

**Wiltshire Council**

**Children's Select Committee**

**12 November 2019**

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## **Higher Education Update**

### **Purpose of Report**

1. To provide an update on the activity and progress of the SWLEP higher education strategy since it was last brought to Children's Select Committee in November 2018.

### **Background**

2. In 2017, the SWLEP board agreed to the direction of travel for the development of a higher education strategy for the LEP area which would focus on; meeting the skills needs of employers, raising aspirations and developing HE provision. An evidence base was subsequently commissioned which provided a thorough quantitative and qualitative analysis of the higher education landscape and upon which the strategy was based.

The final HE strategy was agreed in January 2019 and has two main aims;

1. Increase productivity:

- the area will have a sufficiently qualified workforce at higher levels
- employers will report fewer skills shortages
- the area will attract and retain talent and investment
- there will be a workforce pipeline at graduate level
- SWLEP will benefit from increased HE provision including a multi campus university and growth through the FE sector.

2. Raise aspirations and increase social mobility:

- residents will be inspired by strong local HE provision to continue their learning journey through to higher level
- higher education will be accessible i.e. flexible, affordable and close by
- residents will be able to relate the benefits of pursuing higher education to labour market opportunities, particularly in relation to Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM)
- the route to higher education will be navigable and seen to be achievable.

The council's business plan reflects these priorities in its goal to grow the economy through more apprenticeships and improved access to further and higher education.

## **Main Considerations for the Council**

3. Since the strategy was agreed, significant activity has taken place which has progressed the implementation of the strategy and moved the area closer to achieving its goal. This is summarised below:

### **3.1 The Local Industrial Strategy (LIS)**

The [SWLEP Draft LIS](#) under the People priorities reflects the aims of the higher education strategy:

#### **1. Address the skills demand and supply balance**

- Ensure local employers are involved with higher education to provide clearer routes between education and employment, through a business-led, multi-campus federation of HE providers
- Upskill and reskill workforce, meeting the changing needs of businesses
- Embed education pathways including T levels, apprenticeships and higher education to meet demand

#### **2. Raise aspirations and become more inclusive**

- Raise aspirations and employability of young people through Careers Hub, delivery partners (e.g. Careers Enterprise Company, National Collaborative Outreach Programme), National Careers Service, businesses
- Ensure that all special needs schools are active participants in the Careers Hub
- Use Growth Hub, social enterprises, Careers Transition Partnership and other programmes to widen job access, including older workers, NEETS, looked after children, disabled and ex-military personnel
- Work with the National Career Service to offer careers advice to adults

### **3.2 The Learning Hub**

One of the outcomes of the HE evidence base was that adults and young people and employers were not aware of the extent of HE provision being delivered within the SWLEP area. In direct response to this and through the HE provision and pathways group, Higher Futures have worked with providers to develop the [Learning Hub](#). 'Learning Hub' is a prospectus of higher education courses delivered by our partnership providers across the area. This was launched at the Higher Education event in September. The objective is that for those young people who know they do not want to leave the area to study, they are able to quickly search for and view the opportunities that are available to them to progress to higher education within their area.

### **3.3 New higher education provision**

A variety of new provision is being delivered or planned for delivery and this was also shared at the HE event. This new provision includes the approved Institute

of Technology based at Swindon College. This is due to open in September 2021 and will specialise in delivering higher technical education and apprenticeships (at Levels 4 and 5) with a focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects. It will provide students with a clear route to technical employment offering programmes in the following sectors:

- Advanced Engineering and High Value Manufacturing
- Digital and Information and Communications Technology
- Health and Life Sciences

The successful bid was developed in collaboration with the University of Gloucester, Oxford Brookes and New College and eight local employers.

Wiltshire College and University Centre is expanding its HE delivery with an exciting new portfolio of courses planned in collaboration with Bournemouth University and Oxford Brookes University. Progress is being made with their developments at the HE Centres at Lackham & Salisbury. The investment at these campuses totals £22m and is aligned to higher level skills development. New life sciences courses began teaching from 2019 and in addition to existing HE provision, courses in development include HND in agriculture (dairy engineering), foundation degree in applied science and level 6 top ups for computing and motorsport engineering. The campus development projects are expected to be completed in 2020. These projects aim to have an additional 500 FTE learners per annum from 3 years post project completion and an additional 650 apprentices including 200 higher and 50 at degree level.

From 2020, the new Cultural Heritage Institute through the Royal Agricultural College will be delivering provision from its base in Swindon in a range of heritage related programmes which extends provision beyond bachelor's degrees to include master's and PhD.

### **3.3 The Careers Hub**

The expansion of the Careers Hub to include 56 institutions across the Swindon and Wiltshire area provides the opportunity for more schools to benefit from support in meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks- the eight Gatsby benchmarks are a framework for good career guidance developed to support schools in providing students with the best possible careers education, information, advice, and guidance. [Gatsby benchmark 7](#) is all about encounters with FE and HE and the hub is working with schools and partners organisations to support the progress towards achieving this benchmark. This has increased from a baseline of 10% in 2018 to 24% of Hub institutions achieving this benchmark in summer 2019. The SWLEP recently received a letter of congratulations from the Careers Enterprise Company for the performance of the Hub in the first year of operation.

The Careers Hub is working with partners including the area's [National Collaborative Outreach Programme](#) providers to further support this agenda and the second phase of this programme which focusses on Outreach Hubs. Working with stakeholders is a key priority in bringing all the offers together for schools and colleges to access. This includes the [ASK](#) apprenticeship support programme.

### **3.4 Higher Education Event**

A higher education event took place on September 26<sup>th</sup> aimed at schools which aimed to

1. To raise awareness of the local higher education offer (SWLEP).
2. Raise awareness of various pathways to meet all students needs and abilities, improving progression to higher level skills
3. Raise awareness of new provision (including IoTs) and Wiltshire College (Local Growth Fund) improvements.
4. To raise the profile of locally offered level 4+ apprenticeship opportunities including degree apprenticeships.
5. To launch the online higher education provision platform.
6. To share with schools, ways of supporting them to meet Gatsby Benchmark 7, FE/HE encounters.

The event was attended by employers and HE providers who presented workshops, our partners organisations including NCOPs and ASK, LA, LEP and Careers Hub colleagues and Careers Leaders and Heads of Sixth Form from schools and colleges across Wiltshire and Swindon. The Office for Students presented on the national overview and context.

### **3.5 Next Steps**

The joining of Employment and Skills with the Education and Skills directorate has prompted closer links with wider services including early years and this collaboration will facilitate the linking of business and employers with the education agenda. We will continue to work collaboratively to raise awareness of the current and planned HE offer, to ensure there is adequate HE provision and opportunities.

Support for employers to increase the number of higher and degree level apprenticeships and raise awareness of these opportunities with schools and colleges remains a priority.

We will be supporting the LEP with the development of a multi campus federation of HE providers as it progresses towards the development of an implementation plan and will support recruitment into the Institute of Technology. The LEP are developing an overarching Skills Plan based on the SWLEP wide analysis of skills provision, gaps and labour market intelligence.

We will continue to work with the NCOPs who provide direct support to students from wards which have been identified to have lower than expected progress to higher education.

The aspirations agenda is a key aspect of this work for all students and there is a recognition that:

**Between the ages of 6 – 8**, most children start to develop gendered ideas about careers. These stereotypes follow them into the world of work, affecting the rest of their lives.

**By the time they're 10**, they've typically begun assigning social value based on ideas about social class and intelligence. They internalise long-lasting assumptions about what opportunities are available to them. They start to abandon fantasy careers, becoming more aware of potential constraints on their

futures (Careers and Enterprise Company 2018). In light of this we are continuing to support the [Primary Futures](#) pilot project which is underway in this area.

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