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To:	Education Cabinet Committee – 10 July 2012
Subject	Draft 14-24 Strategy
Classification:	Unrestricted

Summary:	This report informs the Education Cabinet Committee about the key elements of the 14-24 strategy, which is still in draft and is intended for approval by Cabinet in September for consultation with stakeholders.
Recommendations:	The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to give views on the proposed key elements of the strategy, which will be submitted to Cabinet in September 2012 for approval, before consultation with key stakeholders.

1. Introduction

1.1 The ambition of the 14-24 strategy is for all young people in Kent to become better qualified and more employable; to be able to participate and achieve success in education and work based training at least until the age of 18; and to ensure more 18 to 24 year olds can access higher learning or sustained employment that is appropriate to their needs and relevant to the local and national economy.

1.2 Key success indicators for us with this strategy will be lower youth unemployment, better systems in place for local employers and learning providers to work in partnership so that we secure the higher levels of skilled young people we need, and every young person being helped to participate in learning or training until the age of 18, with a good outcome.

1.3 This is challenging when nearly 10,000 18-24 year olds in Kent are unemployed currently, there are wide gaps in secondary school performance at age 16, about 12% of 16-19 year olds do not participate in education or work based training and by the age of 19 over 20% of young people still do not have the basic qualifications to get a skilled job.

1.4 This strategy will focus as a priority on developing the curriculum and raising the achievement of 14 to 16 year olds, so that all young people can be included and participate in meaningful qualification pathways to age 18. Attainment at 16 is the single most important factor in securing participation, learning and achievement between the ages of 16 and 19, especially attainment in English and mathematics. We need therefore to continue to raise the attainment of five good GCSEs including English and mathematics at age 16 to at least 70% by 2015.

1.5 The second key priority is to ensure there is a quality vocational education and training offer in place so that all 14-19 year olds can access and succeed in following an appropriate pathway for education or employment with training. This means a significant increase in young people taking up and successfully completing apprenticeships, as well as more young people following other vocational pathways that lead to higher level qualifications and a skilled job, so that there are no young people who are NEET by 2015.

1.6 Most young people want to stay in education after the age of 16 to improve their levels of qualifications and most of those who follow an A level pathway do well and are well provided for in schools and colleges. However other post 16 learners are not so well provided for and do less well, so another priority must be to improve the vocational curriculum offer and the progress and educational outcomes for all 16-19 year olds, especially those from low income backgrounds who achieve well below average in Kent.

1.7 For the young people who follow a level 3 qualification or Advanced level pathway we need to see an improvement in outcomes. Kent achieves below the national average on all measures and we need to be more ambitious for all young people. Attainment at grades A and B at Advanced level is very variable, even in schools where prior attainment at age 16 would predict very good level 3 outcomes. This should continue to be a focus for improvement in school sixth forms and colleges as part of this strategy.

1.8 This strategy recognises that many young people face challenges in their lives and need additional support. Too many young people in Kent are excluded permanently from secondary school and remain outside the mainstream education system after the age of 14. There is insufficient provision for 16-19 year olds with learning difficulties and disabilities to help them access further learning and achieve the independent living and employment they need as young adults. The number of young people not in education, employment or training is rising and there is over representation in this group of vulnerable young people who are looked after by the local authority, care leavers, refugees and asylum seekers and young offenders.

1.9 This 14-24 strategy, therefore, also includes priorities to:

- Reduce exclusions and the NEET figures
- Improve participation, provision and outcomes for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, including better integrated support for them as they move towards more independent adult life
- Develop an integrated youth support service that will provide targeted support for more vulnerable young people and those at risk of poorer outcomes and future unemployment.

1.10 We recognise that all young people need to be educated to develop their employability skills and that employers typically complain that too many young people lack these essential skills. Communication, problem solving, initiative, team work, time keeping, resilience and at least basic literacy and numeracy are as essential for employability as qualification levels and specific vocational skills.

1.11 A priority for the strategy is to ensure employability and enterprise skills are taught effectively as part of the curriculum from Primary school onwards. Building on this a priority is also to ensure young people access good quality work experience as they progress through their 14-19 education and that there is greater employer engagement in

the design and delivery of courses and work based learning. Quality work experience placements are one of the most effective routes into apprenticeships and other employment with training.

1.12 Many of the young people who do not succeed at school and who find it difficult to participate in post 16 learning and training require better advice and guidance, earlier intervention to support them and effective tracking and monitoring so that they are helped not to fall out of the system. Working with schools, colleges and training providers it will be important to develop a reliable tracking system so that all young people can be supported to age 18. This should start early, when earlier intervention can make more of a difference, and identify those young people for example on entry to secondary school who are more likely to face challenges, who can receive targeted support.

1.13 Under the Raising the Participation Age (RPA) regulations the local authority has a responsibility to ensure all young people's education or training can be tracked until age 18. We recognise that effective tracking and monitoring begins much earlier as young people approach the age of 14 and make decisions about their future pathways. An agreed approach to doing this in Kent, in partnership with schools, colleges, employers and work based training providers is a priority for the 14-24 Strategy.

1.14 The 14-24 strategy, to be effective, must focus on the local economy and the needs of the key skills sectors in Kent, as well as ensure the education and training offer for young people is well integrated with employers' plans and needs. Our aim is to achieve improved employer engagement in how young people are educated and prepared for employment, and the education and skills system in Kent is more responsive to the changing needs of local industry and workforce requirements, so that more young people are helped into jobs and more employers can access the skills they need.

1.15 The priority will be to realign the post 16 offer to better reflect the needs of the local economy. We need to develop curriculum pathways and qualification routes, as well as sustained work experience and training for young people, that are better matched with the requirements of key skills sectors in Kent.

1.16 A key part of this will be to make effective use of all the available local and national schemes that are designed to increase youth employment with training, including apprenticeships. There is a need to convert jobs without training into jobs with training and do more to develop pre-apprenticeship courses, a better level 1 offer and more effective ways of ensuring young people achieve a qualification in English and mathematics, which is a basic entry requirement for an apprenticeship and other skilled employment.

1.17 The strategy will also focus on supporting young people to age 24 into employment, because the successful transition from learning into work continues to be a key issue for young people well into early adulthood, and depends very much on the skills and qualifications they have achieved since age 16. Better qualified young people have lower unemployment, but it is also the case that many better qualified young people are unemployed because their skills do not match the needs of the local economy and the local economy is contracting rather than growing. Nationally over one million 16-24 year olds are unemployed but many local employers and small businesses say one of the reasons for not expanding is the lack of appropriately skilled workers, especially among young people. To address this and encourage employers to invest in skills and have more sustainable workforce development for growth, this strategy will give priority to developing more effective partnerships in Kent between business, schools, higher and further education.

1.18 We will also work with all partners and agencies to ensure as many unemployed 18-24 year olds as possible benefit from schemes like the Youth Contract, which is support worth nearly £1 billion over the next three years. It includes extra support through Jobcentre Plus offering young people additional adviser intervention, access to a careers interview with the National Careers Service, an offer of a work experience or sector-based work academy place, and entry into the Work Programme which provides a subsidised job with wage incentives for employers to take on young people.

1.19 The strategy will not succeed unless we develop more effective partnership working between the local authority, schools, colleges, work based learning providers, employers and other agencies. It is clear that greater collaboration is needed between groups of schools and with local FE colleges and employers, and that local 14-19 partnerships need to do more to develop the curriculum offer and progression pathways, and work based training, for all local young people.

1.20 It is also clear that more intensive work is needed in some parts of Kent where youth unemployment is well above average, there are high numbers of NEETS and attainment at ages 16 and 19 is below average. The strategy will pilot more integrated working to support young people in at least four of these areas of high need in 2012-2013.

2 Strategic Priorities

2.1 The key priorities for the 14-24 Learning and Skills Strategy are to:

- *Ensure all young people participate in learning and training to age 18 by 2015*
- *Ensure the 14-16 curriculum provides vocational options for young people that lead to higher qualifications and better progression to post 16 vocational learning and training*
- *Ensure more young people achieve five good GCSEs including English and mathematics at age 16, and more 16 to 19 year olds achieve level 2 and level 3 qualifications especially those from low income backgrounds*
- *Develop curriculum pathways and progression for 16-19 year olds so that those who do not follow an A level pathway have high quality options that deliver a good outcome and access to skilled employment*
- *Increase the take up and completion of apprenticeships, and ensure there is better progression to higher level apprenticeships for all 16-24 year olds and expand other vocational options that lead more directly to work in the Kent economy*
- *Develop young people's employability skills as an essential part of the curriculum*
- *Improve access to high quality information, advice and work experience and young people's understanding of the labour market and FE options*
- *Ensure disadvantaged young people get good quality work experience and more support for progression towards further education and work, so that achievement gaps narrow and unemployment for this group is not disproportionately higher*

- *Ensure more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds go to university and more young people can advance from advanced level and higher apprenticeships to higher education*
- *Improve early intervention, support and pathway planning for young people most at risk of becoming NEET and rapidly reduce the NEET figures*
- *Develop an integrated youth support programme so that all young people at risk of poorer outcomes have tailored support to improve their well being, to participate in learning, training and other positive activities and are helped to access employment*
- *Develop employer engagement in education, more opportunities for young people to have contact with, and careers advice from employers*
- *Improve 16-24 learning and employment opportunities, and outcomes, for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities*
- *Ensure new courses and pathways 14-19 are more responsive to the needs of local skills sectors and are better integrated with the needs of the local economy, as well as being supported by local employers' investment and engagement*
- *Develop effective tracking and monitoring of all young people from the earliest years of secondary school and more particularly from age 16, so that all young people's needs can be addressed and they are supported to participate and succeed to age 18*
- *Deliver increased youth employment through support for apprenticeships, internships, work placements, re-training opportunities, targeted work with those out of work for more than 6 months and engagement with employers and other agencies to promote wage and training incentives*
- *Develop an effective system of local 14-19 learning and employment partnerships that engage schools, colleges, work based learning providers, employers and Jobcentre plus in delivering planned coordinated improvements in young people's skills, qualifications and employability*
- *Develop more intensive and integrated programmes of support and provision, providing highly targeted interventions and investment in new learning and training opportunities, in the areas of Kent with the poorest outcomes and prospects for 14-24 year olds.*

3. Success by 2015

3.1 If this strategy is successful we will achieve the following outcomes by 2015. We will monitor performance against these measures and report progress and improvements on an annual basis.

3.2 Key stage 4 attainment will be amongst the best for our statistical neighbours and improve to at least 70% of pupils attaining 5 good GCSEs including English and mathematics

3.3 The achievement gaps at key stages 4 and 5 will be less than the national gap figures and students from low income backgrounds, looked after young people and students with special educational needs and disabilities in Kent will be achieving better progress and outcomes than similar groups nationally. Advanced level performance in Kent will be above the national average on all measures.

3.4 There will be full participation in education and work based training for all 16-18 year olds following year on year reductions in the NEET figures and all 16-19 year olds will be able to access and succeed in following an appropriate pathway for education or employment with training to age 18. The NEET figures will decrease to below 1 % and the number of young people from low income backgrounds aged 16 with skills below level 2, to achieve a level 2 qualification and progress to level 3 by age 18 will increase by 20%.

3.5 The employability skills of 19 year olds will have improved, especially in English and mathematics, so that level 2 attainment at age 19 is above the national average. The outcomes for 19 year olds from disadvantaged backgrounds will be above the national average and the achievement gap between this group and other students will have reduced by 10%. There will be fewer young people who achieve no improvement in qualifications between the ages of 16 and 19, so that this number reduces to less than 5%.

3.6 We will have an established a successful pre-apprenticeship and level 1 programme for 17 year olds who are unable to achieve a level 2 apprenticeship. The number of apprenticeships overall will double and level 2, 3 and 4 apprenticeships offered in Kent key sectors will increase by 10%. In addition the uptake of level 2 and 3 vocational training in skills shortage areas will increase by 10%. The Kent Success apprenticeship scheme will continue with at least 88 apprentices taken on each year, totalling 350 successful apprenticeships delivered by KCC by 2015. At least 50% of schools will have provided one or more apprenticeships which have been taken up successfully by young people. There will be double the number of apprenticeships for 16-24 year olds in Kent and successful completion rates will improve to 80%.

3.7 There will be a significant impact on unemployment among 18-24 year olds so that current levels reduce by 4000 to below 2008 levels. The number of assisted employment opportunities for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities will increase by 10%.

3.8 Each district in Kent will have effective partnership working for 14-19 year olds, involving KCC, schools, colleges, work based learning providers, employers and other agencies. There will be effective collaboration between groups of schools and with local FE colleges and employers, delivering a clear vocational curriculum offer, progression pathways and work based training for 16-19 year olds.

3.9 There will be fewer than 50 permanent exclusions and all young people permanently excluded will be supported to access learning and participate to age 18, and there will be an integrated youth support service providing more targeted and personalised support to all young people at risk of becoming NEET.

3.10 The Kentchoices programme will have expanded to provide high quality information about learning options and employment with training, as well as providing support for schools in delivering impartial careers advice and guidance.

3.11 Youth Employment and Learning Zones in Thanet, Swale, Shepway, Gravesham and Dover will reduce unemployment for 16 to 24 to below the national average.

4 Next Steps

4.1 A more fully developed draft strategy will be presented to Cabinet in September 2012. This will be consulted on in September and October, inviting the views of key stakeholders, including schools, colleges, work based learning providers, employers and young people.

4.2 A revised final draft of the 14-24 strategy will be presented to Education Committee in the autumn, following the consultation and with a report on the consultation responses. This will then be approved by Cabinet in late autumn.

5. Conclusions

5.1 This strategy represents one of Kent County Council's top priorities. It is intended to make a significant contribution to improving the local economy, increasing youth employment and raising educational and skill levels and qualifications. Its success will mean life changing benefits for many young people.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Members are requested to comment on the key elements of the proposed strategy and give their views about the priorities, prior to Cabinet considering the draft strategy for consultation in September 2012.

7. Contact details

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