

Jobs, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board

8 March, 2017

Summary of Matters Considered at the Board

Report of the Chair, Councillor S Jones

I have selected the main points of the discussion that I feel members of the Council will be particularly interested to know more about. For more detail, a copy of the minutes is available on the Committee Management Information System (CMIS) via the Council's website at <http://cmis.sandwell.gov.uk/cmis5/>

Sandwell College Visit

The Board carried out a visit to the Construction Industries Unit at Sandwell College to see the facilities and meet staff and students.

Students were very satisfied with the college and their courses. Most had been supported through schools into college and into a career path that suited their aspirations. The Scrutiny Board highlighted the value of partners and businesses working closely together to build the right skills sets and develop the right courses that industries need now and in the future.

The Board welcome the depth of partnership working and considered it as a positive way to filter into the work of the West Midlands Combined Authority to prepare local young people with the right skills for local jobs and to prepare them for the working world.

Special Education Needs and Disability Employment Support

The Board considered a report relating to Supported Internships, Learning Disability Supported Employment Programme and Supported Apprenticeships and welcome the work being carried out in Sandwell to create relationships with employers, to establish employment services and help schools to offer high quality preparation for employment.

The Board recognise the importance of increasing the number of education providers in Sandwell, offering supported internships for young people with learning difficulties. The cost of supporting a young person with learning difficulties could reach £1 million through their lifetime and 40% of young people with learning disabilities want a job but currently only 7% were successful in securing a job. Supported internships change the way employers view an individual with learning disability and change the lives of the individuals themselves.

The Maynard review 'Improving accessibility of apprenticeships for people with learning disabilities (2016)' advised that participation rates for disabled apprentices had improved and more disabled people were employed than ever before, but there was still work to be done in both areas. The legislation for Supported Apprenticeships had not yet been developed by government despite being a recommendation of the Maynard review.

The Board identified that an Education, Health and Care Plan should be in place until an individual reaches 25 years and the Board considered the need to put Education, Health and Care Plan's in place as young people move to employment. It was found that the Council cannot claim supported apprenticeships as part of the apprenticeship levy since legislation was not in place and therefore funding could not be drawn down from levy contributions.

The Board recognised the importance of a strong working relationship between the apprentice, job coach and the employer and emphasised that the funding provided by the Council for job coach training was essential to support the apprentice.

The Board welcome the good work that Westminster School is doing to offer supported internships to their students and that staff are due to meet with the Department for Education and Department for Works and Pensions to discuss a "Supported" Apprenticeships pilot with Severn Trent and Interserve Plc. The Board welcome that several local employers give a commitment to the programme including McDonalds, Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust, the Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, DPD Parcel Delivery Company and Interserve Plc.

The Board recognise that there is a need for the programme to become self-sustaining, as funding ends in July 2017. However, more funding may be needed to take the programme forward.

The Board highlighted the need for the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Investment to sustain momentum on the supported internship programme and promote that the Council is trail blazing this work nationally.

The Board called for the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Investment to lead from the front, to continue to promote the work with the College, Schools and employers in Sandwell and to continue discussions with the Department for Education and Department for Work and Pensions to take this forward.

Councillor S Jones
Chair of the Jobs, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board