

CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel was held on Thursday 18 November 2021.

PRESENT: Councillors C McIntyre (Chair), G Wilson (Vice-Chair), S Dean, C Dodds, L Mason, J Rostron and D Branson

PRESENT BY INVITATION:

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: D Britton, B Smith, M White, T Meredith, J Jemison and Stephen.

OFFICERS: S Blood and C Kemp

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors R Arundale, L Lewis and D McCabe

21/7 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest received at this point in the meeting.

21/8 **MINUTES - CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL - 21 OCTOBER 2021**

The minutes of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel held on xxxx were submitted and approved as a correct record.

21/9 **MIDDLESBROUGH COMMUNITY LEARNING EMPLOYABILITY- UPDATE**

The Chair welcomed Claire Kemp, Head of Community Learning to the meeting. In 2019, the Panel undertook a review into Middlesbrough Community Learning Employability, however due to Covid had been unable to receive an update on the recommendations for some time.

The Head of Community Learning was accompanied by a number of her colleagues, as many of the recommendations were looking at ways of positive impact and since 2019, the programmes and initiatives have moved on and made excellent progress on residents in the town. A participant from the Routes to work programme was also in attendance to give his story.

In terms of the recommendations, the panel were provided with the following updates:

Recommendation	Update
1. That the Panel receive an update on the progress made within Adult Skills and Community Learning in 6 months' time. The Panel would be keen to learn more good practice in Middlesbrough in relation to partnership working/ positive outcomes	Covered within the meeting
2. In terms of the Youth Employment Initiative, the panel is keen to develop closer working relationship with Middlesbrough College, with this in mind, the panel recommend that YEI be provided with one single point of contact within the STEM centre for learner referrals to courses.	COMPLETE There is now a Key contact within the Youth unemployment team within the college and teams meet up regularly to discuss the programme. Within the adult learning sector, there is a le within the College and they meet regularly v community learning to ensure there is now duplication in provision and that they complement one another.

	The Head of Community Learning has strong links with the Principle of Middlesbrough College and meets on a quarterly basis.
3. Routes to Work project be added to Middlesbrough Council's Armed Forces Directory and information on the project be passed to the transition service.	<u>COMPLETE</u> Community learning was now part of the Armed Forces directory and the teams actively engage with Hardwick House. The panel had been provided with a case study for their information regarding community learning's involvement with ex- veterans.
4. That the panel receive a further update on the Routes to Work project in 6 months' time, with regard to the number of participants since staff recruitment and success stories	Covered within the meeting.

.At the time of the Panel's review, the community learning service sat within the communities directorate, however has now moved to sit with children's services.

Due to the delays in update, the Head of Service provided the panel with some headliners:

- **January 2019** – Introduction of 50 Futures Work- Established as the empower commitments and launched as part of the Middlesbrough opportunity strategy with the aim of providing high quality career pathways which was linked to through work placements/ volunteering. This provided those struggling to find work and from disadvantaged communities, the opportunity to have work experience within the Council . Initially we set out to change 50 lives , which went to 100 and the aim was now to provide 200 opportunities across the Council.
- **August 2019 - Change of Head of Service-** move from Chris Kemp to Claire Kemp
- **August 2019 - Devolved Adult Education Budget**

As part of the devolution deal for Tees Valley, the Tees Valley Combined Authority took responsibility for the Adult Education Budget which was administered by the Education Skills Funding Agency, to deliver adult skills provision, from 1 August 2019, to new learners aged 19+ who reside in the Tees Valley.

- **February 2020 Ofsted Inspection – Short Inspection GOOD**

“Leaders and managers implement an ambitious curriculum for learners and apprentices, many of whom are unemployed or have challenging personal circumstances. They make effective use of funding and innovative council projects to provide extensive support to learners and enhance learning beyond the classroom.

- **March 2020 – COVID Pandemic first lockdown**
- **November 2021 - Youth Employment Hub Launch**

In partnership with DWP (Department of work and pensions) and Middlesbrough Council in response to the Governments multi million pounds Plan for Jobs. The Hub will provide a more co-ordinated and joined-up response, improving employment outcomes for young people.” Aimed at 18-24 year olds on job seekers allowance, the funding was allocated until December 2022 with the target of reaching out to 500 young people.

Due to the unprecedented impact covid had on everyone's lives, the Head of Service provided some information in relation to the service's covid response.

The service:

- Redesigned offer to respond to the challenges of COVID-19 and has continued, to provide support to learners, employers and partners.
- Delivery methods and Curriculum offers were effectively reviewed and adapted so, where possible learners could continue learning.
- Implementation of remote teaching and learning via Google Classroom

- Increased telephone and online contact with learners to provide a range of pastoral support including wellbeing support, food parcel delivery and benefit advice.
- Targeted skills scan was undertaken to develop digital skills of staff, which led to a wide range of online CPD being offered to support online delivery
- Increased the number of Safeguarding Officers across the service to track and monitor our most vulnerable learners.
- Equipment loans were introduced for the most disadvantaged learners
- Additional digital skills training to support learners with no digital skills delivered in COVID Secure premises
- Increased partnership working with key stakeholders to ensure the offer was aligned with a local response to need.

Following on from this information, the Head of Service provided the Board with specific updates in relation to recommendations 1 and 4 of the scrutiny's report. This would cover the budget and performance to date, as well as sharing good practice.

As a recap, the Head of Service advised that the adult education budget was passed to the Tees Valley combined authority in 2019 with a budget of £1.616.043, with the aim to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to equip them for work, an apprenticeship or other learning. It enables more flexible tailored programmes of learning to be made available which may or may not require a qualification, to help eligible learners engage in learning, build confidence, and /or enhance wellbeing.

There were two main aims of the budget: Firstly Community learning and secondly adult skills (English and maths/ ESOL and ICT and accredited employability. 60% of the adult skills delivery was aimed at ESOL provision. The service also provided bespoke employer led provision (BELP) in order to upskill individuals for certain jobs, and employers are now approaching Middlesbrough community learning to address employment need.

The community learning offer was small steps to upskill individuals and local communities. The Panel also learnt that they also commission small businesses who are already embedded in the community to work and reach out to local communities e.g. nur fitness, who engage with BME woman.

In terms of performance, the Panel were pleased to see that despite Covid, achievement for 2020/21 was 99.6% (above internal achievement).

In terms of a positive impact story, the Head of Service provided an example of steps towards cleaning, an internal partnership working with properly services. During Covid, there was a real recruitment need for cleaners. The routes to work put a package together after discussing with the Manager. Individuals undertook work experience and were guaranteed an interview (subject to meeting the criteria required). Those who undertook the programme spoke positively and felt it had changed their lives. 32 residents were engaged and 14 of those now work as cleaners for the Council.

Youth Employment Initiative- Choosing Pathways

The Head of Service, introduced Deborah Britton, Assistant Coordinator to the Panel, who provided an update on the progress on the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)- Choosing Pathways.

In terms of a brief overview, the Assistant Coordinator outlined that:

- In 2013 European Commission created the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) targeting regions with a high youth unemployment rate.
- Tees Valley Pathways programme was part funded by European Social Fund and supported under the Youth Employment Initiative.
- Hartlepool Borough Council were the Lead Accountable Body with Middlesbrough Council being one of 22 partner providers, with the programme being called "Choosing Pathways".
- Aims to support young people across Tees Valley aged 15 to 29 who are unemployed and / or not in education, employment or training (NEET).

- Due to its success, the programme has been extended on 3 occasions, now to July 2023, due to its high performance and success.

The programme sets to:

- Develop Employability and Personal development
- Wrap around support from a Learning Advisor – positive, personalised, relationship based and challenging.
- Flexible, individualised induction and individual learning plan – relevant training sourced.
- Motivational approach with high expectations.
- 6 months tracking and support following programme exit
- Financial support – Childcare, Travel, Clothes & Equipment, Incentives

Results against measures set were high, with excellent progression and sustainment outcomes well ahead of the Tees Valley average. The Assistant Coordinator advised that during Covid, the service has been audited and has been seen as best provider from the lead provider.

The Panel were pleased to hear from James Jemison and Michael White, Learning providers who touched on some positive stories from Choosing pathways. A number of these stories had been provided to the Panel prior to the meeting. Each story shared the individuals challenges/barriers to work and explained how choosing pathways provided support. The stories were good news stories in that both secured employment.

Routes to Work

In terms of the update for Routes to Work, the Panel heard from Barbara Smith, who provided a summary of the pilot scheme.

Key points were as follows:

Originally a three year Pilot scheme, £6m DWP matched by £1.5m from the Combined Authority to support the 'hardest to help' to move back into, or towards work, by providing joined up services, centred around the individual. (extended till March 2022 due to COVID)

Eligibility – Originally aimed at 30+, in December 2021 eligibility changed to 16+ in response to COVID and high levels of youth Unemployment

Eligibility Criteria

- over 2 years unemployed, or
- who have significant/multiple barriers who are unlikely to find work in the next 12 months, e.g. ex-offenders; disability; BME/ESOL needed; SEND; drug/alcohol dependencies, or
- who have had a claim for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) rejected, or
- are on the ESA Support Group (have a significant health issue but may be able to work with assistance), or are not in work but are disengaged from the benefit system

Key elements of the pilot:

- Use of 'Key Workers' who can provide holistic support around the individual on the Pilot and into work;
- Targeted use of advocacy/ brokerage with employers;
- Ongoing in-work support (for the individual/employer) for up to 12 months.
- Flexible support funds
- Employer Incentives

In terms of outcomes, the pilot was on track to over achieve on all targets by the end of March 2022.

Highlights of the pilot have been as follows:

- Development and Drive behind 50 Futures Success engaging over 183 residents from Middlesbrough 56% moved into work.
- 36 Employers supported with wage incentives during COVID enabling them to stay open
- Highest performing Routes to Work project within the Tees Valley- out of 5 authorities
- CIVIC Award Winner– “Improving Employment Opportunities for residents” Category
- Provided wrap around support for Kickstart participants
- Supported Adult and Community Learning team to develop Bespoke Employer Led provision
- 50 Employers and 10 charities supported with recruitment and training
- Integral part of Tees Works Initiative

The panel were extremely fortunate to hear from Trina Meredith , support worker and Stephen, a participate in the routes to work programme. Stephen shared his inspirational story with the panel, one he says would not have been possible without Routes to work.

Following the presentation, a Board member queried transport links and issues with individuals getting to work. The Head of Community Learning advised that this has been raised with TVCA and DWP.

The Chair, thanked the officers and Stephen for their attendance and wished Stephen every success in his career.

AGREED- That the updates to the scrutiny panel's recommendations be noted.

21/10 **CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL- FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Democratic Services Officer provided the Panel with an update on the work programme and a proposed future schedule for meetings. The panel were aware that Covid was still very much on the increase and therefore the visit to the locality hubs would be discussed with the Head of Stronger Communities.

AGREED- That the schedule be noted

21/11 **CHAIR'S OSB UPDATE**

The Chair provided a verbal update on discussions raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting on 9 November 2021.

AGREED- That the update be noted.

21/12 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

No items.