

11 November 2014

Report of the Education 16-19s Task Group

Purpose of report

- 1 To present the recommendations of the Education 16-19s Task Group and seek endorsement for them.

Background

- 2 The Wiltshire Education, Employment and Skills Board met for the first time in January 2014 following the merger of the 13-19 Strategic Board and the Employment and Skills Board. The Education, Employment & Skills Strategy for Wiltshire is intended to support an holistic and prioritised approach towards the aim of integrating the Education, Employment & Skills agenda in Wiltshire. It aims to identify a shared vision, strategic objectives and priority actions to help Wiltshire Council and its partners on the Education, Employment and Skills Board.
- 3 On 9 September the O&S Management Committee asked the task group to undertake a one-off piece of scrutiny work; considering the Draft Wiltshire Education Employment and Skills Strategy prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 11 November 2014.
- 4 The Task Group undertook an examination of the various options and over the course of two meetings has developed a response to the strategy.
- 5 The task group's membership was as follows:
 - Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman)
 - Cllr Jacqui Lay
 - Cllr George Jeans
 - Cllr Gordon King
 - Dr Mike Thompson

Task Group 2014

- 6 The Task Group met on two occasions during October 2014 and scrutinised:
 - The draft Wiltshire Education Employment and Skills Strategy.
 - The purpose and benefits of the strategy

- 7 The Task Group received evidence from:
- Cllr Richard Gamble, Portfolio Holder for Schools, Skills and Youth.
 - Cllr Fleur De-Rhe Philipe, Cabinet member for Economic Development, Skills and Strategic Transport.
 - Haylea Asadi, Employment and Skills Manager.
 - James Fortune, Lead Commissioner.
- 8 The Children's Select Committee received an information briefing on the Strategy on 14 October 2014.

Task Group observations and views

- 9 The Task Group noted that the strategy has been looked at through the lens of children's services, but that it may be relevant to a wider range of corporate issues.
- 10 The task group expressed regret that the opportunity for scrutiny was too brief and too late. It was noted that more input could have been provided during the formation of the strategy, rather than a critique after its completion.
- 11 The Task Group would like to thank all those who provided evidence to them.

Recommendations

- 12 The Task Group recommends that:
- a) The strategy should demonstrate a stronger link between school improvement, educational standards, and the employment market.
 - b) The strategy concentrates on the need for a degree qualified workforce and the challenge of NEETS, but does could be stronger when exploring opportunities for less academically gifted individuals. In particular the Task Group felt that the strategy did not explore the options for individuals to improve their development opportunities comprehensively enough.
 - c) The strategy should highlight opportunities available for individuals to enter the labour market without level 4 qualifications, and subsequently undergo level 4 (and beyond) training during employment to later achieve a qualification. The paths available should be made clear so that the Strategy's aspirations can be demonstrated to be realistic.
 - d) There should provide more support and training to employers to encourage them to participate actively with schools in opening work opportunities to 16-19s. The strategy should look at creating closer relationships between employers and educators (e.g. governing bodies).
 - e) The strategy should address further the challenge of transportation. It is important that there is a mechanism available to transport individuals to their training. Some solutions are available and should be identified within the strategy as well as clear guidance on how further solutions could be explored..

- f) Consideration should be given to provision of an impartial careers service for people in Wiltshire. The careers service should cater for those both out of work, and those in work who wish to develop further.
- g) The strategy should recognise that there are many boundary towns in Wiltshire that are having their needs met by providers outside of the county but who could have them met inside Wiltshire.
- h) Higher education opportunities in Wiltshire should be made more explicit. The centres of excellence in Wiltshire should be made as attractive as possible to people inside and outside of Wiltshire, as a high percentage of the 80,000 level 4's required by the Strategy could be delivered through Wiltshire's existing higher education providers.
- i) With regards to the Family Nursing Partnership, this and the need for parents to be educated in the opportunities available to 16-19 year olds should be more explicit in the strategy.
- j) There should be a methodology included for dealing with those who are home-tutored in order to prevent social isolation.
- k) An introduction page should be included, followed by the five key objectives, and then a page with the seven key strands. The current index at the front of the strategy which took the reader to a page with seven key strands, and the previous page with five key objectives, are confusing.
- l) The inclusion of case studies in the strategy would be beneficial, as they would illustrate the process of the Strategy's implementation.

Proposal

- 13 To refer the recommendations in the report to Cabinet for consideration alongside the draft Education, Employment & Skills Strategy for Wiltshire on 11 November 2014.

To request a response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to be received by the Children's Select Committee on 9 December 2014.

Education for 16-19s Task Group

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