

Higher Futures (previously City Deal) Implementation

1. Purpose and Reasons

1.1 At the JSEC meeting of 1 December, the committee received a highlight report on Higher Futures and requested a full update for this next meeting given the significance of the project.

1.2 This report provides an update on progress.

2. Key Recommendations

JSEC is recommended to:

2.1. Note and comment on the progress in establishing the Higher Futures Programme as a Programme of the SWLEP, with robust performance management reporting arrangements to the SWLEP Commissioning Group and from there to the SWLEP Board.

2.2. Note the Board's decision at its meeting on 20 January to approve the change in the profile of budget spending as outlined in paragraph 5.

2.3. Note the Board's decision at its meeting on 20 January for the Chair of the Sub-Group, the Head of Economy (Swindon Borough Council) and Associate Director of Economy and Planning (Wiltshire Council) enter in discussions with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to review the outcomes in the City Deal Agreement.

2.4. Note that the Chair of the SWLEP and Board sponsor will meet with the MOD and Careers Transition Partnership at a national level to facilitate moving forward the military elements of the programme.

3. Implementation of the Partnership Delivery model, governance and Board Sponsor

3.1. Critical start up activity has focused on that which is essential to ensure the success of the project and has included the following:

3.2.1 Appointment of a Board Sponsor; Simon Patten has taken on this role.

3.2.2 The Higher Futures Subgroup membership has been reviewed and a revised Terms of Reference agreed. The first meeting of the newly constituted group took place on 8th January 2016 and was chaired by the Board sponsor.

3.2.3 Recruitment of the dedicated Higher Futures Team to ensure the programme has a skilled resource in place with full time commitment for effective implementation.

3.2.4 The development of a clearly articulated proposition to support work with employers and Higher Education Institutions (HEI) which outlines the offer, the process and the 'ask' of employers. This has provided core information for the Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).

- 3.2.5 Early engagement with key local Ministry of Defence (MoD) contacts and the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) and development of an MOU.
- 3.2.6 Development of the Higher Futures branding, marketing plan and website to ensure the programme is well promoted.
- 3.2.7 Early development of a strategy to prioritise and target employers and recruit 'Pathfinder' Employers to showcase what the Programme can deliver and the benefits to employers.
- 3.2.8 The development of strong strategic and operational partnerships to maximise existing employer engagement networks. The Wiltshire Council's Wiltshire 100 programme and Swindon Borough Council's Strategic Employer Engagement Service have both supported early engagement of employers.
- 3.2.9 Engagement of the Pathfinder Universities and Colleges to discuss the draft MOU, gain a good understanding of their skills offer and expertise in delivering employer led flexible provision and plan brokerage activity for 2016.
- 3.2.10 Working with the Skills Funding Agency, colleges and training providers to link Higher Futures to a wider SWLEP wide strategy on Higher Apprenticeships.
- 3.2.11 Implementation progress has been reported to the Commissioning Group on a monthly basis via the standard Highlight Report and to the SWLEP Board on 20 January 2016.

4. Implementation Plan and Risk

- 4.1. An Implementation Plan outlining the key activity and milestones for 2016 was agreed by the sub group on the 8th January and is available on request.
- 4.2. Key milestones are as follows:
 - 4.3. Website launch – originally by end of February 2016 but this is being reviewed to enable the logo and branding to be reviewed at the Board's request.
 - 4.4. Programme launch between March and September 2016
 - 4.5. Phase 1 brokerage between employers and HEIs January to April 2016
 - 4.6. First courses for military leavers from September 2016
- 4.7. Progress and planned next steps against key activities are described in this report. A Risk Register has also been developed for the programme. The Higher Futures Subgroup has reviewed the risks and agreed mitigating actions. Only two risks are RAG rated as red following mitigating actions. These are:
 - 4.7.1. Lack of engagement and sign up by employers in the short term. This risk is being mitigated by increasing capacity for employer engagement and having a more targeted approach with employers.
 - 4.7.2. Delay in CTP agreeing MOU. This risk is being mitigated by the key recommendation above to nominate the Chair of the SWLEP and Board sponsor to

meet with the MOD and Careers Transition Partnership at a national level to facilitate moving forward the military elements of the programme

4.8. The plan outlines a phased and structured approach to the implementation of Higher Futures and the development of the brokerage model. Phase 1 activity with employers and Universities/Learning Providers will take place between January and April 2016. Phase 1 will test out the brokerage model with the 'Pathfinder' Employers, reviewing and refining for Phase 2.

5. Budget

5.1 The budget for 2015/16 and outline information for 2016/17 and 2017/18, provided by Wiltshire Council's Principal Accountant, are outlined at Appendix 2 on page 11.

5.2 It should be noted that the Higher Futures Sub Group approved the appointment of a second Higher Futures Learner Engagement Adviser in 2015/16 in order to ensure maximum capacity in the team and continued early progress. The appointment of a second post was originally planned for year 3.

5.3 The forecast spend for 2015/16 is:

Total Proof of concept (actual)	£ 257,490
Total Delivery	£ 114,600
Total forecast spend	£ 372,090

5.4 The budget does not include details of income. Ambitious income targets were included in the bid to BIS and these are currently being reviewed following consultation with Employers and Learning Providers. This work will confirm spend and income to 2020.

5.5 The budget shows that that by the end of 2017/2018, without taking into account planned income, there will be an anticipated surplus of £52,355 from the £1.4M grant.

5.6 The two Unitary Authorities have committed the equivalent of £100k each per year through in-kind resources as a contribution to the operation of the programme. Table 1 provides an update.

Resource	Value	Current position
Offices and associated resources	£61K	Now that locations of the team are confirmed, costs for each LA will be outlined.
Staff resources – to include strategic leadership, financial management, compliance, marketing and communications, project governance and Higher Education Policy and Programme Development	£139K	Significant staff resource from 2 interim managers allocated in 15/16 totalling £72,183. Wiltshire Council Accountancy Services Manager supporting Higher Futures financial management. Wiltshire Council as accountable body will ensure programme compliance.
Total	£200K	

Table 1, UA contributions.

5.7 A detailed plan of UA contributions moving forward will be developed by the end of February 2016.

6. Higher Futures Outcomes

6.1 The SWLEP City Deal Red Book (contract signed by Deputy Prime Minister, Secretary of State, SWLEP Chair, Elected Leader Swindon Borough Council and Elected Leader Wiltshire Council) outlines a number of agreed outcomes aligned to the delivery of this Programme. The outcomes are outlined in Appendix 3 on page 9. The outcomes include the income targets (refer 5.4 above).

6.2 One of the Red Book outcomes (see Appendix 1) is to provide training to 18,000 individuals locally to Level 4 and above by 2020. This is an ambitious target and it is recommended that work commences with BIS to review this outcome.

7. Staffing

7.1. Following the July 2015 Board meeting, it was decided that the Head of Employment and Skills for Wiltshire Council and Strategic Commissioner, Routes to Employment for Swindon Borough Council should spend the majority of their time on the Higher Futures Programme from 1 September 2015. This arrangement will continue until end of March 2016 and it has been agreed that they will continue to spend half of their time on Higher Futures until end of July 2016 to ensure sufficient resources for the initial stages of the programme. They will provide strategic direction for the programme, line management for the Higher Futures Manager and support for the team on an on-going basis.

7.2. The two UAs led the recruitment process to the Higher Futures team with the Board Sponsor and the SWLEP Director of Partnerships & Programmes being on interview panels for key roles. As Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (SWLEP) Accountable Body, all members on the team have been recruited onto Wiltshire Council Terms & Conditions and Wiltshire Council is their legal employer.

7.3. The locations of team members were carefully considered to ensure effective working across the Swindon and Wiltshire area. There will be a broker and a learner engagement client adviser based in Swindon to cover Swindon and the northern part of Wiltshire, and a broker and a learner engagement client adviser based in Wiltshire to cover the rest of the county. The Manager, Marketing & Design Executive and Quality & Data Officer will be based in Wiltshire but expected to work across the whole geography.

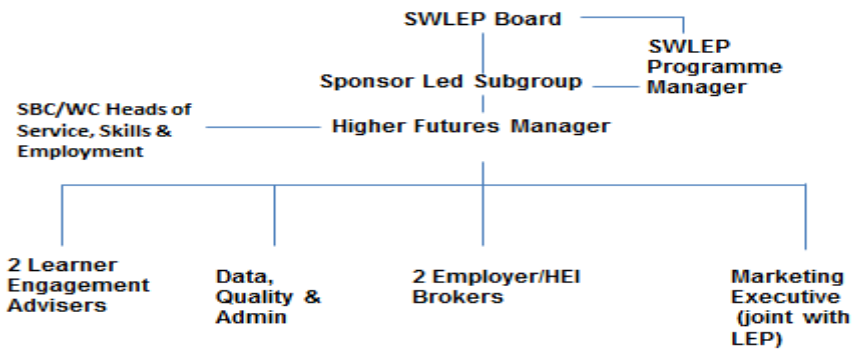
7.4. Two of the team members started in post on 4th January 2016 and five of the team (including the manager) will be in post by 8 February. Recruitment for a second Employer/HEI Broker and second learner engagement client adviser is underway bringing the team up to its full complement of seven staff.

7.4 Induction activity has been planned and is now underway for team members who started in post on 4th January including an induction to all key SWLEP partners, Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council.

7.5 The team structure and roles is outlined below in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Higher Futures Roles



8. Employer Engagement

- 8.1 As part of the 'Proof of Concept' work carried out between January and May 2015, a number of employers were involved to ascertain level of interest and existing training provision and were asked to provide feedback on the Higher Futures model. These employers are named as potential early adopters in the Business Plan developed in June 2015.
- 8.2 The work from September 2015, focused on using the outcome of the proof of concept work to identify a number of 'Pathfinder' employers. Most of the eighteen employers identified were involved in the proof of concept work or the SWLEP/UAs are already working with them as part of wider Business Engagement approaches, for example Wiltshire 100. The employers identified include representation from all 4 priority sectors, large employers/Corporates and SMEs and are located across the Wiltshire and Swindon area and are outlined in Table 1 below.
- 8.3 The 'Pathfinder' employers have a key role to work with the Higher Futures team and Pathfinder Learning Providers to ensure the Phase 1 work is successful, to provide feedback on policies and processes and to act as champions for the project and promote the programme to other employers.
- 8.4 Fourteen of the eighteen employers were visited between October and December 2015 and further visits are taking place during January. The visits focused on detailed discussions on the Higher Futures Programme, what it aims to achieve, the draft MOU and the role of the Pathfinder Employers. Employers outlined their higher level skills needs and gaps, current solutions and their effectiveness. The level of interest to be involved in Phase 1 was gauged and a follow up visit offered to complete a Training Needs Analysis (TNA). The key points and outcomes from each meeting have been recorded as have the key skills needs and gaps arising from the meetings.
- 8.5 Further meetings have been scheduled to do a detailed TNA with each business, the majority of which will take place in early 2016 to fit with employer's schedules.
- 8.6 There has been a high level of interest in the Higher Futures programme, a high degree of resonance with the need for the programme and recognition that an innovative solution is needed.
- 8.7 The MOU outlines that employers would pay a membership fee to gain the benefits of the Higher Futures Programme. During visits, employers supported the principals in the MOU but generally needed to get wider feedback internally. Employers generally outlined an interest in being involved as a Pathfinder but agreement on the MOU and membership fee is priority activity for January 2016. It was felt that the membership fee should come into

play after key elements of the Pathfinder role to ensure the success of the programme has been completed.

8.8 Work with the Financial Sector

8.8.1 The Swindon Higher Futures Interim Manager and the SWLEP Employer Engagement Manager have been working with Swindon College, Nationwide Building Society, Intrinsic and Openwork to put in place a Level 4 Financial Services course, delivered locally and flexibly to meet employer needs. This course will be delivered by Swindon College and starts in January 2016. It will deliver a 2 year level 4 course in Financial Services. The course runs from 3-7pm every fortnight to minimise business disruption.

8.9 Phase 1 and Phase 2 Brokerage

8.9.1 Phase 1 brokerage will take place between January and April 2016 and will bring Pathfinder Employers and Pathfinder Universities together to develop provision which is flexible and bespoke to meet employer needs.

8.9.2 A number of potential 'Early Adopter' employers were identified during the proof of concept phase. These are our starting point for Phase 1 and Phase 2 engagement in addition to the targeted Pathfinders. Additional employers are currently being identified to ensure a balance of employers across the area, large businesses and SMEs across all 4 priority sectors. The Employer Engagement Strategy outlines a number of routes to engage employers including using existing intermediaries and networks.

9. Engagement with the MoD and Career Transition Partnership

9.1 Following the agreement of an MOU with the MoD, the UAs have met with the Army's S02 Transition and the South West Regional Manager for the Careers Transition Partnership (CTP). National sign-off will be required by end of March 2016 from both CTP and MoD's TESSR (Training, Education, Skills, Recruitment and Resettlement).

10. Pathfinder University and Learning Provider Engagement

10.1 The 'Proof of Concept' phase identified 8 Pathfinder Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) who have Degree Awarding Powers as follows:

- Cardiff Metropolitan University;
- Glasgow Caledonian University;
- Middlesex University;
- Oxford Brookes University;
- University of Portsmouth;
- University of Southampton;
- University of South Wales.
- University of the West of England

10.2 A local Training Provider, QA Ltd was also identified as a Pathfinder.

10.3 Additionally, local colleges, and the Corsham Institute were identified as partners in Higher Futures as they already offer relevant HE provision

- Corsham Institute;
- New College Swindon;
- Swindon College;

- Wiltshire College.

10.4 Learning Provider engagement September – December 2015 has focused on the following

10.4.1 Development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining the commitments of the Higher Futures Programme and the Pathfinder Learning Providers. Meetings with each of the Pathfinder Learning Providers and local colleges to discuss progress with Higher Futures, gain feedback on the MOU and get input on Phase 1 activity with employers. The MOU includes the proposal that Learning Providers will pay a commission fee based on the value of any learning provision that is delivered under the programme. Meetings have taken place with all the Pathfinder Learning Providers apart from Oxford Brookes University.

10.4.2 The development of a draft MOU with the Skills Funding Agency as the funder of Further Education for adults and Apprenticeships, including Higher and Degree Apprenticeships.

10.5 Key outcomes from Learning Provider Engagement.

10.5.1 All providers are able to deliver courses in 2 or more of the 4 priority sectors. Some of the providers demonstrated more experience and confidence than others in delivering innovative employer led and employer funded provision. Four of the Universities have a well-developed Work Based Learning Frameworks in place to deliver work based higher level skills provision to meet employers' needs. There are good examples of the providers currently working with the Military. There are some examples

10.5.2 Feedback on the proposal for Learning Providers to pay a commission resulted in a mix of views. The Learning Providers with the most experience in delivering employer led, work based learning programmes were most likely to consider that it is reasonable for the Higher Futures Programme to be paid a commission for its brokerage service if the approach results in additional learners starting on their courses. All providers suggested that there should not be a charge in the early stages when the model is being developed and refined. One provider felt that they would like to see the success of the programme before considering commission. One provider felt that it was inappropriate to request a commission and that the BIS funding should fully fund the programme as long as possible.

10.5.3 Outcome of meetings with the colleges and training providers. Swindon College has been working with Nationwide Building Society and Higher Futures Interim Manager and the SWLEP Employer Engagement Manager to put in place a Level 4 Financial Services course, delivered locally and flexibly to meet employer needs. This course will begin in January 2016. Swindon College is hence a Pathfinder Learning Provider. The specific roles of New College and Wiltshire College will be agreed at meetings taking place in January. Training providers outlined the wide range of higher level skills provision that they are able to offer. The colleges and Corsham Institute are potential venues for learning provision. Corsham Institute also has expertise in areas of Digital Technology but they are not a Learning Provider.

10.5.4 Work from January will focus on the set up of Phase 1 activity. This will involve setting up and facilitating sessions with employers by sector and the Learning Providers to discuss the detail of skills needs and to develop flexible, bespoke provision to meet needs.

11. Branding, Marketing and Website Development

11.1 Branding

11.1.1 Following a competition to find a name, the SWLEP Commissioning Group has chosen Higher Futures as the programme name. A logo which aligns with the LEP branding guidelines is currently under development.

11.2 Marketing Plan

11.2.1 Tribe was commissioned early in 2015 to develop the Marketing Plan. A working group was set up, consisting of the Interim Managers, the SWLEP Programme Manager and Employer Engagement Manager, Communication Team and Employer Engagement representatives from the two UAs and Aerian, the company commissioned to develop the website. Three workshops were held between September and December.

11.2.2 The draft Marketing Plan was presented to the working group on 10th December. Feedback is currently being collated and plan will be finalised by 15th January. The plan provides a marketing 'toolkit' for the Marketing Executive to use to plan the launch and on-going marketing activity. The plan includes the following:

- The Higher Futures proposition, why it's different (the USP), information for employers, military learners and civilian learners and insights by audience.
- Programme objectives
- A SWOT analysis
- The brand and brand story
- A suggested marketing time-line
- Messaging platforms and channels to market
- Launch activity
- Measuring success/KPIs

11.3 Launch activity

11.3.1 Launch activity is planned to take place between March and September 2016. A launch plan will be developed by the Marketing Executive during January. As well as Higher Futures specific events, wider planned events will be used to promote the programme where appropriate.

11.4 Website

11.4.1 Aerian was commissioned early in 2015 to develop the Higher Futures Website and a registration site was developed. Work was put on hold in June 2015 pending confirmation of the delivery model. Aerian has committed expertise to build the website during February 2016. The original aim was for the launch site to be available by the end of February, but this timeline is being reviewed following the Board's request to change the Higher Futures logo and branding considered at its meeting of 20 January. The launch site will provide information on Higher Futures for key audiences and offer the facility for employers and learners to register their interest. Further stages of development are planned and the detailed specifications for these will be developed early in 2016.

12. Recommendation

12.1 As detailed in para 2.

Alistair Cunningham, Associate Director Economic Development and Planning, Wiltshire Council and Director of the SWLEP

Paddy Bradley, Head of Economy, Skills and Property Development, Swindon Borough Council and Director of the SWLEP

Appendix 1. City Deal Red Book Outcomes

Swindon and Wiltshire Commitments

- To establish a SWLEP Skills Brokerage model which provides a Guarantee to all Service Leavers in Swindon and Wiltshire that they will be able to increase their skills to a Higher Education qualification – ensuring that no Service Leaver is at a disadvantage when leaving the Armed Forces, and supporting commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.
- Unitary Authorities (Swindon Borough and Wiltshire Councils) to provide SWLEP Skills Brokerage Resource Funding: £1.00m over 2014/15 to 2018/19.
- To put in place a mechanism to optimise private sector contribution (Tuition Fee Funding £5.84m, and SWLEP Skills Brokerage Membership £0.66m and Placement Fees £2.00m): c.£8.50m.
- To establish a new multi-site University Campus in Swindon and Wiltshire that is capable of delivering part-time, co-designed Higher Education provision, using partnerships between Higher Education Institutions and local employers (with University Technical Colleges, Further Education Colleges and employers providing facilities).
- Provide training to 18,000 individuals locally to Level 4 and above by 2020.
- Deliver local jobs growth of 8.9% compared to the UK average of 5.1% by 2020, and the associated productivity and economic benefits of more people working in higher level jobs.
- Stronger local relationships and understanding between employers and The Army which will support Reservist recruitment and Army 2020.

Appendix 2

Higher Futures Budget

	2014/2015 Proof of Concept Actual	2015/2016 Proof of Concept Actual	2015/2016 Delivery Forecast	2016/2017 Delivery Forecast	2017/2018 Delivery Forecast
Staffing	12,140.19	22,415.45	72,600.00	320,700.00	330,400.00
Programme delivery		233,755.04	38,600.00	116,400.00	126,200.00
Room Hire/Catering	92.00	1,311.50	1,400.00	1,500.00	1,600.00
Admin		8.19	2,000.00	2,100.00	2,200.00
Total Forecast City Deal	12,232.19	257,490.18	114,600.00	440,700.00	460,400.00
Remainder Grant	1,387,767.81	1,130,277.63	1,015,677.63	574,977.63	114,577.63
Match funding from Swindon BC and Wiltshire Council			200,000.00	200,000.00	200,000.00

* In the July 2015 Board paper, operational costs of £120K and 130K were allocated in 2015/16 and 2016/17 respectively. This will be spent judiciously on operational costs such as marketing, website and contracted work.