

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 1st September 2014 at 6.30pm in Meeting Room 3, Darby House, Telford, TF3 4JA.

PRESENT: Cllrs. K. Guy, J. Pinter, R. Scammell, C. Turley and Co-optees S. Ali, A. Atkinson and S. Rayner.

Attending: Prof. Ian Oakes, Higher Education champion on the Marches and Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Wolverhampton; Cllr. S. Davies, Cabinet Member Neighbourhood Services, Employment & Skills; K. Callis, Assistant Director Development, Business and Employment; S. Marston, Skill Service Delivery Manager; S. Jones, Scrutiny Officer; F. Bottrill, Scrutiny Group Specialist.

CYPSC-1 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 29th April 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CYPSC-2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs. G. Green, A. Mackenzie and co-optees R. Aveley.

CYPSC-3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

CYPSC-4 THE MARCHES LEP SKILLS PLAN

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded members that this was the final meeting in the review of Youth Unemployment before the committee agreed its recommendations.

He welcomed Professor Ian Oakes to the meeting. Prof. Oakes had been invited as the Higher Education Champion on the Marches LEP Board, and Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Wolverhampton, to present the Marches LEP 2013-2015 Skills Plan with particular reference to Youth Unemployment in Telford and Wrekin.

Prof. Oakes gave a presentation which highlighted the following points:

- The background to the establishment and operation of the Skills Board as a sub-group of the Marches LEP Board and the process for formulating and funding

the development of the Skills Plan. Businesses, HE, FE and LAs are represented on the Skills Board; Sue Marston represents Telford & Wrekin. The Skills Plan is published on the website and is a live document reviewed and updated every 12 months.

- A number of evidence bases had been considered and tested to understand the issues. Evidence showed the nature of employment was changing from operational roles to professional/higher skilled roles and the forecast was for an increased demand for degree level qualifications and decreased need for unqualified workers while the area profile showed there were insufficient people with high qualifications and too many with low qualifications.
- The Marches has a very large number of small businesses - micro and self-employed – and overall Marches businesses train a lower proportion of staff than the national average. Skills gaps had been identified in defence, security, advanced manufacturing and tourism.
- The Skills Plan sets out 4 priorities and sub-actions to address issues identified:
 - Delivering the skills required for business growth
This included developing higher qualifications, improving take-up of training, plugging skills gaps, addressing issues with leadership and management.
 - Supporting enterprise and access to jobs
This included improving transport links to improve access to employment.
 - Realising the potential of young people
Key actions were tackling NEETs, increasing the number of apprenticeships and developing more work experience opportunities for young people.
 - Developing a shared responsibility for skills through effective partnerships
This was about developing a better structure to link the demand side (businesses) with the supply side (providers).
- The Skills Plan was finalised as the last round of EU structural funding was coming to an end and the next round will take effect from 2015. The principle was to put the co-ordination and communication structures in place ready to tackle the issues and to use the Skills Plan to inform the preparation of the ESIF (European Structural and Investment Fund) document by setting out the business case for how £97m notional ERDF and ESF funding would be allocated. EU funds will start to flow from 2015 and the Plan means the LEP is well prepared for how and where the money will be spent.
- The Skills Plan also influenced the Marches Strategic Economic Plan which supported the bid for Local Growth Fund – which Telford and Wrekin did well from - by identifying where money would be spent, so it has already been used to influence strategic priorities to attract funding.
- The Plan covers the Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin authority areas. The skills needs are different in each area.
- In Telford and Wrekin, all age unemployment had peaked in April 2009 but had fallen to 2,600 and % of working age population unemployment had fallen from 4.6% in April 2009 to 2.4% in July 2014 which was good news although the rate was still marginally higher than the national average. There were proportionately more male claimants than women.
- In Telford and Wrekin the youth (18-24) claimant count rate between 2010 and 2014 had peaked in February 2012 at 1,675 and had halved to 775 in July 2014 which was good although the % rate was still higher than the England average.

Men made up 64% of the cohort, and women 36%. The decline was most rapid over the last 12 months, but the rate of decline was slower for young people unemployed for 6 months or more so there were proportionately more long-term unemployed young people in July 2014 than there were in July 2011.

- NEETs were a real problem in Telford and Wrekin, with the rate substantially higher than the regional average and above the rates in the other Marches authority areas. The Telford and Wrekin NEET (16-18) population was estimated to have risen from 420 to 490 between 2012 and 2013.
- In March 2014 proportionately fewer 16-17 year olds in Telford and Wrekin were engaged in education or training than in England as a whole, but more were undertaking work-based learning outside an apprenticeship than the England average.
- In terms of employing young people, 20% of businesses in Telford and Wrekin had an apprentice in 2013; 25% said they would be interested in getting involved but there are a lot of small businesses who don't have the capacity to spend time working out how to provide an apprenticeship opportunity.
- 16 year old school leavers were less attractive first time entrants than 17 or 18 year old school or college leavers or graduates because they are less well prepared for work and this was reflected in the higher number of 18+ apprenticeships than 16+.
- In conclusion, there were 4 key challenges for Telford and Wrekin:
 - Longer term unemployed entering or re-entering the labour market
 - Two thirds of the long-term unemployed are young men unemployed 6 months or more
 - Proportionately fewer young people in full-time education, training or apprenticeships
 - 16 year olds are less well prepared for work.
- These issues will form part of the Skills Plan going forward. The LEP would be in receipt of substantial structural funds by late 2014-early 2015 and would work with the various partners to work up the actions in the Skills Action Plan in preparation.

Following the presentation members asked a number of questions:

- The Chair checked whether all the figures used were from the claimant count and Prof. Oakes confirmed they were from the month of August.
- Cllr. Turley asked about the implications of an "Out" vote in the eventuality of a referendum on EU membership. Prof. Oakes said if it happened it would be implemented over a long enough period of time such that it would not affect the forthcoming round of structural funding.
- The Chair asked whether the Skill Plan identified the need for a more direct connection between businesses and FE providers and whether the connections were strong enough. Prof. Oakes said there were connections but they were probably not strong enough. They wanted to avoid the scenario of training people for jobs that don't exist and part of the Plan is to develop a mechanism between businesses and FE providers so a pipeline can be developed for the future. For example JLR had invested heavily in i54 and expected a supply of

young people with the right skills but they needed to influence schools and colleges to develop the skills in advance and the model is not developed well enough at present. Businesses are keen to engage with schools, but the links are not good enough yet, and similarly schools want to engage with businesses to understand them and their needs. This is something the LEP will look into and there are a number of actions in the Action Plan.

- Mr. Austin said he was alarmed by the fact that the rate of people with a degree qualification in the LEP area was only half the national rate and felt this went to an issue with the aspirations of young people. He asked what the data was for Telford and Wrekin and whether they had thought about how to improve the aspirations of young people. Prof. Oakes said he did not have Telford and Wrekin figures to hand, but they had done initial work on identifying skills needs and one of the issues was that companies were importing people with higher skills to work in Telford during the week who went home at the weekend – the issue was attracting and retaining graduates who wanted to live in the borough. Graduates look for a certain lifestyle – social opportunities, entertainment and suitable housing – and at that time Telford did not have this sort of offer. Prof. Oakes said he was pleased that Telford & Wrekin has done so much to develop the town centre and housing offer and this would start to address the issue. Telford and Wrekin, Shropshire and Herefordshire are predominantly rural areas so they tend to attract older graduates in their 30s and 40s who want to settle down, but young graduates in their 20s want more of a city lifestyle. There needs to be a coherent strategy to ensure HE students study at home and are retained into their 20s and 30s.
- Cllr. Turley said he thought student loan repayments would mitigate against students affording houses and Prof. Oakes said that graduates do not start repaying student loans until they are earning over the threshold when they would impact on their ability to fund other elements of their lifestyle.
- The Chair asked whether the Cabinet member or officers present had any questions or wished to comment on any points. The Skills Manager said they had not waited until the next round of ESF funding but had already started a lot of initiatives to build up the evidence base to be able to tap into EU funding when it comes through. The Assistant Director concurred with Prof. Oakes comments about the need to develop labour market intelligence and brokerage. She said they already have high level intelligence but need to drill down to understand business needs better especially the small micro companies and there is more to do to look at trends. Cllr. Davies said that the Council shares all its information and data with the colleges but agreed there is an issue with the lead-in time. TCAT and New College had worked as quickly as possible for JLR but bureaucracy had got in the way. The Skills Manager said that the monthly economic profile was also shared with schools.
- The Chair asked Prof. Oakes if he felt there were any useful recommendations that scrutiny could make. Prof. Oakes said he felt that what worked best is having specific interventions to address local issues rather than having a generalist approach. He recognised that authorities want to work with local

providers and not with organisations outside the region and they have been demonstrating that when there is a specific issue and targeted intervention by a local provider, they have more success.

There were no further questions and the Chair thanked Prof. Oakes for attending the meeting and for his very informative presentation. Prof. Oakes placed on record his thanks to colleagues representing Telford & Wrekin on the Skills Board for their work and support and he left the meeting.

CYPSC-5 YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT UPDATE

The Chair reminded members that the committee had requested a report on the latest youth unemployment figures and the costs and outcomes of the Job Junctions and Jobs Fair. The report had been circulated as Appendix C and he invited the Cabinet member and officers to highlight the key points.

Cllr. Davies made some opening remarks:

- He said it was important not to get lost in the numbers and to remember that every one is an individual person with individual needs.
- For the first time there was a Cabinet member and Assistant Director leading on employment and the figures showed that the work had paid dividends. One of the first things he had done was to move the skills team from the education service to economic development to give them a business focus and link the skills agenda to business needs.
- He thanked the scrutiny members for the report on the visits to the Job Junctions and reminded members that they were not the only answer and that other interventions were being developed for young people.

The Skills Manager then presented the key points in the report:

- The overall trend in unemployment was downwards. It was pleasing that the rate was falling more quickly in Telford and Wrekin than in other authority areas and more quickly than the regional and national averages. The latest figures were provided in the report.
- Over 4,000 people had attended the Jobs Fair which all exceeded expectations and there was very positive feedback. The sheer volume made it difficult to capture all the outcomes but of 171 vacancies promoted, 69 were known to have been filled from the Jobs Fair. Other outcomes were still being collected from employers who had attended the fair to promote their vacancies and who were continuing to recruit – Nandos was an example. Some young people had accessed education or training with the providers but data had not been collected. The fair had cost £19k which equated to a net cost of £287 per successful candidate. Lessons had been learnt for future event. Employers had said they

would pay to exhibit next year. Next year there would be a 2 day event, one day focussing on jobs and the other on careers information with Partnership for Careers involving the schools. There would be a competition to encourage young people to gather information about a range of career opportunities and there would be free transport so that no young people were disadvantaged. The Assistant Director said this tied into what Prof. Oakes had said about young people needing to choose careers that there are jobs in. There would also be a smaller recruitment event over 2 days in the shopping centre to promote Christmas retail jobs which could be a good first step onto the career ladder.

There was then a discussion about the Job Junctions:

- Cllr. Davies asked if the members would like to present the findings from the Job Junction visits before moving onto that section of the report. The Chair said that he had visited Woodside and had been very impressed. The staff were very helpful and there had been excellent feedback from other members about staff. Feedback on the venues was good. Some minor issues had been flagged up with tracking and monitoring, signage and there was some feedback from staff that the IT was letting them down but overall members were highly impressed and agreed that the Job Junctions were doing a good job.
- Cllr. Davies said that the number of Job Junction locations had doubled in a short space of time. He receives a monthly report from the Team Leader which flags up any issues. The Job Junctions were a big success because they were in non-traditional places but this had led to some IT problems which they had reacted to tackle quickly and had put contingencies in place in case of problems on the day.
- The Skills Manager said attendance was growing. They had attracted funding from some of the Parish Councils to do extra work. Some of the sessions were run by TCAT and they were trying to iron out any inconsistencies between services but they had less influence over the TCAT sessions. Some of the venues were quieter than others but this would be monitored and reviewed over time so that resources would be targeted at areas of need and demand.
- The Assistant Director said the attendance numbers were impressive and the number and frequency of visits was growing. The re-branding had been successful and it had helped to bring everything under the Job Box banner.
- Cllr. Davies said the Job Junctions had been doing amazing work but had been under the radar and lacking investment so they had invested in them and the investment had been doubled with partner contributions and the feedback was amazing.
- Mr. Atkinson said he thought it was important to look at things from the point of view of the young person because if they are confused they can drop out so we need to make the routes clearer and he congratulated the team on their work.

- Cllr. Scammell suggested that they should consider getting businesses to attend Job Junctions to meet people on the spot and follow through with them. Cllr. Davies said work-based training was already delivered in the Job Junctions. For example in Brookside they had run pre-recruitment training for a cleaning company looking for staff at all levels. The Job Junction staff had identified people who would be suitable and they had been trained up and had a guaranteed interview at the end of the training. 100% of the vacancies had been filled by people on the course. Some people use the Job Junctions to up-skill and they are not quite ready to speak to an employer - feedback is that the Job Junctions are good “incubators” which is welcome - so it could be an issue for customers if employers attended sessions but Cllr. Davies said he took the point. The Skills Manager said they were getting much better at working with employers and bringing things to a local level. If there were problems they would unpick them to see how it could be addressed and she gave an example of how they had worked with a local employer to make a small change to their recruitment process which meant people were able to pass the initial assessment.
- Mr. Atkinson asked if there was an App which may appeal to younger people more and Cllr. Davies said they were developing one. They also had a presence on Facebook and Twitter and traffic on social media and the website was increasing. The Skills Manager said the Job Junctions were not originally set up for young people so they had not promoted them specifically at young people. They had bought into Facebook to increase penetration into the younger age group but it was difficult to get them to come into a service and FutureFocus had found this difficult.
- The Chair asked if the Job Junctions were all branded under the Job Box brand now and Cllr. Davies said the important thing was for them to get on with the job and not to worry too much about the branding but they had been brought under the Job Box umbrella.

The Skills Manager continued the presentation:

- Job Box was the new brand for provision to support young people. Information about the other initiatives to support young people had been included in the report because the Job Junctions could not be considered in isolation.
- FutureFocus is the school careers service for age 13-19. There were about 6,000 young people in the borough. The NEETs are the most difficult group to engage. NEETs are a very diverse group and does not stay static – even if the numbers seem static young people come in and out all the time so for example recently 15 had left the group but another 14 had joined. They are young people with very individual needs. Mr. Atkinson agreed he did not like the term NEET because each young person has a different story – he wanted to know if FutureFocus staff have a caseload of young people who they telephone. The Skills Manager said since First Point had opened in Southwater, FutureFocus arrange to meet young people there and this had made a difference in the number of people turning up for appointments and was proving a successful venue.

- The Job Box Mentors were a new service for NEETs 20-24 to pick up the older age group without other targeted support. The Mentors had received a huge amount of training in guidance and teaching and their caseloads were now 2/3 full and growing quickly. They had already helped 24 people into jobs so were seeing good success. T-shirts had proved successful in making them recognisable so people were approaching them, including employers. They take referrals from Jobcentre Plus because some people need more than the Jobcentre provides.
- Turnaround is run by Telford & Wrekin staff funded with ESF funds through a consortium with other local authorities. Turnaround supports NEETs aged 14-18 (or to 25 with learning disabilities) and provides courses to re-engage them. Funding is awarded depending on how the young person progresses. Some of the courses are run internally and some are contracted out. The internal courses make a surplus which is being developed to enable the courses to run weekly and to offer places to care leavers or other vulnerable groups.
- The EAST team support people with learning disabilities - there are a lot on ESA - to help them into suitable employment for example jobs with repetitive tasks which may be appropriate.
- Education Business Links is a traded service for schools to find and set up work experience placements for pupils. They charge employers pay for the necessary work-place checks. The service operated across Shropshire and has built up a database of employers to work with.

The Chair thanked officers for the presentation and their excellent work and there was further discussion on a number of points:

- The Chair said when he had visited Woodside Job Junction a member of staff had said the Job Box Mentors' caseload was under capacity and he asked whether they could be used to help track Job Junction customers while their caseload built up. The Skills Manager said that business support staff do the tracking work and the Job Box Mentors need to concentrate on their caseloads and doing their job. Visitors to the Job Junctions have to be monitored to draw down the programme funding,
- Cllr. Davies made the point that there had been a lot of migration from JSA to ESA and a lot of the data used was based on the JSA claimant count which had shown an improvement and it was important not to be fooled by the statistics that things were getting better.
- Cllr. Davies said that the £1.4m investment made by the Council into tackling youth unemployment would come to an end, and as the government continues to cut local authority funding they needed to make the case to government that the investment was saving the government money and that the Council was not benefitting from any national funding. Jobcentre Plus and other contracted

providers benefit from DWP funding but the Council does not. He also said some of the Youth Unemployment pledges were slipping but they would all be delivered as soon as possible and if they weren't he would come back to the committee to explain why.

The Chair invited closing comments from the Cabinet member and officers and the Skills Manager said that members should read the case studies highlighted in the report because they give a flavour of the different kind of issues they are dealing with and the successes they have had. She emphasised the point that one size does not fit all and it is really important to understand what goes on under the data. The Assistant Director said the data has to be based on the number of visits and not the number of individuals as this is what is needed to plan resources, but the important thing was to look at the detail underneath the data.

The Chair thanked Cllr. Davies and the officers again and said he looked forward to presenting the committee's findings and recommendations to them and they left the meeting.

The Chair updated members about a meeting he had had with Paul Hinkins who chaired the Telford Business Board and was on the LEP Board and a number of other business boards and a Governor of TCAT. Mr Hinkins had provided a business view of the youth unemployment issues. He had raised issues about the connection between businesses and FE colleges, public sector agencies are poor at identifying and understanding business needs, the lack of awareness by SMEs and micro businesses about grants available to support training opportunities such as apprenticeships and the need for a brokerage service and these points could inform the scrutiny recommendations.

CYPSC-6 CHILDREN IN CARE PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD

The Chair reminded members that the Dashboard had been circulated for information for members to raise any questions. Mr. Rayner said he had noted that the usage of agency social workers and the vacancy rate for social workers were behind target. He wanted to know why and whether it means the strategies put in place were not working and whether they were being reviewed.

It was agreed that a written response would be requested from the service and circulated to members for consideration.

CYPSC-7 CHAIR'S UPDATE AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair said that the meeting concluded the review of Youth Unemployment and the committee now needed to consider the evidence and formulate recommendations. A date was agreed for a working group meeting to start drafting recommendations.

The Chair advised members that the secondment of the Scrutiny Officer from 22nd September until Jun would affect scrutiny resources and may impact on the agreed

schedule of work. The next meeting was scheduled for November to look at School Improvement and scope the review of health improvements for children and young people but there may be some slippage. The Scrutiny Group Specialist informed members that the Scrutiny management Board would be deciding the priorities across the committees at the meeting on 19th September and if members had strong feelings about what should be prioritised they should make this clear to the chair. Mr. Rayner said a priority was the work on school improvement and that he would like the unvalidated results presented in November. The Scrutiny Officer assured Mr. Rayner that the AD had confirmed the unvalidated results could be reported to the committee in November along with the other reports requested at or after the meeting on 29th April on School Improvement.

The meeting ended at 7.35pm.

Chairman:.....

Date:.....