

# Business & Property Committee

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>Skills update</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>15 January 2019</b>
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Tom McCabe – Executive Director, Community and Environmental Services</b>
<b>Strategic impact:</b> Skills are a crucial element in supporting the growth of an inclusive economy where skills and employment provision meets business need and the aspirations of individuals.  Norfolk County Council's Vision 'Caring for our County: A vision for Norfolk in 2021' sets out our strategic ambitions for skills and apprenticeships, providing opportunities for entry to the labour market, improving the skills base and supporting in work progression. Current initiatives and future plans that influence and shape the system locally to deliver on those ambitions are detailed below.	

## Executive summary

The skills system is complex and national skills policy and funding is ever changing. Norfolk has a relatively low skill, low wage economy. This coupled with the regional need to address the productivity gap, consistently places New Anglia in a mid to low standing when compared to other areas of the UK.

This paper provides an overview of projects currently underway, together with some emerging plans designed to ensure that Norfolk is capitalising on new opportunities for the benefit of business and individuals.

### Recommendations

Members are requested to:

- 1) Agree the direction of travel for NCC in supporting current skills projects and initiatives**
- 2) Agree future plans and consider what else could be developed.**

## 1. Proposal

1.1. NCC is leading or supporting a range of skills interventions, both current and planned, focussing on driving skills and inclusion. The projects are grouped under the four main themes adopted by the NALEP Skills Board which expand on the ambitions within the NCC's Caring for our County: A vision for Norfolk in 2021':

- 1) Driving Skills progression for the workforce
- 2) Providing Agile & Responsive training provision for key sectors
- 3) Tackling barriers to employment
- 4) Equipping Young People for success

### 1.1.1. *Driving Skills progression for the workforce*

The aim is to ensure all those in work have the opportunity and support to progress within employment, acquire additional skills, generate greater productivity and ultimately to reduce reliance on working age benefits.

### *Current Projects*

- An ESF funded project entitled Skills Support for the Workforce is providing upskilling opportunities for employees. NCC is working closely with the contract holders SEETEC to target organisations in ICT Digital, Construction and Health and Social Care sectors, where skills shortages are prevalent.
- Apprenticeships. We are focussing on better use of the levy including levy transfer to build skills capacity within supply chains and supporting the Health and Social Care sector to increase the number of apprenticeships
- Sector Skills Plans – these have been produced for all key sectors and identify the main challenges and obstacles to skills development. Sub groups are driving forward the recommendations, developing pathways into sectors, facilitating in work progression and higher-level skills development as appropriate.
- LIFT Skills – an ESF funded rural project offering upskilling opportunities to employees to benefit their own careers and to enhance their contribution to their employers with a specific focus on rural based SMEs.

The outcomes we are seeking include:

- Continuous development and progression into higher paid jobs
- Making best use of the apprenticeships levy to drive the take up of apprenticeships at all ages
- Sectors piloting approaches to encourage in work progression e.g. health and social care via ESF
- Clear pathways to enter and progress within each of our key sectors
- Support those accessing employment at entry level to remain in work and progress into higher paid roles, developing their skills and lifting them out of the benefits system

### *Future Plans*

Working with Suffolk County Council we are developing a project in the energy sector to build skills capacity through supply chain development aiming to inspire and support SMEs to bid to become part of the supply chain for large infrastructure projects in the region.

We are working with both public and private sector organisations to develop more widely apprenticeship levy sharing to maximise the benefits for Norfolk Plc.

### ***Providing Agile & Responsive training provision for key sectors***

- 1.1.2. This theme is about ensuring that the available skills provision supports individuals to attain the type and level of skills required to fulfil their potential, whilst also ensuring that employers have access to the talented pool of people needed to support growth in their businesses and increase productivity.

#### *Current Projects:*

- Development of a single bid for the region for an Institute of Technology, a collaborative bid led by West Suffolk College utilising a hub and spoke model providing industry led higher level technical skills training. The College of West Anglia and Easton and Otley College are partners.
- LEP investment into skills capital e.g. Skills Energy Centre at East Coast College, Construction Centre at Easton and Otley College, HE Centre at College of West Anglia creating a wide ranging higher and degree level

offer across the region

- Norwich International Aviation Academy – Delivering the New Anglia Aviation Skills Programme (NA-ASP) aiming to increase the economic output of the region by facilitating growth in the aviation industry and growing its pool of skilled people across all levels and all aviation disciplines.
- Skills Deals – The Skills Board have funded a series of projects across the region in our priority sectors seeking to fill identified skills gaps and facilitate the development of new provision. In Norfolk, Fabric First, a construction project focussing on ultra-energy efficient construction methods successfully developed a new level 3 qualification together with delivering upskilling training for the industry. The East of England Offshore Wind Skills Centre at East Coast College provides a range of training for those aiming to join or transition into the industry together with pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities.

The outcomes we are seeking include:

- Co-investment into training from employers and the public sector
- Training provider engagement and response to the Sector Skills Plans and Area Review Recommendations in meeting the needs of employers in key sectors and their staff
- Lobbying to overcome barriers
- Ensure key sectors have a sufficient supply of skills as requirements change due to political and technological changes (e.g. Brexit and automation).

#### *Future Plans*

We are planning a project in the ICT Digital sector working with SMEs to understand their skills needs and to influence and shape the skills provision to meet those needs.

#### ***Tackling barriers to employment***

- 1.1.3. Responding to the need to address the large numbers of ESA claimants in Norfolk. This focusses on ensuring support is available for **all** local people to increase their skills, confidence and well-being ultimately moving into long term employment, especially those furthest from the job market.

#### *Current Projects:*

- Work and Health – this theme is being taken forward by local authorities through the design of Integrated Health and Employment Services
- Building Better Opportunities – available across Norfolk and Suffolk via the voluntary sector
- LIFT – employability support being delivered in rural areas of Norfolk and North Suffolk

The outcomes we are seeking include:

- A local integrated approach to work and health, assisting people into work
- Development of pathways for young people and adults with special educational needs and disabilities
- Driving up levels of basic skills across the population, especially in areas of deprivation and low social mobility

- High level of employer engagement
- In the longer term, continued innovation and collaboration between DWP and local VS organisations.

### *Future Plans*

We are seeking to influence public sector procurement in Norfolk to drive inclusive growth by achieving additional benefit for the money spent.

### ***Equipping Young People for success***

- 1.1.4. This theme focusses on ensuring that young people in Norfolk and Suffolk, regardless of social background, are equipped with the ambition, resilience, skills and capabilities they require to fulfil their potential and play a key role in creating economic growth.

#### *Current Projects:*

- Careers Inspiration – Help You Choose (NCC resource for young people, teachers/advisers and parents/carers which includes an online application feature), ICANBEA, labour market materials
- Apprenticeships – As the number of 16-18-year olds starting an apprenticeship has fallen and we have low HE participation rates, NCC delivers information and advice through schools and colleges, supporting young people to aspire and progress towards Higher Education Apprenticeships. This work is funded through the NEACO project
- Supporting 30 care leavers and vulnerable young people to access an apprenticeship through the pilot Apprenticeship Training Agency
- Projects supporting vulnerable young people to overcome personal barriers e.g. Talent Match, Building Better Opportunities- this enables the voluntary sector to support young people who are very far from the labour market.
- Enterprise Adviser Network – promoting the relationship between schools and local employers and building enterprise activity into the school curriculum

The outcomes we are seeking include:

- Equipping young people with the confidence and work-ready competencies that employers across the economy require
- Access to Apprenticeships at all levels and across key sectors
- Ensuring that current and future careers in the local economy are understood and promoted (e.g. growth in STEM related roles)
- Increasing levels of social mobility through the investment and activity in the Opportunity Areas
- High levels of employer involvement in careers inspiration and education activity (e.g. Enterprise Adviser Network)
- Enterprise Adviser Network –every school and college in the region to be participating in the project
- Delivery of the New Anglia Youth Pledge – with every young person (16-24) in Norfolk and Suffolk having access to the support and opportunities they need to get into education, training, an apprenticeship or a job within three months of leaving education or employment.

### *Future Plans*

We are planning an event to celebrate the achievements of apprentices at all levels to inspire young people to consider an apprenticeship.

## **2. Evidence**

- 2.1. The Norfolk and Suffolk Economic Strategy (NSES) shows that the workforce in the region has a lower skills profile than other areas of the UK. The Strategy sets out how there is a significantly lower proportion of workers education to NVQ Level 4 than the national average while at the opposite end of the skills spectrum those who only hold an NVQ Level 1 accounts for a larger proportion of the population than nationally. In addition, Norfolk has high numbers of ESA claimants with health-related barriers who need intensive bespoke support to return to the labour market.

In order for our area to take advantage of the growth potential across the county we need a better skilled workforce and a new culture of lifelong learning and progression.

## **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1. There are no funding implications from these proposals. Where appropriate match funding required for ESF bids was secured prior to the bid submission and there are no funding requirements at this time.

## **4. Issues, risks and innovation**

- 4.1. National skills policy and funding changes frequently and we need to be agile in our responses in order to ensure that we continue to mitigate any risks created.

## **5. Background**

- 5.1. There are no background papers for this report

### **Officer Contact**

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

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