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**Decision Session – Executive Member for  
Economy and Strategic Planning**

**22 September 2020**

Report of the Assistant Director Education and Skills

**Covid Recovery Skills Strategy and communication plan**

**Purpose**

1. This report sets the terms of reference and remit of a City Skills and Employment Board and task and finish group that will be responsible for developing and implementing the city's Adult Learning and Skills Strategy. This partnership board will develop the strategy within the framework set by York's 10 year and 1 year recovery strategies and the York Economic Strategy.
2. It also proposes the governance arrangements through which stakeholder feedback and Executive sign-off of the Adult Learning and Skills Strategy will be sought.

**Recommendation**

3. The Executive Member is asked to:
  - i. Confirm the Terms of Reference and remit of the City Skills and Employment Board
  - ii. Agree the framework within which a new Adult Learning and Skills Strategy will be developed, for endorsement at the City Skills and Employment Board and with final formal consideration and adoption by the council's Executive including a communication plan to support widespread community engagement.

Reason: In order to agree a Terms of Reference and remit of the City Skills and Employment Board and framework and agree the framework within which a new Adult Learning and Skills Strategy will be developed.

**Background**

4. York's current Skills Plan (2017-202) and the skills and employment support in York was developed in the context of the full-employment economy that we had become, with a focus on:
  - school leavers joining the workforce,

- working with those furthest from the labour market to increase employability,
  - apprenticeships
  - community learning
  - general adult education through a self-funded model
5. These agendas drove the work of the council's Skills Team, with its 14-19 work on Career education independent advice and guidance (CEIAG), apprenticeship and work readiness programmes, and York Learning, which has become a commercial provider of individual and workplace training. Through our emerging Economic Strategy, the Economic Development Team has sought to broaden this approach, introducing the theme of "21<sup>st</sup> century jobs" and seeking to expand opportunities for training to support skills for the existing workforce, career change and business start-up.
  6. The economic impact of Covid-19 locally, regionally and nationally has forced a significant rethink in how the skills and training world supports the city's economy, with the potential scale of job losses in some of our lowest paying sectors highlighting long-standing issues in York's labour market. The full impact of Covid-19 on York's economy is still emerging, but it is clear that the certain sectors in the city are experiencing significant disruption and that this will have a disproportionate impact on certain demographic groups in the city, with a particular concern being the impact on women.

### **Key issues**

7. Economic forecasts are still predicting a significant number of job losses across the global economy. For York, current estimates suggest that as many as 8,500 jobs might be lost, with a current benefit claimant rate of 4,995 (July 2020, 175% increase when compared with February 2020).
8. Whilst additional national funding and DWP resources are being made available, this alone will not deliver York's skills and employment recovery. Throughout the past six months, the Council's has focused its work with partners (Appendix A) to:
  - align and, where possible, adapt existing public-funded provision
  - shape local implementation of new national initiatives

- communicate support available to residents, young people and businesses
  - reflect York's emerging and future skills needs in Y&NY LEP plans.
9. However, our current skills and employment offer, predicated on what has essentially been full employment in York, is not sufficient to address the acute needs and increased demand expected over the next 12-18 months.
  10. At the same time, the city needs to understand and develop skills and employment opportunities that support a sustained economic recovery, recognising that there may need to be investment in infrastructure to enable a move towards 21<sup>st</sup> Century Jobs.
  11. The council's resource and remit to do this is limited, however the council continues to play an important role in facilitating city-wide partnerships. Therefore, a new, city-wide partnership approach is needed to help residents and businesses respond to change in the short term, and to set the longer term framework for prosperous city.
  12. Covid-19 has provided a catalyst for remote and flexible working, enabled by increased use of technology across a range of education and employment sectors. While it is impossible to adequately predict the future skills needs of the workforce, emerging global trends towards a digitally enabled, artificial intelligence driven sustainable economy suggest some potential growth areas for a city such as York. Green employment, smart tourism, and technology driven approaches fit well with the expertise in our colleges and universities, but must be complemented by opportunities for those without the high level qualifications that drive the knowledge economy.
  13. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the gender imbalance in low paid and part time roles. With 15,000 part-time jobs in retail and hospitality particularly at risk, it is important to note that 70% of that workforce is female, with 25% of all part time roles being filled by women over the age of 50. While we recognise that retail and hospitality will continue to recruit significant numbers of people, an overall decline in size of these sectors is expected.

14. To respond to the challenges of upskilling and reskilling our workforce, we have already set out a need for £10m to support adult learning and skills development and enable 5,000 people to get better jobs.

### **City Skills and Employment Board – Terms of Reference (Appendix B)**

15. Following Executive in July 2020, positive discussions have taken place with members of the existing Higher York partnership about extending membership to form York's City Skills and Employment Board (the Board).
16. Purpose - The purpose of the Board will be to oversee the development and implementation of the Adult learning and Skills Strategy. Partners' willingness to co-design the strategy demonstrates their understanding of the scale of change needed, as well as their commitment to delivery. Agreement has also been made that partners will contribute to the cost of a secretariat to support the governance of the Board.
17. The Board will also play a role in influencing regionally and nationally for flexibility and funding, with the forthcoming devolution deal providing the main opportunity to change the Adult Education and Skills landscape.
18. Membership - The proposed membership is contained within the Draft Terms of Reference (Appendix B) including, further business and worker representation through: York Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Institute of Directors, York Professionals (business support network), Vocational training providers, Private sector training and skills providers, TUC, Jobcentre Plus and DWP.
19. In addition to the Council's officer representation, Executive Members for Economy and Strategic Planning and Culture, Leisure and Communities will join the Board to represent the local democratic process.

### Governance

20. Beyond agreeing its own business, the Board is not a decision making body but will advise and make recommendations to the Council, LEP and combined authority, and to the City Leaders Board. The Board will oversee the delivery of the strategy and

provide a forum for dialogue between skills providers and local employers to inform the development of future skills provision.

21. The Adult Learning and Skills Strategy will therefore be submitted for formal signoff by the Council Executive and a recommendation made that it is adopted as the City's Skills Strategy to 2030.
22. Communications - To establish the profile of the partnership and support clear and consistent messaging for residents and businesses, it is proposed that external communications activity relating to the Board is embedded within the Council's Skills and Employment Recovery Communications Plan (Appendix C).
23. Temporary resource, is being recruited to deliver this plan which draws on the existing 'let's be York campaign' to:
  - **Target communications directly where they're** needed - cutting through the information overload and providing clear and concise messaging
  - **Build advocacy across the city and wider region** - amplify the message by partner organisations sharing information and supporting links (the 'halo effect')
  - **Build confidence in York's employment/skills sector** – demonstrating sector leadership and what is already being achieved across the City
  - **Provide a steady drumbeat of messaging** – proactive engagement with regular local media articles / features and targeted social media campaigns
24. A key strand of work will be the development of an online information hub where residents and employees can find information about and access skills, training and employment support. All communications will signpost this hub to help build its reach and engagement.
25. **Developing the Strategy – Timeline (Appendix D)**
26. To ensure the strategy development work progresses with the required pace, a subgroup has been put forward, led by the University of York. The Council's Head of Economic Development and Skills Team Manager will be part of the group, ensuring alignment with the wider recovery work and providing regular reports to Decision Sessions - Executive Member for Economy and Strategic Planning.
27. In line with York's 10 year and 1 year recovery strategies and the York Economic Strategy, the Adult Learning and Skills work will comprise a one-year plan (2021) to **help people through**

**change** and a 10-Year Strategy (to 2030) focused on **21<sup>st</sup> Century jobs**.

28. The high-level timelines for producing these are attached (Appendix D) with key activity including:

<b>One-year plan – Helping people through change</b>	
<b>Building the evidence base</b>	
Sep 20	Triangulate the intelligence partners already have in relation to skills and employment needs in York and Identify key evidence needs / gaps for <b>one-year plan</b>
Sep 20 – Nov 20	Conduct targeted research (phase 1)
Sep 20 – Nov 20	Feed in latest regional and national reports (such as those commissioned by the Y&NY LEP Skills Board and National Skills Academies)
<b>Engagement – skills and employment needs</b>	
Sep 20 – Nov 20	Engage employers and worker representative's e.g. local workforce development groups and sector skills specialist e.g. Sector Skills Academies re: emerging and future skills needs.
<b>Executive sign off – Dec 2020</b>	

<b>10-year strategy – 21<sup>st</sup> Century Jobs</b>	
<b>Building the evidence base</b>	
Oct – Nov 20	Triangulate the intelligence partners already have in relation to skills and employment needs in York and Identify key evidence needs / gaps for <b>10 year strategy</b>
Jan 2021	Conduct targeted research (Phase 2)
Dec 20 – Feb 21	Feed in latest regional and national reports (such as those commissioned by the Y&NY LEP Skills Board and National Skills Academies)
<b>Engagement – skills and employment needs (if needed)</b>	
Jan 21	Engage local employer and worker representatives e.g. workforce development groups re: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- emerging and future skills needs</li> <li>- test specific strategy content</li> </ul>
<b>Executive sign off – March 2021</b>	

## Consultation

29. The principal objective of the City Skills and Employment Board is to co-design the Adult Learning and Skills Strategy for York. The Board will be consultative in nature and its membership diverse. The process for developing the strategy will give voice to business, education & training providers, local workforce representatives and regional/national sector skills specialists.

## Council Plan

30. The new Council plan identifies eight priorities, five of which are relevant to this work:
- Good health and wellbeing;
  - Well-paid and an inclusive economy;
  - A better start for children and young people;
  - A greener and cleaner city; and,
  - Safe communities and culture for all.

## Implications

31. **Financial** – the contribution of £8,500 for the dedicated communications resource and £10,000 contribution towards the Board's secretariat would come from within the Children, Economies and Communities Directorate budget  
**Human Resources (HR)** – no implications;  
**One Planet Council / Equalities** – the Adult Learning and Skills Strategy will support our equalities commitments  
**Legal** – no implications;  
**Crime and Disorder** – no implications;  
**Information Technology (IT)** – no implications;  
**Property** – no implications.

## Risk Management

32. There are no specific risks identified in respect of the recommendations.

## Contact Details

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### Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

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**Assistant Director – Education & Skills**

Report  Date 10/09/2020  
Approved

**Wards Affected:** List wards or tick box to indicate all

**All**

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

### Background Papers:

Appendix A – Public Funded Support

Appendix B – York Skills and Employment Board – Draft Terms of Reference

Appendix C – Skills recovery communications plan - Draft

Appendix D – Adult Learning & Skills Strategy development timeline - Draft