

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

**27 April 2021**

Report of the Assistant Director, Education and Skills

**Skills Strategy Update**

**Summary**

1. This report provides an update on the work the city's Skills and Employment Board in developing a 10-year Skills Strategy.
2. The York Skills and Employment Board is a partnership, made up of employer, employee, education and council representatives. Since its inception in September 2020, the board has actively driven the development of the One-year plan: Skills for Employment and 10- year Skills Strategy.
3. At its monthly meetings, the Board considers the key themes and issues emerging from the evidence base developed by the Task and Finish Group, which includes the feedback received from engagement with businesses, Elected Members and other stakeholders. Over the past year, more than 200 businesses have contributed to the development of the strategy through sector round tables, the Talent and Skills Event as part of York Business Week and in-depth interviews with University of York student research teams.
4. Continued engagement with those not directly involved in writing the strategy is core to our approach. Partnership working will underpin the delivery of the one-year plan, which was approved by the Executive Member at his decision session in March 2021, and further sector engagement, over coming months, will help to shape the 10-year Skills Strategy.

**Recommendations**

5. The Executive Member is asked to:
  - 1) Note the contents of the report.

Reason: To support the work of the partnership to develop a 10-year Skills Strategy for York.

## **Background**

6. At his Decision Session on 22 September, the Executive Member for Economy and Strategic Planning approved the partnership approach and framework for developing a new skills strategy. This included the Terms of Reference of the city Skills and Employment Board, comprising representatives from the city's colleges and universities, independent training providers, local employers, the Federation of Small Businesses, West and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce, DWP, TUC, the council and Local Enterprise Partnership.
7. The city's Skills and Employment Board has continued to meet monthly (five times since its inception) to shape the strategy and drive the work of the partnership's Task & Finish Group.
8. This work is in parallel with the development and delivery of the city's One-year Skills Plan, which was approved by the Executive Member at his decision session in March 2021.
9. The Task and Finish Group is chaired by the University of York and includes partners from York's FE colleges, universities and the council. It actively engages with employers to shape outputs, such as the sector skills summaries and one-year plan, and to deliver priority projects.
10. Continuing to provide opportunities to contribute for those not directly involved in preparing the strategy is at the core of our approach to engagement. To date, more than 200 businesses have contributed through sector round tables, the Talent and Skills Event as part of York Business Week, and in-depth interviews with University of York student research teams.
11. Valuable feedback gathered from stakeholders over the past year, including local employers, sector representatives and Members who attended the joint scrutiny committee meeting (1 February 2021) has helped to shape both the one-year plan and the development of the 10-year strategy.
12. Council and education partners are working with stakeholders across the city to deliver priority projects under each of the five commitments set out in the One-year plan:

- **York works – skills support for individuals**  
Support those entering, re-entering or displaced from the workforce to re-train or upskill and connect them with good jobs in sustainable and growth sectors.
  - Priority project focussed on providing localised skills and employment information, advice and guidance, particularly to people in community settings.
  
- **Empowered employers – skills support for businesses**  
Support businesses of all sizes to access national, regional and local skills provision to help them plan, diversify and grow.
  - Priority project to develop models for a skills hub, while continuing to promote existing business and employee support.
  
- **Pioneering provision – productive partnerships**  
Work in partnership to make the most of national, regional and local initiatives and adapt local skills provision in response to emerging needs.
  - Priority project to map existing and inform future digital skills provision, while supporting people to make the most of funded opportunities e.g. Level 3 entitlement and digital bootcamps.
  
- **Education to employment and self-employment – York’s pipeline**  
Support positive progression for all by preparing those leaving education or re-entering the world of work for a culture of lifelong learning and entrepreneurship.
  - Priority project to develop a framework for improved employer engagement with education providers, with a focus on encouraging the creation of Apprenticeships and T-Level placements for 2021/22.
  
- **York shares - communicating the offer**  
Develop a coherent and effective marketing and communications strategy to ensure information advice and guidance is provided at the point of need in a timely and effective way.
  - Targeted communications will support the four priority projects.

13. Over the next 6 – 12 months, these will help support people and businesses through change and begin to develop the skills infrastructure that will support York's longer-term economic recovery from COVID-19.
14. Members of the Task and Finish Group have also identified that two of the priority projects (Information Advice and Guidance and the Skills Hub) may be suitable for council submission to the Community Renewal Fund.
15. Building on the commitments made in the One-year plan, the strategy will move the role of skills in the city from a position of '*Helping people through change*' to supporting '*21<sup>st</sup> Century jobs*'. It will include a strong focus on the priorities for years 2 to 5.
16. From work undertaken to better understand the drivers and needs of the local labour market to support inclusive growth, a number of potential priorities emerged for consideration by the Skills and Employment Board. Building on its past discussions around strategic themes - such as digital skills equality, start-up diversity and skills for the green economy - the board recently provided feedback to hone more than 30 potential priorities.
17. The Board is keen to ensure that stakeholders, including local employers, sector representatives and Members, continue to shape the strategy. The Task and Finish Group is therefore developing plans for focussed engagement with specific sectors, on key themes and priorities.
18. This will include specific engagement opportunities with high employment sectors such as hospitality and leisure, and high growth sectors including rail, biotech and IT. Emerging themes include part-time work and women in the workforce, while emerging priorities include STEM opportunities, young people and apprenticeships and retraining.
19. Skills is a key theme within the proposed engagement plan for the new Economic Strategy. The Task and Finish Group will continue to feed into and receive feedback from this work, through the Head of Economic Growth and the Skills Team Manager – activity will be aligned and relevant outputs shared, to avoid stakeholder fatigue.
20. Economic Strategy engagement will take place from late May and run until October 2021, with the potential for engagement on skills to conclude sooner. It is therefore proposed that Members of the Economy and Place and Children, Education and Communities scrutiny committees provide feedback on the 10-year Skills Strategy at a joint session in September 2021.

## Consultation

21. Members of the Task and Finish group and Members of the Skills and Employment Board are engaged in the work on the one-year skills plan, 10-year skills strategy and delivering activity on the ground. Engagement with businesses and Elected Members has taken place as described in the paper. This will continue through engagement on the Economic Strategy and targeted activity driven by the Task and Finish Group.

## Council Plan

22. The Council Plan identifies eight priorities, four of which are relevant to this work:
- Well-paid and an inclusive economy;
  - A better start for children and young people;
  - Safer communities and culture for all;
  - An open and effective council.

## Implications

23. The following implications have been considered:

- **Financial** – no implications.
- **Human Resources (HR)** – no implications;
- **One Planet Council / Equalities** – no implications
- **Legal** – no implications;
- **Crime and Disorder** – no implications;
- **Information Technology (IT)** – no implications;
- **Property** – no implications.

## Risk Management

24. No specific risks identified.

## Contact Details

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**Report**  **Date** 16 April 2021  
**Approved**

**Specialist Implications Officer(s)** List information for all  
None

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

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

**Background Papers:**  
None

**Annexes**  
None

**List of Abbreviations Used in this Report**  
None