

By: Mr Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Development

Mr Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities

Mr Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills

To: County Council – 28 March 2013

Subject: **Select Committee: Apprenticeships**

Summary: To comment on and endorse the report of the Select Committee on Apprenticeships.

Introduction

1. The Leader of the Council proposed in November 2013 a select committee to explore ways to improve apprenticeships in Kent.

Select Committee Process

Membership

2. The Select Committee commenced its work in December 2012. The Chairman of the Select Committee was Mr Kit Smith. Other members of the Committee were Mr Rob Bird, Mr Alan Chell, Mr Leslie Christie, Mr David Hirst, Mr Steve Manion, Mr Michael Northey and Mrs Carole Waters. In addition, Mr Richard Lees was co-opted onto the Committee.

Terms of Reference

3. The final terms of reference were:

- To explore apprenticeships in Kent within the wider context of the UK and the EU, and to consider how apprenticeships in Kent may evolve in the future.
- To investigate the demand for apprenticeships from employers and learners in Kent and consider ways in which apprenticeships can be championed and promoted to young people as well as employers.
- To examine the current quality of apprenticeships in Kent, delivered by a multiplicity of providers, and explore the extent to which successful completion of apprenticeships leads to sustainable employment.
- To consider the role of Kent County Council in implementing suggestions put forward in the Richard Review of Apprenticeships.
- For the Apprenticeships Select Committee to make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

Evidence

4. The Committee used a number of evidence sources to inform its investigations, including oral and written evidence from a wide range of stakeholders, about forty rapporteur sessions and evidence and information from five official visits.

Report

5. A copy of the report's Executive Summary and its recommendations is attached in Appendix 1. The full report is available on request from the report's authors, Gaetano Romagnuolo (gaetano.romagnuolo@kent.gov.uk or 01622 694292) and Simon Shrimpton (simon.shrimpton@kent.gov.uk or 01622 694126)

Conclusion

6. We would like to congratulate the Select Committee on completing this challenging piece of work. We would also like to thank all the witnesses who gave evidence to the Select Committee.

7. Recommendations

We recommend that:-

- (a) the Select Committee report be endorsed by the County Council;
- (b) the Select Committee be thanked for a useful report on a complex and challenging issue; and
- (c) the witnesses and others who provided evidence and made valuable contributions to the work of the Select Committee be thanked.

Background Information: *None*

Mr Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Development

Mr Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities

Mr Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills

Appendix 1

1. Executive Summary

1.1. Committee Membership

1.1.1. The Committee consists of nine Members of Kent County Council (KCC): six Members of the Conservative Party, one Member of the Labour Party, one Member of the Liberal Democrat Party and one Member of the Swanscombe and Greenhithe Residents' Association.



Mr Rob Bird
Liberal Democrat
Maidstone Central



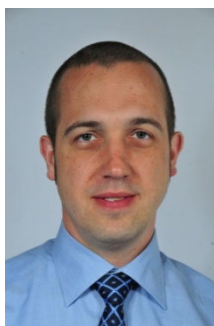
Mr Alan Chell
Conservative
Maidstone South



Mr Leslie Christie
Labour
Northfleet &
Gravesend



Mr David Hirst
Conservative
Herne Bay



Mr Richard Lees
Swanscombe and
Greenhithe
Residents'
Association



Mr Steve Manion
Conservative
Dover North



Mr Michael Northey
Conservative
Canterbury South
East



Mr Kit Smith
Conservative
Deal
(Chairman)



Mrs Carole Waters
Conservative
Romney Marsh

Scene Setting

1.1.2. Young people are the future of England and its economy. Raising their aspirations and creating the right opportunities to enhance their skills and attitudes in order to enter sustainable employment are crucial both for their independence and the quality of their lives, as well as for the country's economic recovery and growth.

1.1.3. Addressing the employability of young people is a critical task if we want to contribute to the country's economic recovery as well as provide the best possible prospects for future generations of workers in Kent.

1.1.4. Kent County Council recognises the importance placed upon apprenticeships by employers, young people and government at both a local and national level and has taken a major lead in the progress Kent has made in increasing the number of apprenticeships, which now stand at around 10,000.

1.1.5. Following last year's Student Journey Select Committee review, which explored ways of improving the employability of young people in Kent, it was decided to organise a shorter review to investigate in more detail the issue of apprenticeships across the county.

1.1.6. The Apprenticeships Select Committee was tasked with making recommendations to the Council that can help to ensure that, in the future, apprenticeships in Kent will:-

- Meet the needs of a changing economy.
- Provide sustainable pathways for young people into jobs through the acquisition of relevant skills.
- Consistently achieve professionally recognised high quality qualifications and skills which both employers and learners need.

1.2. Terms of Reference

- To explore apprenticeships in Kent within the wider context of the UK and the EU, and to consider how apprenticeships in Kent may evolve in the future.
- To investigate the demand for apprenticeships from employers and learners in Kent and consider ways in which apprenticeships can be championed and promoted to young people as well as employers.
- To examine the current quality of apprenticeships in Kent, delivered by a multiplicity of providers, and explore the extent to which successful completion of apprenticeships leads to sustainable employment.
- To consider the role of Kent County Council in implementing suggestions put forward in the Richard Review of Apprenticeships.

- For the Apprenticeships Select Committee to make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

1.3. Scope

1.3.1. The breadth and complexity of this review requires a clear and focused approach, especially when looking to the future. For each of the terms of reference in Section 1.3 possible key themes and issues to be covered by the review are set out below:

- To explore apprenticeships in Kent within the wider context of the UK and the EU, and to consider how apprenticeships in Kent may evolve in the future.
 - a. To explore the present landscape of apprenticeships in Kent within the wider context of the UK and the EU.
 - b. To consider how apprenticeships in Kent may evolve in the future.
- To investigate the demand for apprenticeships from employers and learners in Kent and consider ways in which apprenticeships can be championed and promoted to young people as well as employers.
 - a. To investigate the demand for apprenticeships from employers and learners in Kent.
 - b. To consider ways in which apprenticeships can be championed and promoted to young people and employers.
- To examine the current quality of apprenticeships in Kent, delivered by a multiplicity of providers, and explore the extent to which successful completion of apprenticeships leads to sustainable employment.
 - a. To examine the suitability of the current range of skills and qualifications provided by apprenticeships within Kent.
 - b. To explore the extent to which the successful completion of apprenticeships leads to sustainable employment.
- To consider the role of Kent County Council in implementing suggestions put forward in the Richard Review of Apprenticeships.
 - a. To consider the implications of the Richard Review for apprenticeships in Kent.
 - b. To explore the ways in which Kent County Council can implement suggestions from the Richard Review in Kent.
- For the Apprenticeships Select Committee to make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

1.4. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Skills and Employability Service in Kent County Council (KCC) should further raise awareness about apprenticeships and their benefits amongst young people, their parents/carers and employers. It is important to contribute to a shift in the perception of apprenticeships; from poorly paid jobs to funded training which significantly enhances employability.

Recommendation 2

The Skills and Employability Service should ensure that there is a single point of contact to provide information and support for apprenticeships both to young people and to local businesses in Kent. Particular support should be offered to SMEs employing less than 100 people and to vulnerable learners.

Recommendation 3

KCC should consider the use of Gateway Centres to provide information, recruitment and employment services traditionally associated with Jobcentre Plus. KCC should also consider the use of its own website to highlight these services.

Recommendation 4

The Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills should write to Ofsted to urge that the provision and assessment of careers information, advice and guidance (IAG) in schools is reviewed. Ofsted should ensure that IAG is provided to all pupils at key transition points in their secondary education, and that it becomes a compulsory element in the Agency's assessment of schools' overall performance within 5 years. Ofsted should also assess, as part of its inspection framework, whether IAG in schools is impartial, high quality, and delivered by professionally trained and accredited people.

Recommendation 5

The Skills and Employability Service should develop, in collaboration with the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), an inclusive kitemark to recognise both learning and skills providers and employers who deliver high quality apprenticeships in the county. The kitemark should consist of two awards; one to secure a minimum achievement of Kent high standards of delivery, the other to recognise outstanding provision and excellence.

Recommendation 6

The Skills and Employability Service should recommend to the NAS and the SFA that they promote and finance in Kent:

- initiatives such as Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs), whereby businesses can offer apprenticeships without employing young people directly, and without all the accompanying "red tape". It is hoped that initiatives such as

this will incentivise local SMEs - and micro businesses in particular - to take up apprentices.

- schemes whereby an apprenticeship can be offered jointly by a group of local businesses. The apprentice will work in each of those businesses. The larger business within the group will deal with the administration and organisation of the apprenticeship, in order to fulfil its social responsibility role towards smaller businesses and the wider community.
- a “safety net” system which allows apprentices to complete their courses even if the businesses employing them cease to trade.

Recommendation 7

KCC’s Education Learning and Skills Directorate and the Economic Development and Regeneration Divisions should actively encourage the setting up of an apprenticeship model – similar to that run by BT - where a large employer quality assures, endorses and offers resources to enable the provision of apprenticeships to SMEs within the same sector.

The administration, teaching and bureaucracy are removed from both the SME and the large business, and are instead dealt with by learning and skills providers. The quality assurance of apprenticeships guarantees that SMEs offer high standard skills and knowledge that the large employer requires.

Recommendation 8

The Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills should ask the Secretary of State for Education to further encourage the teaching of soft skills and functional skills in primary schools. He should also further encourage secondary schools to organise work experience placements for all their students in order to prepare them for the world of work.

Recommendation 9

KCC’s Regeneration and Economic Development Division and Education, Learning and Skills Directorate should jointly pilot a scheme whereby post-16 students can gain valuable experience of work by using their skills to help local businesses with particular projects.

Recommendation 10

KCC’s Regeneration and Economic Development Division and Education, Learning and Skills Directorate should develop a mechanism to ensure that students in Kent are offered apprenticeships as part of the September Guarantee.

Recommendation 11

The Skills and Employability Service should encourage schools and public bodies in Kent to employ apprentices as part of their workforce.

Recommendation 12

KCC's Education, Learning and Skills Directorate and Regeneration and Economic Development Division should liaise with Further Education representatives across Kent (through groups such as KAFEC) to promote the vision that each college develops an area of apprenticeship specialisation (beyond Level 2).

Recommendation 13

All KCC directorates should implement an internal performance indicator to ensure that they employ a set number of apprenticeships, including higher level apprenticeships. KCC's ambition should be to deliver high quality, reputable apprenticeships that offer good progression opportunities.

Recommendation 14

All KCC directorates should make certain that the requirement for contractors to deliver one apprenticeship opportunity for each £1 million spend on labour is fully implemented.

Recommendation 15

KCC should review its status as a provider of apprenticeship courses, and move towards a more strategic and enabling role. It should offer more support to providers of apprenticeships, in order to stimulate their growth in a competitive, free market environment.

Recommendation 16

In order to identify new growth sectors in Kent's economy, as well as to support existing ones, it is essential that KCC fulfils a strong strategic and coordinating role. This should be achieved by increasing synergy through the sharing of labour market information between each of its directorates. This information should be cascaded effectively to providers and employers in order to secure confidence in the provision of apprenticeships.

Recommendation 17

The Skills and Employability Service should launch, in collaboration with the NAS, a summit to develop strategies aimed at promoting the growth of apprenticeships in the county.