

**Minutes of the Jobs, Economy and Enterprise
Scrutiny Board**

8th March, 2017 at 4.00 pm
at Sandwell College, 1 Spon Lane, West Bromwich B70 6AW

Present: Councillor S Jones (Chair);
Councillors Allcock, Ashman and Goult.

Apology: Councillor Hickey.

In Attendance: Chris Demetrios, Assistant Director - Construction Industries, Automotive and Engineering, Sandwell College;
Kate Whiting, Assistant Principal for People and Corporate Services, Sandwell College;
Ann Llewellyn, Director of Adult, Community and Foundation Learning, Sandwell College;
Kelly Thomas, Economic Regeneration Manager (Social) Sandwell Council;
Suzanne Allen, Senior Manager Employment, Sandwell Council
Kate Loftus, Senior Manager Disability Employment, Regeneration and Economy;
Ben Taylor, Assistant Head Teacher 14-19 Curriculum and Assessment, Westminster School;
Oliver Flowers, Deputy Head Teacher for Innovation and Development (School Performance), Westminster School.

1/17

Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 7th December 2016 be confirmed as a correct record.

2/17

Sandwell College Visit - Feedback

The Chair thanked senior management for hosting a visit to the Construction Industries Unit of the College and arranging to meet staff and students.

The Board found the visit to be extremely interesting and the facilities fantastic. Of particular interest to the Board was the opportunity to talk to students about their experiences and perspectives. Members found that students were very satisfied with the college and their courses and noted that there were several female students in construction skills. Most students had been supported into a career path that suited them and their aspirations. The Chair highlighted that young people wanted to go to college to get onto the right career path.

The Assistant Director Construction Industry thanked the Scrutiny Board for visiting the facilities and highlighted the value of members seeing the success of partners working closely together to build the right skills and develop the right courses that industries need. He also felt that a future visit should be arranged.

The Chair advised that the visit was also to see how well local youths were preparing for the skills sets that would be needed in line with the West Midlands Combined Authority plans for skills and employability.

The Senior Manager Employment confirmed that the College and the Council were working well together; there had been no barriers to access and young people were being supported through schools into college. The Economic Regeneration Manager clarified that the Council and the College were working together in different ways. The Assistant Principal for People and Corporate Services advised that the Council Economic and Regeneration Manager (Business) also worked closely with the college and employers to get young people on the path of training and the right skills.

The Chair welcomed the depth of partnership working and welcomed this as a positive way to pick up the West Midlands Combined Authority work to prepare local young people with the right skills for local jobs and to prepare them for the working world.

3/17

Special Education Needs and Disability Employment Support

The Senior Manager Disability Employment, Regeneration and Economy provided a report relating to Supported Internships, Learning Disability Supported Employment Programme and Supported Apprenticeships.

The Board was advised that the Department for Education had awarded funding to local authorities to create relationships with employers to establish employment services to help schools to offer high quality preparation for employment. Sandwell Council received a sum £30,000 and had subsequently developed a two year contract from July 2015 to July 2017 to increase the number of education providers in Sandwell offering supported internships for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged 16-24 with and Education Care Plan.

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. Employment rates for people with learning disabilities hovered around 6.8% and the lifelong costs of economic activity were considerable.

The Board acknowledged that as supported internships were not officially an apprenticeship, unpaid and apprenticeship funding could not be claimed. There were individuals with learning difficulties and disabilities who were able to meet the occupational standard for an apprenticeship but struggled to achieve English and maths qualifications at the level normally required (to level 2).

The Board was advised that Westminster School, Meadows Sports College committed to offering supported internships to their students. The Board welcomed several local employers 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 Assistant Head Teacher 14-19 Curriculum and Assessment, Westminster School and Deputy Head Teacher for Innovation and Development (School Performance), Westminster School provided a summary of how the programme was working and of their engagement with Interserve Plc . They highlighted the importance of

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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. They emphasised that young people could thrive with the right level of support and gain enough confidence to get employment and earn a wage.

The Board was advised that the supported internships had changed the way employers viewed the individual with a learning disability and had changed the lives of the individual themselves. They were advised that in their lifetime, a young person with learning difficulties could cost £1 million in support and that supporting them into employment would not only give them the chance to do what they want to do but also save public funding.

The Assistant Head Teacher outlined the importance of opportunity and managing risk in the programme. He highlighted that if employers did not take part in the programme, they would not change the lives of individuals. He emphasised that 40% of young people with learning disabilities wanted a job but currently only 7% were getting a job.

The Board considered the level of employment young people with a learning disability could reach and were advised that entry level talent could support any role. The young people would be reliable, turn up on time and enjoy the repeat tasks.

The Board was advised that the College could vary the qualifications on offer and were delivering supported internships and were being supported to do so by the consultant who used to work for National Grid.

The Westminster School and the consultants were meeting with Department for Education and Department for Works and Pensions to discuss a "Supported" Apprenticeships pilot with Severn Trent and Interserve Plc.

The Board welcomed the good work that Westminster School were doing and that Sandwell Council was leading this ground-breaking work.

The Board was advised that funding would come to an end in July 2017 and that there was a need for the programme to become self-sustaining. However that more funding may be needed to take the programme forward.

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In response to questions relating to the need to have an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) in place, the Board was advised that an EHCP should be in place until the individual reached 24 years, 364 days and that supported transition to adult education and college was the Transitions Team's responsibility.

The Board considered the number of young people without an EHCP and the need to put EHCPs in place as they came through the process to employment.

The legislation for Supported Apprenticeships had not yet been developed by government despite being a recommendation of the Maynard review. Currently, the Council could not 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 were advised that currently two individuals had supported internships at Westminster School with an increase to six at the next school academic year. The College were starting six supported internships from September 2017 and the Meadow Sports College would have a further three, totalling 15 supported internships from September 2017. The Board welcomed the increase and highlighted that as businesses get involved there would be further growth.

In response to questions about college courses the Board was advised that the entry level for "Supported" apprenticeships was 'Entry Level 3' which came before 'Level 1' and equated to a grade D or below at GCSE. The Director of Adult, Community and Foundation Learning advised that the individual would have to take a functional skills exam; the assessment could not be done by observation. In response to questions she advised that the individual had to stay at a level until they had progressed through the skill test. The Board made reference to the difficulty of level 2 maths tests and discussed other ways of skill testing such as computer simulation testing.

The Board considered what qualifications and insurance would be required to access construction site work and were advised that there were Health and Safety Executive requirements, insurance and a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) green card would be required for even a basic job such as sweeping; apprentices would require a green card to access the construction site.

In relation to suitability of employment path for individuals with mental health issues, physical or learning difficulty, the Board were advised

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that an apprenticeship had a requirement of 30 hours per week; a job could be less hours and for someone on Employment Support Allowance, they may be able to complete supported permitted work, which could be 16 hours or less. There would need to be benefit assessment to ensure they were better off in work.

The Economic Regeneration Manager (Social) informed the Board that a meeting with school improvement would be taking place next week and that she would speak about the need for EHCP to be in place on behalf of the Board. The Economic Regeneration Manager (Social) also informed the board a visit was taking place to Department of Works and Pensions and that she would speak to them regarding issues with claims to access to work.

The Chair thanked all present for their contributions to the discussion and highlighted the need to keep momentum on the supported internship programme. He welcomed that the Council were trail blazing this work nationally and called for the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Investment to lead from the front, to continue working 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.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Director – Regeneration and Economy encourage local employers to develop different levels of job entry to increase the percentage of young people with disability in employment in Sandwell;
- (2) that the Director – Regeneration and Economy continue discussions with the Department of Work and Pensions relating to supported internships;
- (3) that the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Investment promote supported internships in the work place.

(Meeting ended 5:15 pm)

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