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To: Education and Young People’s Services Cabinet Committee
– 15th April 2015

Subject: Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy 2015 - 2018

Classification: Unrestricted

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Decision

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

This report presents the final draft of the Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy and reports on the consultation process.

Recommendation:

The Education and Young People’s Services Cabinet Committee is asked to endorse the amended Strategy, following consultation, and recommend to the Cabinet to approve the Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy for Kent.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Draft *Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy* and accompanying *Datapack* were presented to this Committee in January 2015, with a proposal to go out to consultation.
- 1.2 The consultation was subsequently undertaken, during February and March, with key stakeholders, including: other relevant departments of KCC, FE Colleges and HE institutions, training providers and employers. The consultation ended on March 20th. The responses to the *Strategy* consultation are set out below.

2 Responses from consultation

- 2.1 The *Strategy* was, generally, well received by stakeholders. However a number of respondents, although agreeing to the broad aims of the strategy, had questions about how such ambitious targets could be delivered. It was felt that the draft *Strategy* explained ‘what’ we would like to achieve, but not ‘how’ we would like to achieve it. A more detailed delivery plan will be developed as the next stage of taking this Strategy forward.

- 2.2 Respondents suggested that the title '*Adult Skills, Learning and Employment Strategy*' better reflected the content of the Strategy
- 2.3 Providers asked for an addition to the document explaining current context, specifically: changes to funding (including a 24% reduction, nationally, in the Adults Skills budget); the Review of Adult Vocational Qualifications currently taking place; and the review of Apprenticeships. In response to this request an additional section has been added to the *Strategy*
- 2.4 Some respondents felt that the emphasis of the *Strategy* on economic growth and employment pays insufficient regard to the wider benefits of community learning for social inclusion, community cohesion, health and wellbeing. Additions have been made to reflect this view.
- 2.5 Colleagues in the KCC Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Directorate asked for recognition of the role that adult skills and learning can play in the lives of vulnerable adults, including those with sensory and learning disabilities, autism and mental illness. This request has been partially reflected in the revised *Strategy* and will be further developed in the subsequent *Action Plan*.
- 2.6 There was general agreement that the Priority Sectors, as defined by the LEP and by KCC, needed further refinement before specific KPIs could be determined. Currently they provide a broad framework, but there needs to be recognition of occupations within sectors and specific local requirements.
- 2.7 Subsequent to the completion of the consultation process the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) published its own consultation on the future of adult skills, 'A Dual Mandate for Adult Vocational Education'. This government report places an emphasis on higher level skills for growth, and for inclusive programmes for adults with no or low level qualifications. This is consistent with the proposals in the *Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy*.

3 **Next Steps.**

- 3.1 A detailed action plan, containing the Key Performance Indicators and milestones will be developed, which will be reported to the Kent and Medway Education, Learning and Skills Partnership Board. This board is an advisory group to the Local Enterprise Partnership on skills. This will ensure there are clear interdependencies between the LEP Skills Strategy and a new *Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy* for Kent.
- 3.2 Employer engagement will be critical to the successful delivery of the strategy. This will be achieved by working through the Chambers of Commerce and other employer led organisations.
- 3.3 The Strategy will also inform the service specification for the Community Learning and Skills Service currently under consideration for becoming a Local Authority Trading Company. The CLS growth strategy and service plan, regarding provision from September 2015, will include commissioned services that will contribute to the KPIs in the Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy.

4. Recommendations

The Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee is asked to endorse the amended Strategy, following consultation, and recommend to the Cabinet to approve the Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy for Kent.

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Background documents: none