessions, the TFG found evidence of a variety of work which is being done to try to ensure there are opportunities for skill development in the borough. A regional issue however is that there is limited investment by local employers in their workforce. In relation to Level 4 qualifications and above, only 22% of the Barnsley population have this compared with Sheffield at 36% against a national average of 37%. One of the key challenges is funding for higher level qualifications as up to Level 2 (GCSE), organisations can draw down government funding, however funding for higher level qualifications either rests with individuals or employers.
- 5.2 A key opportunity is investment in higher level apprenticeships which offer a work-based learning programme and lead to a nationally recognised qualification. These enable adults to earn while they learn as well as enable employers to access funding. They can be used to meet the unique needs of businesses and attract new employees as well as develop those existing in a company. Currently, there is a lack of awareness of higher level apprenticeships both amongst businesses as well as the general population, resulting in their under-use. There is also a perception that apprenticeships are only for lower graded jobs and qualifications. It is acknowledged that better careers advice needs to be available for both young people and adults to make sure they are aware of such opportunities. This will require schools, colleges and businesses to work together better to promote opportunities.

- 5.3 A key link to the Employment and Skills strategy is the Barnsley Jobs and Business Plan (2014–2017) which focuses on how we will achieve sustainable business growth through infrastructure, investment, enterprise and business support to create jobs and opportunities. There have been a number of new developments in the borough, such as at Junctions 36 and 37. The TFG acknowledged that the nature of the developments would bring additional employment in Barnsley; however there may be a limited number of higher skilled jobs. Similarly, the TFG raised concerns that a number of residents have to travel out of the borough to obtain higher skilled work; however it was highlighted that often to obtain the skills and experience our businesses want, employees need to have moved around and worked elsewhere. Neighbouring developments such as the Advanced Manufacturing Park in Rotherham provide additional opportunities for Barnsley residents, as well as the supply-chain impact this may have for Barnsley businesses and future developments.
- 5.4 The TFG were made aware of a number of programmes being run through SCR including: the Growth Hub which aims to be the single point of contact for all business support across the region; the Skills Bank which forms part of the Growth Hub and aims to invest in skills and expertise to drive business growth in the region by providing advice, support and funding to businesses to develop their workforce; and the RISE programme which aims to increase graduate employment in small and medium sized enterprises by encouraging these businesses to employ graduates as well as advertise the opportunities to graduates as a whole, to compete with schemes available at larger, more established companies.
- 5.5 It was evident that there is a lack of awareness of these schemes in our local communities, particularly as only 20 businesses in Barnsley have currently accessed the SCR Skills Bank. It was highlighted that local Barnsley businesses do not necessarily identify with the 'SCR' terminology, therefore may not look to this for support in developing their businesses. There was evidence of work being done to engage with our local businesses to ensure they are aware of local opportunities. For example, 78 Barnsley companies have accessed £177,000 of funding from a scheme which has been established for some time through Leeds City Region (LCR) and support is in place to increasingly encourage businesses to access opportunities through SCR.
- 5.6 Contact was made with three of the 20 businesses which have engaged with the SCR Skills Bank, all of whom were complementary regarding the scheme. Some had been contacted by the Skills Bank directly and others through a broker. Key comments included: they had all been supported through the application process which they found simple; the scheme had enabled them to invest in their workforce which they would have either delayed or not been able to afford; and had also had their eyes opened to other opportunities. The businesses were willing to be advocates for the scheme and could not understand why others had not yet taken up the opportunities available.
- 5.7 In summary, the TFG were reassured by the amount of work being done and the schemes available to increase the availability of higher level skills and jobs in Barnsley. The TFG acknowledge that it will take time to develop some of these areas but we need to ensure that there is knowledge of what is available to our local communities.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 During the investigations, the TFG members made a number of suggestions and recommendations regarding the work being undertaken which the services were able to consider as part of their work. The TFG support the continuation of this and in addition recommend the following:

6.2 **Recommendation 1: Promotion of opportunities such as the SCR Growth Hub and higher level apprenticeships need to increase**

The TFG found there a number of opportunities for both individuals and business to increase skills and the number of higher level jobs; however there is a lack of awareness of these amongst our communities. Local media channels need to be utilised to promote this, including putting an article in staff communications so they are aware and can share their knowledge with family and friends who may be interested. It is important that the perception of apprenticeships is changed and communities made aware that these are not just at a low level. As a result of the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, it is also important businesses are encouraged to take on apprentices and understand the value these bring to the workforce, which will also assist them in utilising available funds.

6.3 **Recommendation 2: We recommend an all-member information brief (AMIB) is held so that ALL Members are aware of and can share knowledge of the available opportunities with their communities**

This will help to raise awareness of the schemes available through the SCR Growth Hub so that Members are better able to promote opportunities in their wards. This includes making local businesses aware of development opportunities and to encourage them to invest in their workforce. It is also important key messages are fed into local schools regarding future opportunities such as the RISE programme as well as higher level apprenticeships.

6.4 **Recommendation 3: SCR engage with Barnsley Elected Members so they can better understand local governance arrangements and networks**

By SCR representatives being involved at a local level, this will increase their knowledge of the Area Council and Ward Alliance arrangements in Barnsley and how their networks can be utilised to promote opportunities amongst local businesses. This includes both opportunities within the Growth Hub as well as the use of higher level apprenticeships. These networks can also be used to raise awareness amongst individuals of opportunities such as higher level apprenticeships which enables them to earn while they learn. The SCR will also be able to advise Area Councils on what they could prioritise investment in at a local level in terms of supporting this agenda.

6.5 **Recommendation 4: Careers advice needs to be improved for both young people and adults**

To achieve this, schools, colleges and businesses need to work closer together to ensure there is good quality provision across the borough. This includes connecting businesses with young people in our schools as well as their parents, particularly to raise awareness of local opportunities such as the RISE programme and higher level apprenticeships. As people tend to engage better with their peers, schools and colleges could invite previous students who have recently graduated or obtained employment to share their experiences with other pupils.

6.6 Recommendation 5: The OSC facilitates consideration of BMBC's Adult Skills and Community Learning Service (ASCL)

Further to the recent Ofsted inspection, the service is currently undertaking a governance review which includes increasing involvement of Elected Members. To assist with the ongoing review of the service and to enable Members to be aware of services being delivered, the OSC should engage with this and facilitate Scrutiny Members' involvement.

6.7 Recommendation 6: Services to engage with Barnsley Bus Partnership (BBP) in relation to economic developments in the borough

Throughout all three of the TFGs' investigations on jobs and skills, access to transport has been a fundamental aspect of this. For example new graduates often don't have access to their own car. The TFG welcomes the formulation of the BBP and continued work to improve services for our local communities, including specific work to enable access to the new economic development sites at junctions 36 and 37. The TFG recommends that as our key employment areas at J36 and J37 are brought into use, investment is prioritised to serving these areas to make sure employment opportunities are accessible and affordable for all.

The TFG would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who provided information and assisted with the TFG's investigation.

7. Implications for local people / service users

- 7.1 A variety of work is being done to facilitate access to higher level skills and jobs in Barnsley. A number of opportunities are available to support local people to access and gain higher level skills and therefore jobs. There are also opportunities for local businesses to access funding and training to develop their workforce and thereby their business which is likely to increase the number of higher skilled jobs in the borough. It is noted that access to transport is fundamental in enabling local communities to access these opportunities. Also that residents may need to be prepared to travel outside the borough and move around to obtain the required skills and experience businesses require for higher level jobs.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no specific financial implications, although in responding to the recommendations in the report, the financial implications of these would need to be fully assessed by the appropriate services responding which may be the Council or partnership agencies.

9. Employee implications

- 9.1 There are no specific employee implications, although in responding to the recommendations in the report, the employee implications of these would need to be fully assessed by the appropriate services responding which may be the Council or partnership agencies.

10. Communications implications

- 10.1 A key theme which ran throughout the investigation is the need to ensure local people and businesses are aware of the variety of opportunities available to them. The findings and resultant recommendations are reflective of this and require the utilisation of local networks and media channels to spread the knowledge of available schemes.

11. Consultations

- 11.1 Consultations have taken place with Councillors Johnson (TFG Lead Member), P. Birkinshaw, Charlesworth, Clements, Frost, Hayward, Lofts, Sheard, Tattersall and Wilson, Co-opted Member John Winter, Councillor Roy Miller, Council Officers David Shepherd, Tom Smith, Judy Sidebottom, Mark Anderson and the Senior Management Team as well as Krysia Wooffinden from SCR.

12. The Corporate Plan and the Council's Performance Management Framework

- 12.1 As outlined in the Corporate Plan, the three priorities for Barnsley are: a thriving and vibrant economy, strong and resilient communities; and citizens achieving their potential. Ensuring people in our communities are 'work ready' and can 'get on in work' contributes to achieving all of these and should be prioritised in services being provided. The investigation therefore sought to better understand what is being done to facilitate higher level skills and jobs in Barnsley.

13. Risk management issues

- 13.1 This issue relates to the following risks currently logged on the Council's Strategic Risk Register (SRR), as follows:
- 3034 - Lack of Educational Attainment (whilst the focus of this risk relates to attainment within schools and educational settings, elements of this risk are pitched at broader educational outcomes within the borough); and,
 - 3543 - Failure to ensure the adequate supply of land for housing and commercial property growth (whilst this risk focuses on the availability of land to enable development opportunities, elements of the mitigations for this risk touch on the opportunities present within the regional devolution deal, referenced in section 6.4 of this report).
- 13.2 Furthermore, risk owners within Business Unit 4 (Economic Regeneration) will be encouraged to remain cognisant of the recommendations detailed within this report as part of the regular review of operational risk registers.
- 13.3 The recommendations detailed in section 6 should be considered by the relevant risk owner in light of the SRR, which is programmed for its next review in March 2017.
- 13.4 It is likely the recommended activities detailed in this report will contribute further to the effective mitigation of these risks, and it would be appropriate for any follow-up report regarding the 'work readiness' of adults in Barnsley to be cognisant of these risks.

14. Promoting equality & diversity and social inclusion

- 14.1 The TFG acknowledges that many barriers are faced by diverse groups in accessing employment as well as higher level skills and jobs, which creates inequalities. Vulnerable groups in particular need to be fully supported in this agenda as well as those that are hard to reach. Work is currently being undertaken to consider how through collaborative working, support and opportunities for vulnerable groups can be provided.

15. Glossary

AMIB – All Member Information Brief
ASCL – Adult Skills and Community Learning Service
BBP – Barnsley Bus Partnership
BMBC – Barnsley Metropolitan borough Council
LCR – Leeds City Region
Ofsted – Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills
OSC – Overview and Scrutiny
SAR – Self Assessment Review
SCR – Sheffield City Region
TFG – Task and Finish Group

16. Background papers

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group Report on ‘Work Readiness’ – Young People (Cab.25.3.2015/7.3):
<http://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/Data/Cabinet/201503251000/Agenda/item%20f7.3.pdf>
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group Report on ‘Work Readiness’ – Adults (Cab.9.3.2016/8):
<http://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s8211/Task%20and%20Finish%20Group%20-%20Work%20Readiness%20-%20Adults.pdf>
- Barnsley Council Employment and Skills Strategy: More and Better Jobs:
<http://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s8211/Task%20and%20Finish%20Group%20-%20Work%20Readiness%20-%20Adults.pdf>
- Barnsley Council Jobs and Business Plan 2014-17:
<http://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s7069/Jobs%20and%20Business%20Plan%20Update.pdf>
- Barnsley Council Jobs and Business Plan 2014-17 Update Report:
<http://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s7069/Jobs%20and%20Business%20Plan%20Update.pdf>
- Barnsley Local Plan: <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/planning-and-buildings/local-planning-and-development/our-new-local-plan/local-plan-publication-consultation-2016/>