

BARNSELEY 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 PLACE DIRECTORATE TO CABINET ON 31st May 2017

RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT ON 'HIGHER LEVEL SKILLS AND JOBS'

1. Purpose of the Report:

This report offers a response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Report in respect of Higher Level Skills and Jobs.

2. Recommendations

That the responses to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Report in respect of Higher Level Skills and Jobs set out in section 4 of the Report be agreed.

3. Background

3.1 Higher Skills will play an essential role in delivering Barnsley Council's ambitions of:

- **A brighter future where people achieve their potential**
- **A better Barnsley where our residents think and feel we are making a difference together**
- **Working together with our partners and communities**

They will be essential to meet two of our three priorities of "Growing the economy" and "Improving people's potential and achievement", as these will help to drive a more productive and resilient economy, enabling us to compete more effectively in the world and meet the challenges of Brexit.

Last year, the Council adopted our employment and skills strategy "*More and Better Jobs*". It aims to "*To embed a shared ambition, not just for any jobs, but for better jobs that grow Barnsley's businesses in the long term*". The headline measures of success are that by 2021:

- There is stronger ambition across businesses, organisations and people of all ages;
- All schools and colleges have excellent business engagement and employability activity;

- The proportion of people claiming out of work benefits is cut by a third;
 - Workforce skills, progression and earnings are increased, with the gaps to national average on NVQ Level 3+ and NVQ Level 4+ qualifications reduced by a third.
- 3.2 We are supporting our economy to grow and diversify and are seeing progress; we have one of the highest rates of new business formation in the country, reducing rates of adult and youth unemployment and significant falls in 16 to 18 year old Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Figures in the last year show both young peoples and the adult working age population in Barnsley are attaining higher skill levels. GCSE attainment increased at a faster rate than the overall UK rate and April 17's ONS national survey showed a significant increase in higher skills.
- 3.3 The Task Force observed that regionally there is limited employer investment in workplace skills and that locally only 20 Barnsley companies have accessed support from the Skills Bank. It should be noted however that in this context, Barnsley companies are investing at a slightly higher level than their counterparts in the rest of the city region. Currently, Barnsley represents 16% of the SCR Skills Bank deals approved, which is proportionate with our share of the city region business base. Additionally Barnsley companies have also accessed £177k of support from the Leeds City Region.
- 3.4 Despite a positive and sustained direction of travel, ONS figures continue to show generally low skill levels in Barnsley, below national and regional rates. The percentage of residents with only a level 2 qualification is the 4th highest regionally. The low waged and low skilled economy persists in the borough which created disincentives to investment and relocation of high level sectors and jobs to Barnsley and depresses local aspirations. The result is many higher skilled residents need to commute out of the borough or move further afield, especially young people. It will be important to support and grow activity such as Teen Tech/Tech Town/Connected/Click projects to embed higher skill jobs within the borough, building on the 130 digital jobs created every year, which have average starting wages of £28.5K.

4 Response to Recommendations:

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

The TFG found there was 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 perceptions of apprenticeships is changed and communities made aware that these are not just 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 funds.

We welcome this recommendation and believe the timing is right for a concerted communication plan to increase understanding of higher level apprenticeships and to promote aspiration. Despite punching above our weight, we aspire and need to do more to improve our skills base to meet regional, and then, national levels. The Apprenticeship Levy is still little understood, particularly among SMEs in the UK yet it offers new opportunities to deliver better skills in the current and future workforce. It will be important to maximise take up and promote quality as advocated by the Learning and Work Institute March 2017 report [*“Three Million Apprenticeships Building Ladders of Opportunity”*](#) where it argues that apprenticeships should focus on quality and access, a view echoed this month by the [*Chartered Institute of Personnel Development*](#).

“More and Better Jobs” aims to lift skills across the board. It has a private sector led Task Force with a membership that includes key stakeholders with responsibility for the attainment of skills and qualifications, providing a forum for co-ordinated action and sharing intelligence.

The Task Force started its work by developing two immediate interventions. Firstly a common core of **“Work Readiness” competencies** to enable employers, educational and training organisations and individuals to understand, attain and demonstrate effective behaviours at any level of workforce entry.

Secondly the Task Force is also developing an **Employer Pledge**. This will include explicit employer “offers” to create quality apprenticeship routes and develop their workforces to achieve greater productivity and competitive advantage. The pledge will be widely promoted to local employers through a range of channels, including peer to peer. We would welcome further support across the Council to promote the pledge including the use of corporate procurement, economic regeneration and inward investment.

The Council is already planning higher level apprenticeships to meet future skill needs, for example the Level 4 Apprenticeship in Cyber Security. It is supported in this by the Employment and Skills Business Unit who implement *“Pathways to Success”*, a corporate approach supporting young people to develop their employability and transferable skills. The unit manages the Council’s supported placements, traineeships, apprenticeships, undergraduate placements and graduate internships. Future plans include opening this to adults who have been out of work and who are interested in upskilling and re-training.

There is a need to raise the awareness and appetite of local communities to travel to learn in order to maximise the benefits of a range of high level specialised opportunities in the city region. It will also be important to encourage large and higher skilled employers in the city region to promote opportunities to Barnsley people, including those for work experience, placements, apprenticeships etc.

Sheffield City Region promotes the Growth Hub and Skills Bank through its website, traditional and on-line media and through an annual Skills Summit. We welcome the recommendation to raise awareness of city region opportunities in Barnsley and would recommend that local case studies are used to strengthen an understanding of these as a shared resource and not a Sheffield activity.

4.2 Recommendation 2: We recommend 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 scheme available through the SCR Growth Hub so that members are better able to promoted 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.

We welcome this recommendation – the first priority of “*More and Better Jobs*” is to raise the ambition of Barnsley Businesses, institutions, people and communities. We recognise the importance of promoting opportunities across all communities to inform and raise aspirations in the borough and we can provide briefings for all members both on city region and local opportunities.

The “*More and Better Jobs*” Task Force members act as champions and informed elected members will strengthen this championship and ensure that the Employer Pledge and Work Readiness can penetrate into local communities and highlight best practice being employed by the Council to encourage further take up by local businesses.

The Employer Pledge will provide a mechanism by which to communicate opportunities to employers, be these through the Growth Hub and Skills Bank, the new Apprenticeship Levy, new higher level apprenticeships offered by [Sheffield Hallam](#) and [Sheffield](#) Universities or graduate retention programmes, like RISE and to draw funding down for local employers.

SCR is developing an Employment and Skills Strategy and Investment Plan which strongly correlates with the TFG recommendations and Barnsley’s “*More and Better Jobs*” Plan. In respect of higher level skills SCR details 5 conditional outcomes:

1. Improvement in Key Stage 4 educational attainment across the City region.
2. Increase in the number of 19 year olds achieving a high quality Level 3 qualification (and closing the Free School Meal gap).
3. Improved workforce skills profile, especially at Levels 3 and 4+.
4. Increase in the SCR Employment rate.
5. Greater levels of graduate talent retention.

Council business units are also working with employers and other stakeholders to strengthen higher skilled growth, develop progression ladders and raise aspirations of young people in a variety of ways, through social value in procurement, the Henry Boot Skills Village and as noted in the introduction by nurturing, attracting and retaining digital and technical jobs in Barnsley through Teen Tech/Tech town/Connected and Click projects. This can be further strengthened by working with the college to create industry linked courses and training programmes to meet the growing demand for higher level digital skills, which also in turn support local growth sectors such as manufacturing and logistics. It is important that these local opportunities are promoted in wards and that the links are made with the wider city region.

The emerging City Region strategy has the potential to deliver vital support to both young people and the non-working and working adults of working age. Elected member can play a vital role in raising awareness and enabling Barnsley communities to engage in these opportunities and to counter perception of city region interventions being “not for us”.

4.3 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 enable 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.

We support this recommendation with reservations. We agree it is important that City Region representatives are highly aware of the local context and those strategies and activities support local needs and align well with local structures. We also strongly support the timely free flow of information and close working between SCR and Barnsley Elected Members so that that local communities and businesses can fully engage with the city region’s opportunities. We also believe that as the city region moves closer to Mayoral elections that the relationship with local people needs to be strengthened.

However, we are aware of the capacity constraints in the city region team in connection with engaging with local wards across 9 local authority areas. It will be necessary to agree with SCR streamlined structures that facilitate close partnerships and greater transparency, without imposing an unmanageable burden of meetings that will either reduce the ability of city region officers to secure further opportunities for the city region and deliver those already secured.

Currently Council Members and Officers are represented in across city region governance structures and technical task groups. We would support a greater degree of information sharing and consultation to enable the city region to cascade information and consult more effectively.

In terms of Employment and Skills Strategy, Barnsley Council is represented on the Skills Employment and Education Executive Board and has officer representation in each of the Task Groups reporting to the Board. Barnsley Officers hold or have had key roles in developing plans for the city region's Devolution of Employment Services Pilot, the Work and Health Innovation Unit Trial, Social Inclusion support, Apprenticeship plans, Implementation of the Area Based Review and Devolution of the Adult Education Budget.

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

To achieve this schools, colleges and businesses need to work 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 pupils.

We support this recommendation. It reflects statutory guidance that recommends schools build strong links with employers and reflects the findings and benchmarks recommended in the [Gatsby Report](#) and the findings of the CIPD's 2016 ["Outlook Focus Employee Views On Working Life, Skills And Careers"](#) which reported once again on the *"importance of the provision of good-quality career advice and guidance to people of all ages"* and in its recent 2017 report ["From inadequate to outstanding making the UK skills system world class"](#).

The Employment and Skills Business Unit operates the IKIC programme of work to which develop aspiration in schools and young people, the Enterprise Adviser network which provides opportunities for young people to discover enterprise and experience the potential for higher level careers and the TIAG team which aims to raise young people's participation in learning. It supports schools via involvement in whole school peer reviews to assess the performance of the school's careers offer, a CEIAG Network that offers school colleagues support and CPD as well as the Enterprise Adviser Network that matches a volunteer business person with each secondary school and college to strengthen and increase interactions between employers and young people.

CIPD recommend promotion of lifelong learning across life's course to both increase skill levels, ensure the adult workforce can adapt to changing demands, and the economy can whether the challenges of Brexit. It notes one of the barriers to learning is *"lack of information of types of training that are available, the benefits and return on investment of different courses"*.

There is minimum support for adult careers information advice and guidance. Adults, especially those furthest from the labour market or made redundant, need good quality, impartial careers information, advice and guidance to be built into employment support systems and we particularly welcome the inclusion of adult careers guidance in the recommendation.

Young people and adults need to understand the local labour market and the skills required by employers now and the future employers and we would welcome support to embed the “*More and Better Jobs*” Task Force 10 Work Readiness Competencies within education, training and employment support systems. SCR have published a comprehensive [Labour Market Intelligence](#) report in March, which contains detailed information including breakdowns by district of key aspects of the city region.

4.5 Recommendation 5: the OSL facilitates consideration of BMBC’s Adult Skills and Community Learning Service (ASCL)

Further to the recent Ofsted inspections, 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.

We would welcome this recommendation – the engagement of Scrutiny, “check and challenge” feedback last year was extremely useful and enhanced and consistent engagement between the service and Members will support the achievement of “good governance” at the next Ofsted inspection.

“*More and Better Jobs*” promotes the ambition of progression in the labour market from all stages of labour market entry and from all levels of skills. Devolution of the Adult Education Budget will strengthen the focus on engaging adults and delivering the skills they need to get ready for work, apprenticeships and further learning. ASCL would welcome ongoing challenge to protect and improve the depth and breadth of its curriculum offer to match it to the needs of local communities and businesses.

Sheffield City Region’s emerging Employment and Skills Plan will support the development and testing of new approaches to lifelong learning and learner support, with a focus on people in receipt of out of work benefits. ASCL delivers strong outcomes in its motivation, support and progression of vulnerable learners which needs to be harnessed to underpin ongoing progression and a culture of lifelong learning and continuous improvement.

Whilst the Adult Education Budget will initially transfer without change, it will be vital for Members to help to articulate the learning needs the borough needs to support its communities and businesses, to ensure that decisions are not made latterly that do not fully support the needs of the borough by narrowing the focus to a few high growth sectors without cognoscence of the need to lift skills across a wide spectrum of sectors and businesses.

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

Throughout all three of the TGF's 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 formation 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 service these areas to make sure employment opportunities are accessible and affordable for all.

We welcome this recommendation - "*More and Better Jobs*" promotes alignment with Transport Strategy alongside the Local Plan and Jobs and Business Plan. Good transport is an enabler both to access to employment, but also to the ability to travel to learn higher skills or to progress to higher skilled work. Lack of reliable, affordable public transport on routes and at times to match business requirements is a major barrier for many people in Barnsley, notably the young or the poor. In particular transport needs radical improvement to open up city region opportunities to young people in Barnsley such as those at AMP. Currently a one way 1 and a half hour journey of up to 3 buses and a train is prohibitive in terms of time and cost.

Although there are schemes to support travel to employment, such as the "Wheels to Work", these are often subject to time-limited funding. Sustainable solutions are required. Furthermore, developing increasing access to safe, reliable and affordable public transport promotes a greener environment and reduces traffic. For example, we have recently seen £560k for improvement to public transport to employment sites and we are currently facilitating introductions between SYTPE and employers at Tankersley and Wentworth business parks.

5. Conclusion

We fully support the aims of the recommendations believing that we need to consistently promote and facilitate the acquisition of higher level skills both in order to break the low skill/low wage paradigm and attract higher skilled sectors/jobs.

"*More and Better Jobs*" sets out strategic priorities and actions on skills and routes to employment to build on our strengths, address our challenges and accelerate progress. It focuses on embedding a shared ambition in peoples, communities and businesses not just for any job, but for better jobs that support Barnsley's businesses and help people to thrive in the long term.

Raising aspirations, improving educational attainment across the board, especially at key stage 4+, increasing employer and education links and promoting workforce development are the key objectives of the strategy.

It aims to drive progress in Barnsley on 2 fronts:

- Ensuring that local people have the skills and aptitudes that will allow them to work and progress.
- Working with businesses to ensure that they have access to the skills they need in order to compete and grow.

The core focus is on embedding a shared ambition not just for any job, but for better jobs that support Barnsley's businesses and help people to thrive in the long term. The recommendations put forward by the OSC to promote higher skills will improve the ability for local people to engage with and gain support from the plan.

6. Background papers

Scrutiny Report

More and Better Jobs Plan 2016- 2020

Sheffield City Region "Labour Market Information 2016"

Gatsby Charitable Foundation Report 2014 "Good Career Guidance"

Learning and Work Institute March 2017 report "Three Million Apprenticeships

Building Ladders of Opportunity"

CIPD 2016 "Outlook Focus Employee Views On Working Life, Skills And Careers"

CIPD 2017 "From inadequate to outstanding making the UK skills system world class"

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