
To: The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)

Date: 23rd September 2020

Subject: Employment, Skills and Training

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 The purpose of the note is to introduce Members of the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board to the document - Coventry Employment and Skills Priorities: Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic.
- 1.2 In collaboration with key partners in the city, the paper, which can be found at Appendix 1, sets out agreed employment and skills priorities for Coventry in response to Covid 19. The economic impact of this pandemic is on an unparalleled scale with GDP falling by 20.4%, unemployment more than doubling from 3.4% to 7.8%, and an extra 1.5 million people claiming out of work benefits in the last three months. In addition, there are 9 million workers furloughed across the country.
- 1.3 Members are requested to consider the following questions, identified by Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, when scrutinising this issue:
 - Where are we now, what is the impact of Covid-19?
 - How has this changed what we know about the city, our priorities and plans?
 - What opportunities are there to do things differently in the long term as we re-set?

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board is recommended to:
 - 1) Consider the content of the paper at Appendix 1
 - 2) Support the identified priorities and actions within the paper
 - 3) Identify and further recommendations for the appropriate Cabinet Member/s.

3 Introduction and context

- 3.1 There were 170,000 fewer vacancies in the UK in February to April than in the previous quarter- a decrease which has not been seen since the global financial crisis of 2008. It is likely that further job losses will be prevalent in some deeply affected sectors and especially as financial support for furlough ends. The longer-term impact is not yet fully understood so we need our City Priorities to not only reflect the current challenges, but also prepare for the future.
- 3.2 In assessing Coventry's capacity to recover quickly there are a number of advantages and challenges. The city has a broad jobs base with a particular

strength in advanced manufacturing, boosted by investment in the UK Battery Industrialisation Centre as well as research projects linked to two leading UK universities. The growing creative and cultural, tourism and hospitality sectors will be boosted by City of Culture 2021 and there has been heavy investment in the city centre to support both the retail and hospitality sectors. Coventry is also benefiting from a construction boom with expansion of both universities, investment in housing and infrastructure, as well as the nearby HS2 project and good transport connections to construction schemes across the West Midlands.

- 3.3 Nevertheless, Coventry faces significant challenges with a high youth population that has been disproportionately affected by job losses, a low skills base and lower than average wages. In addition, Coventry has a higher than average concentration of areas of deprivation. This analysis and the evidence base emerging around the impact of Covid-19 has informed the development of Coventry's priorities.
- 3.4 Work is already underway to establish economic recovery plans across Coventry & Warwickshire as well as at a regional level. It is essential that our local plans also fit into and take advantage of the National, Regional and Sub-Regional plans and stimulus for recovery; including the Government's 'Plan for Jobs' to bring forward capital investment and invest in infrastructure, hospitals and school buildings. In addition, there is a £3bn Green Investment Package, job retention bonuses to help employers retain furloughed workers, a new Kickstart Scheme for young people, apprenticeship and traineeship employer incentives and increased investment for Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service. We will continue to respond quickly to further new WMCA or Government schemes and ensure these are implemented locally to benefit our residents.
- 3.5 These priorities and the actions that follow from them, should partly mitigate some of the worst of the impact on communities, helping to protect residents and their livelihoods. We will ensure that emerging trends are identified, resources directed to the most in need, and opportunities to protect jobs and increase available vacancies are seized

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