

Title of Report: Update on the work of the Education & Skills Delivery Partnership	Officer presenting: Head of Business Author: Skills Manager
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

- 1.1 To update members on the work of the Transition Education & Skills Group and the progress made on delivering a number of priority education and skills collaborative actions as identified in the Inclusive Strategic Growth Plan: Community Plan.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Transition Education & Skills Delivery Partnership was established in February 2017 as an implementation structure to deliver the specific detailed actions across the education and skills theme as outlined in the community plan. Four meetings have been held this year with another one scheduled in November.
- 2.2 The remit of the Education & Skills Delivery Partnership is to contribute to the vision of a thriving, prosperous and sustainable City and District with equality of opportunity for all. It has the following mandate:
- It has a strategic role of setting the direction of skills development in the city and district.
 - It has an operational role in leading on co-ordinating and implementing the education and skills actions identified in the Community Plan.
 - It has a reporting role to provide quarterly progress reports to the Community Planning (Transition) Partnership using the Partnership's progress reporting mechanism to monitor key performance measures in line with targets and indicators associated with each outcome.
- 2.3 Membership of the Education & Skills Delivery Partnership is comprised of all the members responsible for the actions in the Strategic Growth Plan including DfE, DfC, NWRC, UU, DE, Business, and Chambers of Commerce & Schools.

3 Key Issues

3.1 With the formal establishment of the Transition Education & Skills Partnership a delivery structure was in place to work collaboratively and coordinate delivery of collaborative actions, therefore council agreed in the short term a £200,000 budget to secure some early project wins using the following approach:

- Prioritisation of actions is focused on partnership working and building on existing initiatives that are already in place rather than duplicating existing activity and waste resources; and
- A focus on planning new activities through joint bids and pooling resources rather than continuing to deliver disparate activities.

3.2 The education and skills collaborative actions outlined below do not include the expansion of the Magee campus and higher and further education generally but it is recognised that this is a key driver for the local economy and these actions are in addition to this. An update on the collaborative actions identified are as follows:

3.3 Shared Education Campus

The submission to the shared application campuses programme is currently with the Minister for approval and has not progressed as power-sharing has not been restored. In the event that it is not positively received it is proposed that whilst the opportunity remains under the Shared Education Campuses Programme to invest in 10 new Shared Education Campuses up to 2019 (five have been approved) that a business case will be commissioned to prepare for the next call for applications.

3.4 Apprenticeships

A number of meetings have taken place with the NWRC and it has been agreed that in working together with other key stakeholders we aim to:

Promote apprenticeships as a progression route to teachers, young people, their parents and businesses;

Promote apprenticeship careers advice and guidance for schools and young people;

Develop the capacity of providers ensuring supply is matched to demand

Encourage more employers across the region to offer apprenticeships; and

Celebrate the successes of apprentices and their employers.

We are currently engaged in reviewing provision in respect of apprenticeships, including higher-level apprenticeships, and considering how best to develop the apprenticeship model (with all training providers) in a way that both supports the Strategic Growth Plan and makes an attractive proposition for the City Deal/Growth Deal.

An action plan is being developed which includes a joint marketing campaign to begin in February 2018 between council and NWRC targeted at students, parents, teachers and businesses to increase the numbers starting and sustaining apprenticeships as a viable career choice across all levels.

In addition, an employer wage incentive is being scoped to ensure that extra support is targeted towards the smallest firms that can least afford the extra upfront costs of taking on an apprentice. The funding criteria set will focus on the creation of a new job to help employers grow their business.

3.5 Learning Cities Network in partnership with NWRC & UU

Five representatives from the Council area attended the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities Conference in Cork from 18th - 20th September 2017. It was an excellent event and a huge success not only the benefits of becoming a Learning City clearly outlined but also the main challenges of establishing a governance structure and a shared vision to take the initiative forward. There is no cost for membership but funding will be required to establish a secretariat.

Following a discussion at the Transition Education and Skills Group it was acknowledged that to progress membership we needed to focus on developing disparate initiatives and activities with greater collaboration and partnership working. Emphasis should be to promote the region and establish connectivity to the city and wider areas. There was also discussion about a regional approach with Letterkenny and Donegal. It was agreed that a workshop to hear about best practice and really examine first-hand what works best and what might be adaptable for this region will be hosted by UU with a facilitator sourced. Belfast City Council who recently submitted an application for membership and Cork County Council have agreed to be in attendance at the workshop to be arranged in the New Year.

3.6 Regeneration

Under this funding allocation it was agreed that developing appropriate occupational route ways for a range of unemployed individuals to up-skill and access job opportunities arising from major local developments was key to bringing more individuals into the labour market.

Two proposals are currently under discussion. Firstly, the neighbourhood renewal managers are working with NWRC and council to scope out the potential for an expansion of level 2 IT courses which are currently only funded in the Triax area under Urban Villages. Secondly, to support the investment in Brooke Park and to engage with local unemployed residents' discussions are ongoing with Conservation Volunteers who have residency in the park on a horticultural project. This is being scoped as a project which would involve tackling mental health through horticulture and as a possible pilot to a larger DfC project under the PfG 'Local Works' agenda.

3.7 Careers Advice & Guidance

Pending the publication of the EA's report on the review and assessment of careers advice in the council area there will be joint delivery of actions to progress some projects. In the interim, as part of Enterprise Week on March 5th it has been agreed there will be an event around skills for Start Up Success to promote routes to self-employment and enterprise development.

3.8 Engineering Collaborative Network Action Plan

The Chair of the Transition Education & Skills Partnership, Gavin Killeen has been working with the NWRC and the UU in establishing a sub group to take forward the action plan of the Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering Collaborative Network commissioned to address the sectors' skills issues and to foster better collaboration between businesses and the F&HEIs. A potential Chair has been identified and this will be agreed at the next Transition Education & Skills Partnership meeting.

3.9 Skills Academies

To date two academies have been funded which are industry-led supporting key sectors to realise employment and skills solutions. An IT Software Fundamentals Academy jointly funded by NWRC and DCSDC has been completed. It was a great success and of the 23 students who enrolled, 19 completed the course with 13 into fulltime employment, 2 into temporary work with 2 into further education. A further IT academy is being considered. In addition, the NWRC's Business Support Unit has been approached with demand for a welding academy. It was hoped that the DfE would fund the welding academy but their response has been slow with employers becoming frustrated at not being able to fill local job vacancies. This academy has been again jointly funded. Following an intensive marketing/social media campaign and recruitment drive by council, 15 unemployed people will start eight weeks training on 27th November 2017.

4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR and Other Implications

4.1 A budget of £200,000 has been identified within the Education and Skills area of the Business section.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Members note the update on the work of the Transition Education & Skills Group and progress made on delivering a number of priority education and skills collaborative actions with partners as identified in the Inclusive Strategic Growth Plan: Community Plan.

Background Papers

None