

STOCKPORT WORK AND SKILLS PLAN

Report of the Director of Education, Work and Skills

1. INTRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC INTENT

- 1.1 This Work and Skills Plan is fundamental to a establishing more sustainable, inclusive and diverse economy that benefits everyone It has been drafted to complement the ambitions articulated in our other key strategies including our One Stockport Borough Plan, Economic Plan and Schools Strategy.
- 1.2 Working in partnership across the Borough we will support accessible, fair and good opportunities for residents to learn the skills they need to achieve their ambitions while ensuring that business and other organisations have access to the talent that they need to be successful and grow.
- 1.3 Our ambition for education, work and skills is about how we support our residents to have access to the best education, skills and qualifications at all stages of their lives, as well as ensuring we support those who most need it to access the work and skills they need to succeed.
- 1.4 Our ambition requires the following vision:
- To have the **best schools and colleges** in the country with every child included in their success.
 - Every young person is empowered to **make a positive and well-informed choice** about their post 16 learning and future career.
 - Everyone has the opportunities and skills to **successfully achieve their ambitions**.
 - A **thriving economy for Stockport** which works for all our residents.
- 1.5 This strategy seeks to:
- Ensure we have the very best schools, colleges and training providers;
 - There is **choice and opportunity for every learner**;
 - Ensure economic growth through a strong and diverse pipeline of appropriately skilled workers;
 - Ensure every partner in the education, work and skills system understands their role and significance in delivering the above.
- 1.6 A key determiner of our success will be the extent to which partners can work together towards a common aim. It is for that reason that we wish to engage with wide ranging partners to develop this strategy, to ensure it is representative and proportionate to the challenges our Borough and our partners face.
- 1.7 As part of a significant engagement period, members of this committee are asked to comment on the following strategy.

2. BOROUGH AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 2.1 Stockport is strategically located within one of the most important, exciting, and dynamic city regions in the country. The Borough has experienced rapid and sustained economic growth and is home to a range of nationally and internationally significant companies. Stockport makes a distinctive contribution to the Greater Manchester (GM) Economy.
- 2.2 Underpinning the success of Stockport's economy is a highly skilled workforce supporting growth, in particular, knowledge intensive business sectors:
- 3rd largest workforce within Greater Manchester, with 124,000 people employed in 13,000 businesses;
 - 41.1% of Stockport's residents qualified to NVQ level 4 or above;
 - GCSE attainment consistently higher than the Greater Manchester and UK averages;
 - 99,000 students across 4 local universities with 33,000 graduates per annum;
 - over 35% (63,000) of the working population have professional occupations;
 - 8,800 are employed in digital and creative industries and over 10,000 employed in manufacturing;
 - over 26,000 are employed in business, financial and professional services in the borough.
- 2.3 According to the 2023 State of the Borough Report:
- Our population has grown by 4% since 2011 from 283,000 to 295,000
 - International immigration is a key driver of population growth, 9% of Borough's residents were not born in the UK in 2020.
 - Employment rates have not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels with 77.8% of residents 16-64yrs in employment in September 2019, to 75.9% of residents 16-64yrs in employment in September 2023
 - Since 2013 there has been a 14% rise in active enterprises, from 11,845 in 2015 to 13,520 in 2023.
- 2.4 Through the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, the Government has set out its intent that every area would have a Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) agreed with Government by Summer 2023. Stockport's own approach is part of the Greater Manchester wide strategy drafted by GM Chamber of Commerce. The primary purpose of the LSIPs is to put the voice of employers' front and centre of the development of skills provision, using an evidence led approach to make sure that the LSIP is capable of underpinning future funding decisions and directly influencing future provision. In bringing forward this Work and Skills Plan for Stockport, the Council can influence the iterative development of the LSIP, ensuring that a coherent and well-defined Stockport perspective is at the forefront.
- 2.5 The government has made it clear that the purpose of post-16 education system is to support people to move into high-skilled jobs, either directly, or through progression into good quality further and higher education courses. To enable their objectives for post-16 education the government is in the process of reforming current post-16 qualifications at Level 3 and below.
- 2.6 Greater Manchester's most recent devolution deal is regarded to be the most significant yet in terms of embedding the role of local decision-making through additional powers, new financial freedoms and new accountability arrangements. Part of these new freedom's allows Greater Manchester the ability to create the country's first integrated technical education city-region. The deal extends existing devolved adult skills functions to include further areas of post-19 education and skills activity; and provides greater oversight of post-

16 technical education and skills and careers. The partnership between the GMCA and DfE will focus and aid:

- Responsiveness of the system, connecting commissioners with funders;
- Strategic oversight of the implementation of local skills improvement plans;
- Support effective planning functions linked to both sufficiency and alignment between the technical education offer and local labour market needs;
- The autonomy to develop an all-age careers strategy for Greater Manchester that responds to the local skills improvement plan and reflects the skills ambition for the city region.

- 2.7 Greater Manchester has plans to introduce a Greater Manchester Baccalaureate (MBacc) for technical education, which would sit alongside the existing English Baccalaureate (EBacc) for those wanting to pursue a university education. The MBacc will guide students towards subjects which will maximise their chances of getting a good job in the region in areas such as Engineering, Computer Science, Construction, Education or the creative subjects. A pilot is planned to launch in September 2024.
- 2.8 Overall, the UK's skills system is complex and largely fragmented and Stockport is no exception to this. Activity generally is driven by funding policy and takes place on an institution-by-institution basis; whilst colleges, universities and businesses connect with each other, there has been no coherent Stockport-wide perspective on what good practice is being delivered and where opportunities to operate at scale and make improvements might be implemented.
- 2.9 In Stockport we are fortunate to have several effective and well-respected education and training providers including our schools and sixth form colleges, further education colleges, and independent training providers. However, at a GM level, feedback is being heard from businesses, both large and small, that the current skills system is flawed in that it can be difficult to engage with and is not always effective in providing the right skills or flexible enough to respond to modern day business demands. In Stockport, through the Stockport Economic Alliance, Work and Skills Partnership, and strategic business relationships established through SMBC, we are aware that businesses across every sector and at every skill level are facing significant recruitment challenges. However, most importantly perhaps, they have indicated a desire to be part of the solution and have offered to get directly involved; this offer presents an invaluable opportunity which must be seized, and this is a key feature of our plan.
- 2.10 Some of our learners face barriers within the skills system too and find it is hard to understand, enter, navigate and progress through the system, as a consequence:
- an increasing number of learners are on waiting lists for courses and not actively participating in education, employment or training (NEET);
 - an increasing number of learners don't attempt to access the system at all;
 - an increasing number of learners ultimately face significant barriers to employment, often without the qualifications, capabilities or skills they need for lifelong learning.
- 2.11 Our schools need more support to meet the Gatsby benchmarks for impartial careers advice. There is a real need for schools to better link up with businesses not only to shape curriculum delivery but to understand the non-academic options for the students for whom that might be a positive choice. From January 2023, schools have been required to provide meaningful encounters in the workplace and the delivery plan being developed from this Work and Skills Plan should recognise and foster this opportunity.
- 2.12 Within the skills system there are a number of stakeholders and delivery agents. From primary schools through to the prospect of in-work progression and the retention of

imminent retirees there are opportunities to promote new careers of the future and to educate and train people to continue to learn and build their experiences through a lifetime of learning. Work already undertaken nationally has highlighted the importance of improving relationships between education and business and this is likely to be needed at Year 7 (or earlier) and at Years 11 / 12.

- 2.13 The Work and Skills Partnership holds overall accountability with the Stockport Economic Alliance holding equal interest; engagement and consultation is being undertaken prior to SMBC's formal approval processes.
- 2.14 Whilst the Council has vital role in shaping, defining and driving forward this Work and Skills plan, its delivery will be led by **our strong network of colleges and training providers**.
- 2.15 The Council is committed to act as a Borough wide strategic leader to enable and drive systemic improvements, provide constrictive challenge, and to hold partners to account.

3. DEFINING THE CHALLENGE

- 3.1 Qualification reforms and devolution are two of a number of aspects of the skills system which could fundamentally change our collective approach. As such this plan cannot attempt to wholly define the problem or put forward all-encompassing resolutions. Our understanding will develop, the problem will shift, so this plan will be the first iteration of many which will plot our work together.

3.2 What we know

3.3 One Stockport Borough and Economic Plan

- 3.4 Our One Stockport Plan provides the overall strategic framework for the Borough and sets the vision for the future that we want to see. As a Borough wide strategy, the Work and Skills Plan directly delivers on most of the One Stockport themes and priorities:

- **Enterprising and productive** - by supporting development and growth of a vibrant and more inclusive economy, and by ensuring that opportunities created in this economy are good quality and fair. Furthermore, by ensuring there is support for our young people to be work ready and that there are opportunities for all our residents to learn and develop the skills they need to meet their own goals and ambitions.
- **Fair and inclusive** - by supporting all our residents to thrive from a skills perspective, and by contributing to improved health and wellbeing by addressing some of the most significant social determinants of health.
- **Climate friendly and resilient** - by growing the supply of training opportunities that we need to transition to a zero-carbon economy, and by promoting the opportunities this creates for our residents and businesses.
- **Accessible and connected** - by growing the supply of training opportunities that enable our residents to access services and employment in an increasingly digitised world.

- 3.5 Our Economic Plan provides a case for change to diversify and grow the economy based on inclusion, green growth, and fairness. The case for change identifies opportunities:

- Stockport benefits from excellent connectivity to the vibrant economic hub being developed at Airport City and is part of the Southern Growth Corridor, an area of strong economic opportunity.
- The Borough has experienced rapid and sustained economic growth over the past decade, making Stockport a major regional economic driver in its own right.
- The borough also retains specialisms across many critical foundational sectors such as utilities, logistics and manufacturing which are integral to regional and national prosperity.
- Stockport makes a distinctive contribution to the Greater Manchester (GM) Economy in terms of its high-quality skills base, its innovative businesses and its thriving VCFSE sector.
- The Council is taking an active role in place-shaping. Stockport town centre is being transformed through award-winning commercial and leisure developments at Stockport Exchange and Redrock work alongside support for a thriving independent sector around the marketplace and Underbanks. Greater Manchester's only Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) has been established in Stockport which is focussed on regenerating Town Centre West.

3.6 It also identifies several key challenges:

- Stockport is the 8th most polarised Borough in England in terms of deprivation (out of 317 local authorities) and borough-wide averages mask acute and highly localised challenges.
- Diversifying Stockport's economy is integral for future resilience. A lack of business dynamism and poor survival rates risks undermining Stockport's recent growth.
- The council has declared a climate emergency. Issues of congestion, air quality and the carbon footprint of our buildings and business activities need to be addressed if we are to meet regional and national net zero targets.

3.7 Population Demography, Forecasts, And Capacity

3.8 Stockport is the 8th most polarised Borough in England in terms of deprivation (out of 317 local authorities).

3.9 Mapping of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) reinforces the borough's stark polarisation challenges. Whilst Brinnington contains some of the most deprived neighbourhoods nationally, places such as Bramhall fall within the bottom 10% most deprived nationally.

3.10 This polarisation poses specific challenges for our economic development and without our attention it will limit both our potential for economic growth and limit the potential of our residents to benefit from our economic growth.

3.11 Stockport's population is older than other many other areas in England.

- The population aged 16-39 accounts for 47% of people in Stockport compared to 50% in England.
- Similarly, the working age population (aged 16-64) accounts for 60% of people in Stockport compared to 64% in Greater Manchester and 62% in England.
- The working age population has also remained relatively stagnant over the last decade, with -1% change since 2010 in Stockport compared to 4% across Greater Manchester and 3% nationally.

- The population aged 0 to 15 accounts for 20% of Stockport's population, which is slightly below Greater Manchester (21%) but above the national average (19%).
- On average, men die 11 years earlier in our most disadvantaged community compared to our most prosperous area, and there is a significant difference in how early people start to experience life limiting illnesses.

3.12 In addition, as with many of our other demographics, the age of the population is not consistent across the borough. In parts of Stockport town centre residents are up to 22 years younger than some of the borough's suburbs such as Windlehurst. The average age mirrors Stockport's deprivation patterns – with the most deprived neighbourhood's typically having the lowest median age.

3.13 Mapping the education attainment of learners in secondary schools for English and Maths shows that the lowest levels of attainment are located in the areas with highest deprivation, whereas schools in Cheadle Hulme and Bramhall have over 80% of pupils achieving the equivalent of grade C or above in both English and Maths.

3.14 Stockport has the second lowest child poverty rate¹ of all GM Borough's after Trafford. Despite this, one in four children (25.4%) live in poverty after housing costs. The highest concentration of child poverty is in Brinnington, Stockport town centre and Reddish.

3.15 An Attainment 8 score is a measure published annually showing the average academic performance of a secondary school. It is calculated by adding together pupils' highest scores across eight specific school subjects. While these numbers are not made publicly available on a pupil-by-pupil basis, scores taken from across a school year group are averaged to produce a school's overall score. A higher score indicates a higher average set of grades, a lower score indicates a lower average set of grades. The following table shows these scores for all children in Stockport, those who do not have special educational needs, those who do and children who experience disadvantage (those eligible for free school meals).

All cohorts	46.9
No identified SEND	51.1
SEND without an EHCP	35
SEND with EHCP	16.4
Disadvantaged ² background	33.7
Non-disadvantaged background	51.2

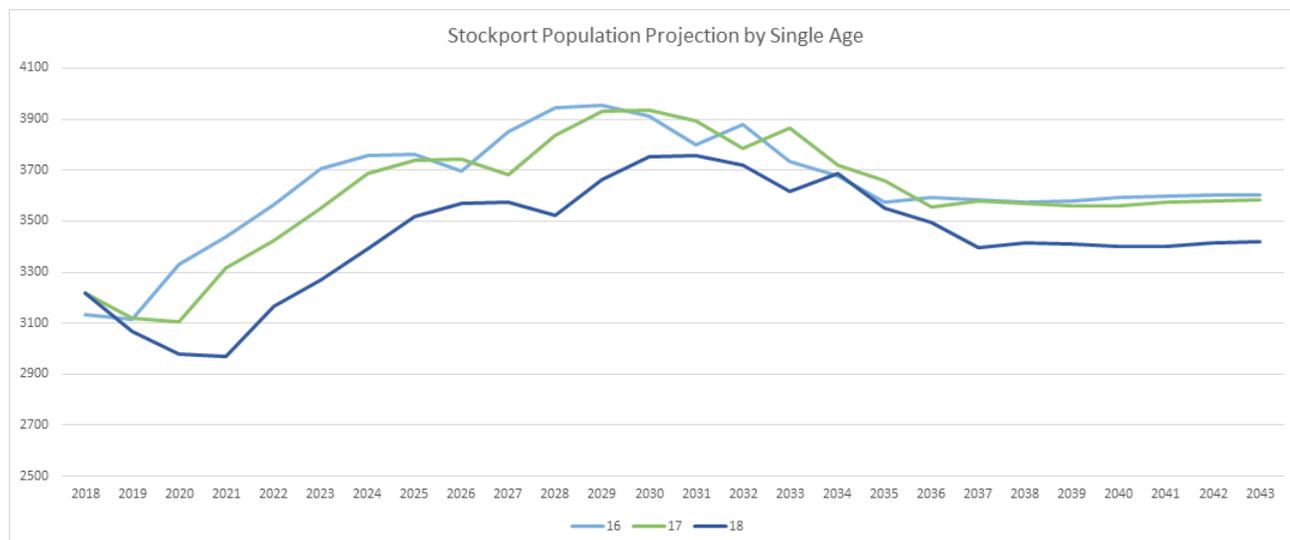
Average Attainment 8 scores across all pupils leaving KS4 in Stockport, 2022/23 academic year – Source: LG INFORM.

3.16 The Council is considering how major regeneration of the town centre can redefine demography in the town centre through the Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC). Through social infrastructure, demography, and lived environment planning the MDC seeks to mitigate some of the inequalities residents currently feel, to act as a vehicle to improvements in the skills system, but also to drive entry/occupational learners into Stockport provision and then into Stockport jobs.

¹ The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) measures the proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families. It is a subset of the Income Deprivation Domain which measures the proportion of the population in an area experiencing deprivation relating to low income.

² Disadvantaged pupils are those who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) at any time during the last six years and children looked after (in the care of the local authority for a day or more or who have been adopted from care).

3.17 The ONS population estimates forecast that the 15-19yrs population in Stockport will grow by 8.8% by 2030, DfE projections estimate that growth in this population could be as much as 12.7% whereas GP registrations of all school age pupils in Stockport indicate that growth is around 11.1%. GMCA are currently estimating the Greater Manchester populations of the same age will grow by 11.4% in the same period.



Actual and forecasted numbers of 16, 17 and 18 year olds by academic year – Source: Public Health

3.18 In terms of Stockport residents attending Stockport schools, we know the number of pupils leaving KS4 and entering the post-16 skills system has/will be approximately:

Academic Year	Total Cohort	No SEND	Identified having SEND	as	EHCP
2019	2892	2360	532		234
2020	3067	2393	674		289
2021	3116	2431	685		268
2022	3254	2531	723		336
2023	3473	2523	950		373
2024	3570	2658	912		319
2025	3669	2663	1006		341
2026	3576	2629	947		310
2027	3665	2660	1005		345
2028	3858	2891	967		345*
2029	3845	2965	880		295*
2030	3828	2941	887		330*

Actuals and forecasts for pupils entering the post-16 skills system, (* may have significant variation due to policy and practice changes relating to the assessment of EHCPs) Source: SMBC pupil forecasting model

3.19 Of our pupil population in Primary and Secondary schools, 17.92% had a special educational need or disability compared with 16.8% based on a mean average of CIPFA nearest neighbours. 5.33% of pupils had an Education Health Care Plan in comparison to 4.2%, whilst 12.63% had their needs met through SEN Support in comparison to 12.6%.

- 3.20 Autism; Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH); Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN); and Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD), represent the four biggest areas of growth in the past five years. SEMH specifically bucks national trends, whereby nationally SEMH numbers have risen to 1 in 5 children having a primary need of SEMH, in Stockport 1 in 4 children have a primary need of SEMH. This equates to approximately 396 more pupils with SEMH in Stockport than another typical authority in England.
- 3.21 Of all learners that left KS4 in July 2022:
- Approx. 91% remained in full-time education;
 - Of the above who remain in full-time education, approx. 32% attended provision outside of Stockport (68% access places in Stockport);
 - Approx. 1% entered training;
 - Approx 4% started an apprenticeship;
 - Approx 3% were not in any kind of education, employment, or training, the vast majority of these learners have some form of identified vulnerability.
- 3.22 The national rise in learners leaving KS4 in coming years will affect choice and availability of places across provision external to Stockport and as such we must look at how we can create more places, above that of anticipated population growth, to provide choice and opportunity for those learners who would ordinarily have sought places outside of Stockport but who cannot secure a place.
- 3.23 We must plan on the assumption that as much as 80% of Stockport learners in full-time education will need to access a place in Stockport – this equates to approx. 472 additional places (3845 pupils forecasted to leave KS4 in 2029 minus 3254 pupils leaving KS4 in 2022 multiplied by 80%) compared with 2022 by 2028. This is equivalent to an uplift of 14% and equates to an additional small sixth form campus.
- 3.24 This section tells us that:
- Our demography indicates significant polarisation from some of the most deprived areas in the country to some of the most affluent;
 - Learners living in areas of deprivation tend to have fewer skills or qualification relevant to GM recruitment needs and our plan for inclusive economic growth;
 - The number of learners entering post-16 education, employment, or training is increasing and numbers are set to increase to a peak in 2028 where approx. 485 additional learners will enter this sector;
 - The number of learners entering post-16 education, employment, or training with identified SEND will increase;
 - Those who fail to secure any form of education employment or training having left KS4 tend to possess some form of vulnerability such as possessing an identified SEND, presently and previously looked after, or presently or previously living in income deprivation.
- 3.25 This means that:
- our challenges locally are not evenly spread and there are areas of the borough where children experience a high level of disadvantage, and there is a risk that this will become entrenched across generations;

- we are planning for inclusive economic growth, our ambition is to have more jobs and better jobs, so to access these jobs young people need reach their potential and achieve the highest skills and qualification they are able to;
- in order thrive and be a productive resident, young people need positive choice across the post-16 skills system, and to do this they need to achieve well in their pre-16 career;
- without careful planned growth in places there will be a lack of positive choice for learners and it will be the most vulnerable learners who are left without any choice, or worse without places.

3.26 Visibility And Awareness Of The Skills System And Local Employment Opportunities, Source Stockport LSIP

- 3.27 Stockport has the highest number of recruitment difficulties compared with other GM authorities, with 79% of businesses reporting they struggled to recruit staff. Stockport's employers especially had problems recruiting 'professional / managerial' roles, as 43% of them reported that getting people for these roles presented a challenge. This was followed by 'skilled and technical' (38.7%), 'clerical' (23.2%) and 'unskilled and semi-skilled' (14.1%). Notably, recruitment problems for every role were greater in Stockport compared to the Greater Manchester average.
- 3.28 The hardest-to-obtain technical skills from candidates were 'specialist skills/knowledge to perform the role' and 'knowledge of products/services offered by their organisation' with 46.3% and 45% of businesses reporting these. These two skills areas exceeded the others by far. In third and fourth place came 'advanced IT skills' (16.2%) and 'basic IT skills' (15.3%).
- 3.29 Regarding soft skills, 'ability to manage own time and prioritise own tasks' (33.3%), 'sales' (31.5%) and 'managing own feelings or the feelings of others' (29.6%) were the most difficult to find in candidates. 'IT skills' (both advanced and basic) and 'sales' were identified as being in short supply more often in Stockport than in Greater Manchester.
- 3.30 The training courses with highest demand in Stockport were 'basic functional skills for business' (33.6%), 'digital marketing' (31.4%) and 'sales & business development' (30.5%). Other popular training courses were 'business leadership & management' (30%) and 'specialised functional skills for business' (25.9%). Compared to Greater Manchester, businesses in Stockport were substantially more interested in 'digital marketing' courses and less interested in the 'soft skills' and 'business leadership and management' courses.
- 3.31 The below table shows a sample of occupations by total number of vacancy postings in Stockport from 2017 – 2022. Source: Adzuna.

Vacancies	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Social Care worker	1702	1845	1757	2246	3048	2546
Customer service advisor	1686	1442	1050	336	1054	1297
General nurse	1623	1325	1350	1318	1214	1015
Mental health nurse	880	779	622	359	NO DATA	NO DATA
Administrator	654	447	524	342	710	884
Teacher	NO DATA	NO DATA	255	NO DATA	NO DATA	565
Teaching assistant	NO DATA	NO DATA	470	426	718	835

3.32 This section tells us:

- there are skills gaps within Stockport's existing workforce which may act as a constraint on productivity, economic growth and levels of earnings;
- There is an apparent lack of awareness from an employer's perspective of the availability of occupation training of existing workforce;
- There is a perceived lack of awareness from education, and training providers that employers are demanding these qualities/behaviours/skills, and possibly a reluctance from providers to change their business models because of risk;
- Stockport suffering higher than GM average recruitment difficulties suggests that candidates may be choosing their employment opportunities elsewhere, exacerbating local recruitment challenges.

3.33 This means that:

- Our skills plan needs consideration of the skills and training offer from 16-64 years;
- Whilst the LSIP is an excellent vehicle to highlight skills gaps, nothing can replace direct collaboration between employers and skills and training providers;
- Consideration must be given to how Stockport markets itself and its employers alongside Stockport One Future and its five big things such as 'Best place to work', 'Best place to live' etc. perhaps with variants of best place to work in social care, best teaching opportunities in Stockport etc.

3.34 Participation, and the prevention of NEETs

3.35 Stockport Council's Education and Careers Advice Service (ECAS) target those young people in year 11, who are most in need of support, to ensure a positive transition into education, employment and training. Those identified possess either an EHC Plan, are in receipt of SEN support, are children in care, or who are for other reasons at risk of becoming NEET. They are targeted in all Stockport mainstream schools and PRUs and receive one to one bespoke support to transition into the next phase of their life.

3.36 The increase in pupil numbers generally and those who have some form of SEND, has put a significant strain on post-16 provision in local colleges and training providers who are reporting on-going waiting lists for young people to access their provision. The impact of Covid has also exacerbated anxiety and mental health issues with young people; this is also a contributory factor in the increase in NEET numbers locally, as well as reduced attendance in secondary phase education which will compromise the achievement of skills and qualifications in young people.

3.37 Whilst it is clear that increased capacity is needed generally in the system, specific capacity and resource is needed at foundation level, level 1 and 2 courses. Consideration also needs to be given as to how the post-16 system engages with and prioritises the placement of disadvantaged learners. In a competitive market for places, it is these learners that will be at the back of the queue and potentially without any form of provision, particularly if they have not achieved level 2 maths and English.

3.38 This section tells us that:

- The council is anticipating increased numbers of NEETs with data expected to confirm that in the next few months;

- Whilst tailored support is offered to those most at risk of becoming NEET, more needs to be done to support these learners into skills and training opportunities that they are motivated to engage in;
- Achievement of level 2 maths and English is a key requirement.

3.39 This means that:

- Alongside careful planning and commissioning of places over the coming years, careful consideration needs to be given as to how these cohorts of learners can be prioritised in the system to access places and have the greatest choice;
- Our thinking around alternative provision and pupil referral units (pre-16) needs to link in with education and training providers (post-16) to broaden their offer, essentially creating pathways from as early as KS3 into skills and training pathways post-16.

3.40 Careers Advice

3.41 Careers education, information, advice and guidance is provided in schools, across key stages, and is supported by The Gatsby Benchmarks which are:

- A stable careers programme
- Learning from careers and labour market information
- Addressing the needs of each student
- Linking curriculum learning to careers
- Encounters with employees and employers
- Experience of workplaces
- Encounters with further and higher education
- Personal guidance.

3.42 The quality of Support for young people can vary and schools would benefit from support in working towards the Quality in Careers Award. The Quality in Careers Standard is the national quality award for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) in secondary schools, colleges and work-based learning.

3.43 Anecdotally we know that the quality of the careers advice available in our secondary schools is variable depending on the school you attend. We also know that a number of secondary schools have outsourced their careers advice resulting in little or no direct interaction between employers, post-16 providers and school leaders is taking place. As such no meaningful advice can be given, no curriculum development can occur, and there is no feedback mechanism or responsibility taken in terms of the role the school has in preparing the pupil for a productive life.

3.44 This section tells us:

- We don't fully understand whether the quality of careers advice in Stockport is sufficient to meet the ambitions we have as a Borough;
- The quality in Careers award is an objective benchmark which could allow all stakeholders to better appreciate the quality of our collective careers advice;
- Providers may not be aware of or making the best, full use of the careers resources available to them.

3.45 This means that:

- This is an area where the Council should act a strategic leader, advocating for good communication and collaboration;
- Quality careers advice is central to our plans around creating positive choice and inspiring our young people in to careers where their interests, abilities and skills lie.

3.46 LSIP

3.47 Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) are an employer-led initiative from the Department for Education (DfE) in England. They aim to reshape skills training provision to better meet the local needs of employers and the wider economy.

3.48 Working with the Greater Manchester Chambers of Commerce and other organisations, 'Employer Representative Bodies' will consider the current and future local skills needs identified by the employers working with them. The iterative plans will outline what employers, training providers and stakeholders can do locally to support the delivery of training that meets those future skills needs.

3.49 A summary of Stockport's LSIP is as follows:

3.50 Anticipated digitisation of manufacturing and health and social care requires that additional consideration is given to the creation or scaling of courses which cover computing, AI, analytics.

3.51 Stockport MDC and other developments across GM will lead to a greater demand in construction skills. It is anticipated that a significant proportion of construction workers have or will retire by 2031. We will need to consider how we can best leverage this rich source of experience and talent either as it leaves or before it leaves the industry. Construction skills will need to be supplemented and complemented by green, low carbon/net zero construction skills.

3.52 The education sector faces severe recruitment difficulties. There is a need to expand training provision in various subject areas, demand for early years teachers, teaching assistants and STEM. There isn't adequate local training provision in this area and addressing this gap needs the creation of new courses and pathways.

3.53 The transition to net zero will mean increased adoption of electric/hydrogen/low carbon vehicles, which is likely to create demand for specialised vehicle maintenance and component replacement. Motor Vehicles Service & Maintenance courses will need to incorporate the knowledge and skills needed in this area.

3.54 This section tells us that:

- The LSIP provides detailed analysis of labour market information and provides clear recommendations that both employers, and education and training providers can follow to create short- and medium-term delivery plans for skills shortages.

3.55 This means that:

- At a point where we are collectively looking to build capacity, the LSIP provides a steer as to possibly what kind of capacity needs to exist.

3.56 What we need to understand over the next 12 months

1. How well do various learner cohorts attend and attain through the post-16 system (across all education and training providers)?
2. How can the Stockport employers’ voice (and wider GM and North West employers) be heard across the system from Primary/secondary schools through to further education/training providers and higher education providers?
3. How can we best support careers advice in Stockport?
4. How can we better ensure every learner in Stockport has the choice and opportunity to access the education or training they want?

4. OBJECTIVES

4.1 Our overarching objectives must be aligned to a broader Greater Manchester perspective however they must address the immediate local issues identified above. They are:

Supporting Businesses	Supporting our residents	Enabling Collaboration	Future Proofing
Help businesses prosper and become more productive by making our skills system more responsive – both to immediate needs and those presented in the medium-longer term.	Help people to benefit from better life chances through improved careers education, information and guidance, linked to clear learning, work and training pathways.	Deliver a step change in our skills system, at pace, through enhanced and purposeful collaboration between and across businesses, schools and skills providers. Increasing awareness across the system to the opportunities that exist for both entry level and occupational learners, and for businesses to shape and influence the curriculum to better meet their needs.	As part of a thematic focus on skills of the future, strengthen the pipeline of priority skills to meet employer demand, recognising the needs of public services, SMEs and larger businesses.

4.2 Priorities

4.3 This Work and Skills Plan must be an evolving document, supporting a greater understanding of the challenges we face and guiding the commissioning decisions we take.

In the same way that we update our pre-16 sufficiency plans annually and reflect these in our capital strategy we intend to do the same with this plan.

4.4 In Our first iteration of the work and skills plan needs to ensure we are addressing some of the fundamentals of the system ensuring we have a strong focus on sufficiency, our disadvantaged learners, and collaboration - as such our priorities must ensure:

- There is sufficient capacity in the system ensuring there is positive choice and opportunity for all learners;
- There is fair and equal access providing choice for all learners irrespective of SEND, ability, qualifications;
- Our learners have access to high quality, timely, engaging and relevant careers advice;
- Our schools have or are working towards the Quality Careers Award;
- We contribute to GMCA's work reforms and post-16 sufficiency;
- Collaboration across the system ensuring the employer's voice is heard by all stakeholders;
- We better embed the principals of lifelong / occupational learning;
- We work towards implementation of the recommendations from the LSIP; We reduce the number of NEETs
- We maximise social value used to benefit work and skills
- We increase the number and survival rate of active enterprises.

4.5 **Delivering the Work and Skills Plan**

4.6 **Governance**

4.7 The Work and Skills Partnership holds overall accountability with the Stockport Economic Alliance holding equal interest; engagement and consultation is being undertaken prior to SMBC's formal approval processes.

4.8 Whilst the Council has vital role in shaping, defining and driving forward this Work and Skills Plan, its delivery will be led by **our strong network of colleges and training providers.**

4.9 The Council is committed to act as a Borough wide strategic leader to enable and drive systemic improvements, provide constructive challenge, and to hold partners to account.

4.10 The Work and Skills Partnership will review progress against the agreed priorities, outcomes and indicators on a periodic basis, taking action to celebrate success, remove barriers and solve issues or problems. The Council's Scrutiny Committees will be invited to review regular updates on progress.

4.11 At a more strategic level the Work and Skills Plan will be monitored through its connection to the One Stockport Economic Plan.

4.12 Once the plan has been adopted, the Work and Skills Partnership, working with Council officers will develop a full delivery plan to implement the identified priorities. The delivery plan will be monitored quarterly and reviewed annually to ensure that it remains responsive to changing labour market and wider economic circumstances. This delivery plan will contain the detailed actions and outputs that guide the day-today work of colleagues and partners in other learning and employment organisations in Stockport.

4.13 Our Priorities in delivering and governing the strategy include:

- Creation of a detailed annual delivery plan that sets actions and milestones for delivery of the strategy.
- Creation of an index of the indicators identified in this strategy to track progress and act accordingly.
- Maintain a productive partnership of stakeholders.
- Working to align Work and Skills Plan priorities to emerging funding opportunities created by central government and other funding agencies.

4.14 **Partnerships**

4.15 The successful delivery of the Work and Skills Plan will rely on joint work with our partners and stakeholders across the Borough and wider region. A significant part of our work will be to manage these relationships and ensure that people and organisations are joined up and are working collaboratively to achieve our priorities.

4.16 Our main partners are:

- Learning and training providers, including schools, colleges and universities, apprenticeship providers, un-accredited providers, registered housing providers, and other accredited providers of qualifications such as community-based learning institutions.
- Employers, including Stockport's anchor institutions, employers in our growth sectors, the foundational economy and within our and our partners' supply chains.
- Voluntary and Community Sector, including organisations that support our residents towards and into learning and employment and organisations that work specifically with people experiencing inequalities.

4.17 The Council's Work and Skills Team will lead on managing this network of relationships and providing opportunities for partners to connect, share best practice and remove barriers. At a strategic and senior level, the Work and Skills Partnership is made up of senior representatives of the organisations listed.

4.18 **Engagement**

4.19 The development of the strategy will be supported by wide ranging engagement. This engagement will be with businesses, employer representative bodies (such as GM Chambers of Commerce), schools, training providers (including colleges, universities and independent training providers) and those who play a key role in supporting people into employment (including the Department for Work and Pensions and other GM Councils).

4.20 This first draft of a Work and Skills Plan will go to the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee in February and their comments will be incorporated into the final publication of this document.

5. **RISK AND IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The risk of SMBC not taking any action is that the skills system continues to be fragmented and, in some ways, difficult to access from both a business and learner perspective. If we

do not act, we will miss out on opportunities for collaboration and sharing, which will harm both the economic growth of Stockport's business community and the skills development opportunities for our residents. Taking no action also increases the risks of Stockport becoming a less desirable place for investment; skills problems are already a significant concern of many established Stockport businesses who could look elsewhere for future investment if they felt the right talent pool was available to them.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The vast majority of activity outlined in the Plan will require support and delivery through a wide range of partners, largely meaning that our commitment is focused on staff time and resources. Any financial contribution from SMBC will come from existing and future budgets, as well as through securing devolved GM funding, such as the Local Skills Improvement Fund.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 7.1 The potential activity outlined in the Skills Plan is intended to wholly inclusive and as such will not have a negative impact on any protected characteristics.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 To note and comment on the development of this work and skills plan.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 Anyone requiring further information should contact Christopher Harland on Tel: 0161 521 1707 or by email on christopher.harland@stockport.gov.uk