

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)
held at 10.00 am on Wednesday, 16 September 2015

Present:

Members: Councillor R Lakha (Chair)
 Councillor S Bains
 Councillor L Bigham
 Councillor J Birdi
 Councillor K Mulhall
 Councillor H Sweet

Employees (by Directorate):

Place K Mawby, R Young
Resources G Holmes, L Knight

Apologies: Councillors G Crookes and M Mutton

Public Business

8. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

9. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th July 2015 were agreed and signed as a true record.

Further to Minute 4, the Board were advised that the Indian Government had changed the way it managed twinning with other cities which had caused a delay in Coventry's desire to twin in Jalandhar. The Board were reassured that, despite this delay, the Council continued to build links with India and various delegations would be visiting the City over the coming months.

10. Outstanding Issues

There were no outstanding issues.

11. Work Programme 2015/2016

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) considered the Work Programme for the coming year and were advised that the 'Local Plan Representations' scheduled for 16th December would be rescheduled to March 2016 due to the amended timescales for finalising the Local Plan.

It was therefore proposed that the meeting on 16th December be used to consider one of the items listed for consideration on a date to be arranged.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) note the Work Programme for 2015/16 and agree the rescheduling of items as indicated.

12. Jobs and Growth Strategy Annual Report

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) considered a report of the Executive Director of Place, which set out progress made to deliver the Jobs and Growth Strategy in its first year from 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015.

The Board noted that the report had previously been considered by the Cabinet at their meeting on 11th August 2015 (their minute 32/15 refers).

The Board further noted that all performance measures had been met and had exceeded the targets set for the year. Working with local businesses, job opportunities across the sub region had been created and business investment had also been secured for the benefit of the City via programmes such as European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Regional Growth Fund (RGF).

The number of people engaging with the employment support services had far exceeded the target for the year, with over 7,000 people accessing employment support. More than 2,000 people engaged with the service had progressed into work, with many of these individuals having used the service offered through the Council's City Centre Job Shop.

The Jobs and Growth Strategy had a particular focus on supporting people into employment. Nearly 300 young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEETS) had been supported by the Council into work, further education, self-employment or another positive outcome.

The Board welcomed the report and the positive outcome the Strategy had on supporting people into employment but were of the view that the scheme could be extended in order to offer support to schools who were finding it difficult to recruit quality teachers to vacancies and recent graduates from all professions, particularly teachers, pharmacists, solicitor and opticians.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) recommend that the Cabinet Member for Business Enterprise and Employment:

- 1. Offers the support of the Employer Hub to schools who are finding it difficult to recruit quality teachers to vacancies.**
- 2. Explore the possibilities of providing support to recent graduates from all professions, such as teachers, pharmacists, solicitors and opticians, to access employment.**

13. **The Employment Support Service (TESS)**

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) considered a report of the Executive Director of Place, which set out proposals for the future of the Employment Support Services (TESS).

The Board noted that the report had previously been considered by the Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Employment at his meeting held on 7th September 2015 and the Cabinet Summary detailing the additional recommendations made by the Cabinet Member was circulated to Board Members in advance of the meeting.

The TESS provided a supported employment service for people with learning difficulties, autism, physical/sensory impairments and people with severe and enduring mental ill health. The service successfully helped secure permanent employment.

The report set out a number of options for the future of the service, which included externalise the service through a form of Social Enterprise; merge the service with another local authority delivering supported employment provision; or to close the service on 31st December 2015.

However, the recommended option was to work in partnership with others to develop a sustainable model for supported employment delivery in Coventry. This would create a city-wide vision for supported employment, developed with investment from partners and providing a clearly defined role for the City Council and stakeholders in steering future delivery. Efficiency of approximately £70k could be delivered in the service so an on-going resource of £262,056 would be required to support the option. This would also allow the Council and partners to modernise the service and develop a pan-disability model of delivery to address unmet need.

Discussions were underway with a range of partners, including the Clinical Commissioning Group, Jobcentre Plus and the voluntary sector regarding the proposals and the Council's Public Health and Adult Social Care sections were engaged in the development of the recommended option. However, whilst meeting the vulnerable customer group is regarded as crucial with each agency, an on-going budget has not yet been secured.

The Board noted that European Social Fund grant was being sought but would be limited to meeting only half of the costs of any activity, with the other half being 'matched' by the applicants own resources. It was unlikely to provide the same level of resource per individual that was currently delivered for TESS customers.

In considering the report, the Board were concerned that the cost of delivering a job outcome for a TESS customer was £8,640 against the cost to the public purse of supporting an unemployed job seeker with learning disabilities of £15,000 per year, excluding housing benefit or health and social care support costs, which could be significant. The Board were of the view that an approach should be made to Central Government for funding of the service and that, given the savings potential, the model should be shared nationally as good practice.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) recommend that the Cabinet Member for Business, Economy and Employment:

- 1. Pursue funding from Central Government to address the costs of supporting this vulnerable group.**
 - 2. Share Coventry's model as good practice nationally to highlight the savings potential.**
- 14. Any other items of business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.00 am)