

STOCKPORT SKILLS PLAN

Report of the Director of Education, Work & Skills

1. MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

The final draft of the Work and Skills Plan for Stockport.

2. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

- 2.1. This Work and Skills Plan is key to securing to a more sustainable, inclusive and diverse economy that benefits everyone. 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, and to get into good work, while ensuring that business and other organisations have access to the talent that they need to be successful and grow.
- 2.2. Our ambition for education, work and skills is about how we support our residents to have access to the best education, skills, qualifications, and employment 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.
- 2.3. We have undertaken a listening exercise having shared a draft of the Work and Skills Plan with a range of stakeholders. Their valued and insightful feedback has been reflected back into this revised and final draft and is now presented to Children and Families Scrutiny Committee members for comment and endorsement.

3. REFLECTION ON FEEDBACK

- 3.1. Since February 2024 we have been engaging groups of stakeholders in discussions about a recent draft of the Work and Skills Plan. During this time, we have engaged:
 - Corporate Leadership Team
 - Children and Families Scrutiny Committee
 - School representatives
 - College principles
 - Economic Alliance members
 - Work and Skills Partnership members
 - Greater Manchester Combined Authority
 - GM Chamber of Commerce
 - Department for Education

- 3.2. Encouragingly the plan has been well received by stakeholders who have both understood and welcomed the need for some strategic plan in this area and they felt that the draft was a robust first step towards better communication, collaboration, and role clarity.
- 3.3. We received some valuable feedback during our engagement and this has been reflected back into the final draft we present today. The strongest themes that run through feedback received were:
- The plan needed to be grounded more in the Economic Plan with greater focus on Work and Stockport's Economy;
 - The draft plan did not say enough about public sector and work experience;
 - Acknowledgement that childcare is a significant barrier to recruitment and retention of a skilled workforce;
- 3.4. This plan will be reviewed and updated annual as such we expected it to improve in every iteration. We are presenting this first Stockport Skills Plan understanding we have sufficient information to allow us to move into a delivery phase with our partners. There are a lot of moving parts in this sector and we know that our understanding will shift and evolve over time. As such our annual refresh will allow us to reflect on the latest data, changes in national and regional policy , and economic trends accompanied by associated delivery plans from across the sector.
- 3.5. We know our plan will develop over time, sharpening our focus on the challenges, and enhancing our ability to make impact.

4. CONSIDERATIONS

Financial

- 4.1. The vast majority of activity outlined in the Plan will require support and delivery through a wide range of partners, largely meaning that the Council's commitment is focused on staff time and resources.

Legal

- 4.2. This Plan is not a Local Skills Improvement Plan, which are a government initiative introduced in the Skills and Post 16 Education Act 2022 supplemented by statutory guidance issued in October 2022. This legislation does not impose new duties upon the Council. However, working with other stakeholders, the context of this legislation will assist the Council in its strategic role in relation to education, skills and employment planning to deliver its plans for economic growth.

Risk

- 4.3. The risk of Council and partners 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.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1. Committee members are asked to consider the Work and Skills Plan (**Appendix 1**).
- 5.2. Committee members are asked to endorse the Work and Skills Plan, allowing partners to move into delivery.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Christopher Harland on Tel: 0161 521 1707 or by email on christopher.harland@stockport.gov.uk