

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2011

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>THE WIRRAL APPRENTICE</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>INTERIM DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR PHIL DAVIES REGENERATION &amp; PLANNING STRATEGY</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>NO</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to respond to the motion raised by Councillor Kelly at the Economic and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2011.
- 1.2 The report details work currently being undertaken by Council officers to support the up-take of level 3 (Advanced) Apprenticeships within the Wirral Apprenticeship Programme. The report also provides a commentary on the currently position of the education sector to deliver functional skills.

### 2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1 Cabinet is to note report findings and the establishment of the Council Apprenticeship Strategy Working Group (SWG). This group draws officer expertise from children & young people, economic development, business support, human resources and procurement. The SWG will take forward a holistic view of Apprenticeship engagement in the borough and are developing a Wirral response to the actions detailed in the Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Strategy. The SWG will initially report to Executive Team to ensure this strategic approach to apprenticeships is communicated across all directorates.

### 3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 3.1 Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2010 agreed the recommendation of the Economy and Regeneration Task Force for continuation of the Wirral Apprentice.

### 4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 On Monday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2011 Cabinet considered a Notion of Motion in relation to continuation of the Wirral Apprenticeship Programme.

Notice of Motion it was resolved as follows:

- The details of the Wirral Apprentice be noted.
- Committee looks forward to commenting on the work currently being undertaken to increase level 3 take-up within the scheme and asks that the idea of specific premiums be considered as part of the review.
- Committee notes that many apprenticeship frameworks are soon to replace the requirement for key skills qualifications with the new requirement for functional skills, and asks the Director of Children's Services to report on the preparedness of the education sector for this new challenge.

### **Progress on Apprenticeship Activity and Level 3 (Advanced Apprenticeship) Promotion**

- 4.2 It is widely recognised that level 3 (Advanced) Apprenticeships are a key driver of business competitiveness and growth. If businesses are to meet the increasing forces of globalisation and retain a market share employers need to continuously update skills.
- 4.3 Members will note that Cabinet adopted a Liverpool City Region (LCR) Apprenticeship Strategy on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2011 and authorised officers to work with LCR colleagues, on behalf of Wirral Council, in the development of an Apprenticeship Strategy Action Plan.
- 4.4 The LCR Apprenticeship Strategy details a number of strategic priorities and twenty key actions. Priority 2 in the strategy is concerned with Apprenticeships meeting the needs of the Liverpool City Region economy, including in the Transformational sectors. Within this priority is an action to drive up the volume and share of level 3 Apprenticeship programmes.
- 4.5 Council Officers came together in August to establish a group to take forward the actions identified in the Apprenticeship Strategy and influence the future direction of the LCR strategy. The group draws officer expertise from children & young people, economic development, business support, human resources and procurement. Draft terms of reference for this group have now been agreed and the group will take forward a holistic view of Apprenticeships in Wirral, encompassing the Wirral Apprenticeship Programme, the on-going programmes which support take up of jobs and training opportunities, such as Build Wirral which influences accessibility via procurement processes. The Officers Group is currently defining practical actions and solutions to be implemented in Wirral to support the Apprenticeship Strategy's identified priorities and actions. Key to the actions and solutions will be a full consideration as to how the officers group can practically support increasing the number and share of level 3 Apprenticeships in the borough.
- 4.6 In terms of the current Wirral Apprenticeship programme there is no capacity to respond by increasing the volumes of level 3 Apprenticeships. This due to the fact that all available funding is currently in contract. The officers group will however set in training considerations as to how any future Wirral

Apprenticeship Programme funding could be prioritised to encourage greater volumes of level 3 Apprenticeships and grow the market.

- 4.7 The Wirral 14-19 Strategic Partnership circulated, for consultation, a draft copy of the 2011 Wirral Strategic Overview (WSO) in July 2011. The WSO identifies the supply and demand of education and training provision in the borough for young people aged 16 to 19 (or up to 25 where subject to a learning difficulty assessment). This is done as part of Wirral Council's statutory duties under the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act (ASCL), 2009. The consultation, which closes 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2011, is seeking the views of stakeholders in respect of identified education and training priorities for 2012/13. In the Apprenticeships section under, 'key risks factors to achieving priorities' it has been identified that a key priority for the Council and Government is level 3 Apprenticeships.
- 4.8 Upon completion of the consultation phase the Council 14-19 Team will be presenting Wirral priorities and findings to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) – the national key agencies responsible funding Apprenticeship provision. It is at this stage the 14-19 Team will be looking to agree specific support and actions with the SAF and NAS to assist in making a reality of the identified priorities and aspirations. This meeting is scheduled to take place in September 2011.
- 4.9 Members will note that the National Apprenticeship Service has recently released a Higher Apprenticeship Fund prospectus which is designed to increase activity in Level 4 apprenticeships.
- 4.10 Officers have promoted and explored the potential for local applications to this fund from appropriate local organisations within the subscribed criteria. Members will be updated on any subsequent successful developments in this activity. The full prospectus can be found on the National Apprenticeship Service website at: <http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/News-Media/Latest-News/~link.aspx?id=C0E72E74DA424B6BBBE56BED93FA16A3&z=z>

### **The Education Sector and Preparedness to Deliver Functional Skills**

- 4.11 In the context of Apprenticeships Functional Skills qualifications are due to replace Key Skills, as a mandatory component of all Apprenticeship frameworks. This requirement is stated in the Specification for Apprenticeship Standards in England (SASE) which sets out the minimum requirements to be included in a recognised English Apprenticeship framework.
- 4.12 Compliance with the SASE will be a statutory requirement of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning (ASCL) Act. The agreed minimum requirement for Functional Skills qualifications in Apprenticeship frameworks is English and Mathematics at Level 1 for Intermediate Level Apprenticeship and Level 2 for an Advanced Level Apprenticeship.
- 4.13 On 14 July 2010, the Business, Innovation and Skills Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning agreed to extend dual running of Key Skills and Functional Skills in Apprenticeships until the end of March

2011 to allow time for employers and providers to finalise their models for delivering Functional Skills within Apprenticeship frameworks.

- 4.14 Following consultation with key partners and the identification of a need for additional development time, Ministers have agreed an extended, temporary transitional arrangement involving parallel running between Key Skills, Functional Skills and the new GCSEs (with increased functional content) from April 2011 until the end of September 2012. This extension is subject to further work with stakeholders, to develop a wider range of flexible assessment models to ensure that Functional Skills are intrinsic to Apprenticeships and to facilitate full implementation by September 2012.
- 4.15 The Learning and Skills Improvement Service provided formal support to post-16 learning providers up to August 2010. All supporting materials and Adviser Support Services have now transferred to the Excellence Gateway.
- 4.16 Locally the Council 14-19 Team has provided support for schools, independent private providers and Wirral Metropolitan College during the development (2008 onwards) and implementation phases of the 14-19 Diploma. Support has included development days facilitated by external consultants and the Council 14-19 Team, resource development and 1:1 support for teaching professional. All Wirral Council online resources are publically accessible at: [Wirral 14-19 Partnership :: 14-19 Curriculum :: Foundation Learning :: Functional Skills for Foundation Learning \\*\\*\\*\\*](#)
- 4.17 The Wirral 14-19 Strategic Partnership have committed to fund a teaching professional from Wallasey School to drive forward, during the 2011-12 academic year, Foundation Learning curriculum development. Sue Elliott is now in post and will work to support Wirral post 16 learning providers in the development of Foundation Learning curriculum. Functional Skills are part of the core curriculum in Foundation Learning.

## **5.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 5.1 There are no direct risk implications arising from this report.

## **6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 6.1 Options for the delivery of the Wirral Apprenticeship Programme were considered and agreed by cabinet before the start of each phase.

## **7.0 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 The Wirral Apprenticeship Programme forms part of the Council's Regeneration Programmes which are taken forward in close consultation with partners from private, public and voluntary, community and faith sectors.

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

- 8.1 The Wirral Apprenticeship Programme forms part of the Council's Regeneration Programmes which are taken forward in close consultation with partners from private, public and voluntary, community and faith sectors.

## **9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

9.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

## **10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

## **11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 The Wirral Apprentice forms part of the Council's Regeneration Programmes which adhere to current legislation including those relating to equal opportunities. The Wirral Apprentice directly supports priority customer groups currently under-represented in the labour market to secure sustainable employment.

11.2 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

(a) Is an EIA required? No

## **12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 There are no direct carbon reduction implications arising from this report.

## **13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 There are no direct planning or community safety implications arising from this report.

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## **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Strategy –  
(<http://www.liverpoolcitystrategyces.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/lcr-apprentice-brochure.pdf>)

National Apprenticeship Service website – Functional Skills in Apprenticeships  
([www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk))

Wirral 14-19 Strategic Partnership Virtual Learning Environment – Functional Skills materials and the Wirral Strategic Overview document  
(<http://clc2.uniservity.com/GroupHomepage.asp?GroupId=20115134>)

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cabinet – Wirral Apprentice Programme	<b>23<sup>rd</sup> April 2009</b>
Cabinet – Additional Allocation of Working Neighbourhood Funds	<b>26<sup>th</sup> November 2009</b>
Cabinet - Extension of Wirral Apprentice Programme	<b>14<sup>th</sup> October 2010</b>
Cabinet - Liverpool City Region European Funding Proposal	<b>4<sup>th</sup> November 2010</b>
Cabinet - Tackling worklessness and supporting apprenticeships in Wirral through the European Social	<b>9<sup>th</sup> December 2010</b>
Cabinet - Tackling worklessness and supporting apprenticeships in Wirral through the European Social	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> February 2011</b>
Economic and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Programme funding for the Wirral Apprentice Programme.	<b>6<sup>th</sup> June 2011</b>