



Report To: Greater Cambridge Partnership
Executive Board

20 September 2017

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Manager

Skills – Delivering the Greater Cambridge Partnership Ambition

Purpose

1. To set out the Partnership's progress on the skills workstream.
2. To recommend next steps on the skills workstream.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Executive Board:
 - (a) **Agree** to refocus the skills workstream in order to facilitate the delivery of the up to 420 apprenticeship target agreed with Government as part of the City Deal agreement
 - (b) **Agree** to do this by establishing a GCP apprenticeship matching/brokerage service that has a focus on STEM apprenticeships
 - (c) **Agree** that officers should work with and commission, where necessary, external organisations to support this work
 - (d) **Agree** to work with the LEP, the Combined Authority and delivery organisations in the development of a skills strategy, including evaluating this new service to determine whether it would be suitable, in the medium to long term, for roll out across a wider geography

Reasons for Recommendations

4. The skills workstream has so far delivered good progress across its involvement in a number of activities. Satisfactory progress has been made and current activities have been delivered on time and on budget.
5. However, the workstream hasn't yet been able to demonstrate a direct and fully evidenced link between the work agreed to date the 420 apprenticeship target agreed as part of the City Deal. This paper seeks agreement to the above recommendations in order to redress this issue.

Background

6. In March 2015 the Executive Board agreed to establish a locally led skills service that could deliver a package of interventions across the GCP geography. The agreed

proposal mirrored what was currently being delivered, via the LEP through the Cambridge Area Partnership, outside of the GCP geography. The proposal for the service was tendered and won by Form the Future.

7. The service aimed to:
 - Improve the aspirations and economic awareness of young people, increasing their knowledge of local businesses, sectors, opportunities available and the skills businesses are looking for
 - Sustainably develop students careers awareness
 - Work with schools, colleges, learning providers and businesses to close the gap between the necessary and available workforce
8. The service aimed to achieve this by:
 - Facilitating opportunities to improve students' employability and entrepreneurial skills
 - Gathering and sharing information on labour market trends and employer requirements
 - Coordinating events with schools and colleges to develop young people's employability skills in line with business needs identified locally.
9. We expect a full evaluation of the activities to be submitted by Form the Future in the autumn. The evaluation will be brought to the Board in November 2017.
10. As reported in the July 2017 Progress Report to the Exec Board, officers are satisfied that work agreed across the workstream has been delivered on time and on budget.

Considerations

11. As above, although officers are satisfied that the work agreed has been delivered on time and on budget, the workstream hasn't yet been able to demonstrate a direct and fully evidenced link between the work agreed and the 420 apprenticeship target.
12. Through the Board and Assembly 'task and finish' group work on skills, officers have worked with members, skills providers and the LEP to understand the what more we could do to fully evidence the link between GCP interventions and achieving the 420 apprenticeship target.
13. That work has provided us with a high level core evidence base which strongly suggests there is a gap between available apprenticeships and people looking for, or potentially looking for, an apprenticeship placement. Officers recommend, as above, that we bridge this gap by establishing a GCP apprenticeship matching/brokerage service that has a focus on STEM-based apprenticeships.

What the service would offer

14. A full procurement specification needs to be established. However, because we have already identified a gap in what the market offers, as a broad outline the service would be able to:
 - Place individual applicants in apprenticeships

- Increase the number of apprenticeships provided by employers in the Greater Cambridge area
 - Increase the number of students from Greater Cambridge schools and colleges choosing to enter apprenticeships
 - Increase the positive perception of apprenticeships amongst students going to school or college in Greater Cambridge
 - Increase the positive perception of apprenticeships amongst the parents of secondary school students in Greater Cambridge
 - Reduce NEET numbers in Greater Cambridge
15. The task and finish group work identified the need to look at increasing access to apprenticeships for those people living in more rural areas. In order to address this issue the service could also provide travel grants/bus passes for people who currently face challenges travelling to and from their apprenticeship placement.

How the service would operate

16. Subject to a procurement exercise and in order to deliver the above 'offer' the service would need to:
- Be a direct apprenticeship recruitment service connecting applicants with employers
 - Provide a website with information and access to opportunities
 - Provide information and training events for stakeholders
 - Support employers to establish new apprenticeships
 - Provide active and ongoing marketing to stakeholders
17. The service would be directly procured by GCP with the help and support of the LEP. The procurement specification will be very clear that the design of the service will need to be business led so as to directly respond to the needs of business and ensure that we provide high quality, market led apprenticeships. As part of the procurement process we will establish an advice group made up of business HR experts to ensure the specification is designed to fit what the market needs.
18. The procurement specification would state very clearly that any activity needs to be additional to current activity and complimentary to work that's being delivered by, for example, Cambridge Regional College.
19. In order to meet the 420 target, officers foresee the GCP service running over an initial 18 – 24 month period after which, dependant on its evaluation, the Combined Authority would be able to weave the service in to its wider skills workstream. The GCP service can operate to not only meet the 420 target but may also provide useful evidence towards the Combined Authority and LEP's wider development of a skills strategy.
20. There is an opportunity to look at how we could jointly fund the service with the LEP's European Social Funding (ESF). Officers are working together to understand the joint

funding could operate and what work would be required to bid in to the LEPs ESF allocation.

21. After the initial 18 – 24 month period this model would allow the GCP to step back from the skills workstream and allow the LEP and Combined Authority to deliver on skills across the wider geography. Stepping back at this stage allows the GCP to report to Government on its specific City Deal skills target while seamlessly exiting the skills landscape and allowing the Combined Authority and the LEP to carry on and potentially broaden the scope of the service.

Options (on the basis of above considerations)

Option 1 – Recommended Option (as above)

22. Agree to refocus the skills workstream in order to facilitate the delivery of the 420 apprenticeship target by establishing a GCP apprenticeship matching/brokerage service. Agree that officers should work with and procure, where necessary, external organisations to support this work.
23. As above, officers recommend this option because:
 - (a) It will directly target the gap in delivery that has been identified through the task and finish group process
 - (b) It will provide the GCP with a direct and fully evidenced link between its activity and the number of apprenticeships that activity facilitates
 - (c) It will serve to provide the area with a service that delivers what businesses are reporting they need in order increase apprenticeship numbers.
 - (d) It will give local people an enhanced opportunity to access apprenticeships and give them the skills and knowledge they need to significantly improve their career opportunities and options

Option 2 – Do nothing

24. Agree to do nothing. The Board could decide not to agree any further work that focuses specifically on the up to 420 target.
25. Officers don't recommend this option because:
 - (a) To do so would limit the extent to which the GCP can directly target the gap in delivery that was identified through the task and finish group process
 - (b) To do so would prevent the establishment of a service that delivers what businesses are reporting they need in order increase apprenticeship numbers.

Option 3 – Develop an alternative proposal

26. Agree to look again at what the GCP wants to deliver from its skills activity and develop an alternative proposal as a result.
27. Officers don't recommend this option because:
 - (a) To agree it would likely serve to delay the necessary work required to move towards meeting the up to 420 apprenticeship target

- (b) As above, the task and finish group process has already worked through a number of scenarios and determined that supporting the recommended option is likely to be the most effective way forward

Next steps

28. Assuming the recommended option (1) is agreed officers will work quickly, in partnership with the LEP, to design a procurement specification and launch a procurement exercise. The design will be done in close consultation with the skills task and finish group.
29. This process will determine the likely cost of the service and how/if the LEPs ESIF funding could part fund the service.
30. The Board will be kept regularly updated on the progress of the procurement exercise and will be able to comment on progress, to be detailed in the progress report, during the November cycle of Board and Joint Assembly meetings.

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