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To: Children, Families & Education Policy Overview Committee – 13 November 2008

Subject: Skills for the 21st Century: No More Wasted Opportunities

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: ‘Skills for the 21st Century: No More Wasted Opportunities’ is a policy discussion paper commissioned by the Leader and Chief Executive and prepared by Corporate Policy and the 14-24 Innovation Unit. The paper analyses the key skills and welfare issues facing young people aged 14-24. The paper provided the basis for a series of seminars held by KCC at all three main political party conferences in Autumn 2008.

1. Background:

- 1.1 The increasing centralisation of all government's over the last twenty years has led to the capacity, knowledge and expertise of local government in developing responsive solutions to local problems being too often ignored and sidelined by Westminster and Whitehall at the expense of local people and businesses. The Leader and Chief Executive have therefore made it their priority that KCC should seek to influence the national public policy debate and demonstrate in light of previous experience how KCC can develop innovative solutions to complex policy and delivery problems. To this end, the Leader and Chief Executive have commissioned Corporate Policy to prepare a series of policy discussion papers with colleagues across Directorates and Business Units that will set out KCC's thinking across a broad range of key public policy issues.
- 1.2 The audiences for the policy papers will include Government departments and agencies, political parties, think tanks, NGOs, businesses and the voluntary sector.

2. Skills for the 21st Century: No More Wasted Opportunities:

- 2.1 Skills for the 21st Century: No More Wasted Opportunities’ analyses the key skills and welfare issues facing young people aged 14-24 and is a policy area considered a top priority by the Leader of the Council. The broader welfare and skills policy arena is currently very fluid, with a range of national policy changes coming online including the extension of the compulsory participation age, the introduction of 14-19 Diplomas and the transfer of Learning and Skills Council (LSC) 16-19 function to local authorities by 2010. The paper provides an analysis of the current policy landscape, the costs of failure and examines the opportunities that exist for improving the system, setting conclusions/recommendations around:
 - The need to fully devolve LSC functions to local authorities, and replacing the LSC with new quangos - the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and the regional delivery structure - will hinder rather than assist local government in its role as strategic commissioner of FE provision.
 - The need for central Government to support vocational qualifications, ideally moving towards a single integrated Qualifications Framework and providing some stability for vocational qualifications by avoiding a continuous programme of reform.

- That assessment of individual students and institutions should be broader than GCSE league table measures and based around individual progress and include a range of measures, including post-participation destination and an assessment of employability skills.
- The need to deliver a world class careers service, which increasingly provides individuals with skills to manage their own careers, through understanding the needs of the local economy, their own skills requirements and how to access the training required to gain those skills. This will allow individuals to better manage their career in an increasingly fast changing global economy.
- The need to radically increase the provision of apprentices and the work based learning for many of our young people as a means to meet the skills requirements of the local economy and provide young people with the qualifications and experience they need to succeed in the world of employment. There is an urgent need to think about how the bureaucracy associated with the current apprenticeship provision can be removed for businesses, especially Small-Medium Enterprises (SMEs), in order to encourage the take up of apprenticeships. Radical options in regard to post-16 funding also need to be considered to increase both volume and quality of provision.

3. Conference Events:

3.1 In order to publicise the paper and influence as wide an audience as possible KCC held a seminar at each of the party conferences in September. The seminars were jointly sponsored with the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion and chaired by its Chief Executive, David Simmonds. The Leader of the Council shared the platform at the seminars with a range of speakers including:

- John Hayes MP, Conservative Shadow Minister for Vocational Education;
- Keith Donnelly, General Manager responsible for training at Carillion.
- Rt. Hon Charles Clarke MP, former Secretary of State for Education and Skills.
- Gordon Marsden MP, Labour Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Skills and Member of the House of Commons Select Committee on Innovation, Universities and Skills.
- Phil Willis MP, Liberal Democrat Chair of the House of Commons Select Committee on Innovation, Universities and Skills.

3.2 The feedback from each of the seminars has been extremely positive. A range of stakeholders attended the seminars, including organisations such as:

- Audit Commission
- Birmingham Council
- British Gas
- Centre for Cities
- Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development
- Cheltenham BC
- City & Guilds
- Commission for Employment
- Essex CC
- Government Office South East
- Hastings BC
- IFS: School of Finance
- Improvement & Development Agency
- Institute of Groundsmanship

- Learning & Skills Council
- National Union of Teachers
- RB Kingston upon Thames
- South East England Development Agency
- West of England Aerospace Forum
- Working Links

4. Next steps:

4.1 Following on from the publication of 'Skills for the 21st Century: No More Wasted Opportunities' Corporate Policy is working with colleagues across the Council to prepare a series of policy papers on issues such as welfare provision; the ageing population; 16-19 funding opportunities and a follow on paper from Skills for the 21st Century on careers advice and guidance.

5. Recommendations

- a) Members of the Policy Overview Committee are asked to note the policy discussion paper 'Skills for the 21st Century: No More Wasted Opportunities'.

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Background Documents:

'Skills for the 21st Century: No More Wasted Opportunities', September 2008