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| BRIEFING | TO: | Improving Places Select Commission |
| | DATE: | 19 th September 2019 |
| | LEAD OFFICER: | Simeon Leach Economic Strategy and Partnerships and Manager 01709 823828 |
| | TITLE: | Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy - Update |

1. Background

1.1 Summary

The report provides an update on the development, approval and delivery of the Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy, since the draft version was previously discussed by the Improving Places Select Commission on the 20th December 2018.

Since that date the Strategy has been approved by the Rotherham Together Partnership, endorsed by Cabinet and implementation has begun, overseen by the Employment and Skills sub-group of the Business Growth Board.

1.2 Background

Acknowledgement of the increasing importance of skills in attracting investment and growing indigenous businesses, as well as ensuring local residents can access employment opportunities, resulted in agreement by the Rotherham Together Partnership (RTP) that Rotherham required a specific Employment and Skills Strategy.

Responsibility for the production of the Strategy sat with Rotherham Investment and Development Office (RIDO), within the Council, supported by the Employability and Skills sub-group of the Business Growth Board (BGB).

The Employment and Skills Strategy builds on the existing Rotherham Economic Growth Plan (2015-25) and also seeks to link to and complement the Sheffield City Region's Strategic Economic Plan and its thematic priority on Skills, Employment and Education.

The Strategy was officially approved by the RTP Board on 17th April 2019 and endorsed by the Council's Cabinet on the 10th June 2019.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Subsequent to the approval, responsibility for the delivery of the Strategy sits with the BGB's Employment and Skills sub-group, although delivery of the required activities sits with a much wider range of partners.

2.2 The Strategy has four Strategic Outcomes:

- Motivated Young People have opportunities to access the guidance, learning and development they need to further their chosen career path.
- Employment provides opportunities for in-work health, well-being, skills progression and a decent level of pay.
- Those excluded from the labour market are able to overcome barriers to training and employment.
- Businesses are actively engaged in delivering training opportunities and recognise the benefits of investing in their workforce.

2.3

Progress to date

A number of work streams have been commenced since the Plan was approved by the RTP Board

- A mapping exercise is underway, identifying all existing employment and skills provision within the borough, how it can be better linked and where the gaps in provision are which require filling. This will drive forward the future work programme for the Employment and Skills sub-group in overseeing delivery of the Strategy.
- The Strategy includes a “delivery plan” setting out the actions needed to deliver against its priorities, with each action having an outcome and timescale, which will be monitored. These are currently high level actions, with partners working up further detail on how these will be delivered and by whom. For example the Local Integration Board (LIB) will take the lead on delivering activity under Outcome 3 – “Those excluded from the labour market are able to overcome barriers to training and employment.”
- Schools are now represented on both the BGB, through Head teachers, and the E&S sub-group through Career’s Leads. This further improves School-Business linkages and assists delivery of the Gatsby Benchmarks, especially benchmarks 5 and 6.
- Skills Bank 2 and Skills Support for the Workforce have both launched. These provide funding for businesses to train and upskill their existing workforce, assisting their growth and improving their long-term viability.

2.4

When the draft Strategy was presented to OSMB on 5th June 2019 a number of issues were raised by Members, these are set out below along with the responses/actions to them:

- *That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.* – This was done and the Strategy was endorsed by Cabinet on 10th June 2019
- *That consideration be given to the design of the document to ensure that it is accessible* – The document is predominantly meant to be accessed electronically. A number of hard copies have been printed and are handed out when required. Further hard copies will be printed as required, although numbers will be kept to a minimum as a cost saving exercise.
- *That consideration be given to what steps can be taken to address barriers to employment or training such as lack of photographic identification or access to bank accounts* - this has been passed to the Local Integration Board (LIB), who look at specific issues that impact on people securing training/employment opportunities.
- *That consideration is given to how meaningful work experience opportunities can be*

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| | <p><i>given to young people</i> – Head teachers and School Career Leads are now represented on both the Business Growth Board and the Employment and Skills sub-group. These groups have identified improving the work experience offer as a priority, with it also linking to delivery of Gatsby Benchmarks 5 and 6. Current activity linking business and schools includes the Enterprise Adviser Network and the ESF funded Business Education projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>That the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) be reviewed to ensure that it reflects sex/gender inequality in the employment and skills market</i> - The EIA has been updated in line with the OSMB comments and the changes in the Rotherham economic statistics since it was originally produced. It will continue to be updated during the lifetime of the Strategy. The latest version of the EIA is attached as Appendix 2. • <i>That a detailed action plan be provided with clear, targets, milestones and measures in three months' time to Improving Places Select Commission</i> – work is on-going to provide a more detailed Action Plan, although a timescale of Quarter 1 of 2020 now appears to be more realistic. Once the action plan is produced and agreed it will be monitored and reported on to the Business Growth Board, every 6 months. |
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3. Key Actions and Timelines

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| 3.1 | Implementation of the Strategy will be overseen by the Employment and Skills sub-group, part of the RTP. Activity to deliver the identified priorities in the Strategy will be the responsibility of partners, who will provide information on how this will be achieved and by when. |
| 3.2 | The Strategy covers the period 2019-25, with a review carried out halfway through this period. The Plan will be monitored on a 6-monthly basis, with the results reported to the RTP Board and the Council. |
| 3.3 | The successful delivery of this Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy is dependent on the availability of external funding. The latest Employment and Skills Fund (ESF) funding call for the period 2020-2023 has funding of £23.57m available for the wider Sheffield City Region. |
| 3.4 | Partners are essential to the delivery of the identified activities, working together to ensure that Rotherham residents and businesses receive the highest possible level of support. |

4. Recommendations

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| 4.1 | That IPSC agree the update report. |
| 4.2 | That any comments on the final Strategy and its implementation to date are fed back to RiDO officers and the Employment and Skills Sub-group |