

Scrutiny Coordination Committee  
Cabinet

28 September 2022  
11 October 2022

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills – Councillor K Sandhu

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Chief Partnerships Officer/ Director of Education and Skills - Kirston Nelsen

**Ward(s) affected:**

All

**Title:**

Coventry Skills Strategy 2022-2030

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**Is this a key decision?**

Yes – as it has the potential to positively affect all wards within the city.

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**Executive Summary:**

This is Coventry's first ever citywide Skills Strategy. The Coventry Skills Strategy takes a holistic approach to the skills system from early years through to lifelong learning to achieve the best outcomes for our residents and businesses. It plays a pivotal role in delivering on the ambitions of the 'One Coventry 2022-2030 Plan' in helping to increase the economic prosperity of the city, addressing climate change and tackling inequalities within our communities. The approach reflects collaborative principles of the One Council Plan with shared work across Council teams and services, residents, education/skills providers, employers, other public sector bodies and community organisations. It serves as a 'framework for action' with partners learning and developing creative solutions to skills challenges together to meet our three Strategic Ambitions and the eight Priority areas within them:

**Strategic Ambition 1: A comprehensive, citywide skills offer that raises aspirations and allows each and every resident throughout their lives to reach their full potential.**

**1. Skills Levels:** To improve the overall skills levels of Coventry residents.

**2. Aspiration:** Further develop a skills system that inspires residents to achieve from primary school through to lifelong learning.

**3. Progression Pathways:** Providing a clear line of sight for people to progress through Coventry's skills system.

**Strategic Ambition 2: A skills ecosystem which ensures that all, including those most in need, are able to participate in, progress and achieve success.**

**4. Community:** A skills system which meets the needs of all residents and is widely accessed by all Coventry communities, including newly arrived communities.

**5. Inclusion:** A skills system which is fully inclusive and representative of our diverse City.

**6. Highest Needs:** A skills system which supports those most in need, with a 'proportionate universalism'<sup>1</sup> approach, helping people out of poverty and creating a more equal City.

**Strategic Ambition 3: A flexible and responsive system that works together with our growing, investing and local businesses to deliver the right skills mix for our dynamic labour market.**

**7. Skills for business:** A skills system which provides the skills required by Coventry's businesses, both current and future and contributes to economic growth and the prosperity of the City and Region.

**8. Social Value and Sustainability:** A skills system which is well positioned to maximise increased commitment to social justice, respect, community, and responsibility including Coventry's commitment to tackling climate change.

### Shared goals with the Economic Development Strategy

The Skills Strategy is fully integrated with Coventry City Council's new Economic Development Strategy 2022-2025.\* Through the two strategies we will achieve three common goals:

1. **Getting the skills and opportunities right for investment:** Develop a 'team around' approach for investments and large developments with expertise brought together from across the Council to ensure early, comprehensive planning better meets business need and ensures maximum benefit for Coventry.
2. **Co-designing skills solutions with businesses:** Designing together with industry and skills partners to ensure the skills system is responsive, innovative and produces the right skills mix for now and the future. This includes supporting employers to maximise social value commitments.
3. **In-work upskilling with local employers:** Collaborations which encourage access to skills and workplace development at all levels.

### Recommendations:

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee is recommended to:

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<sup>1</sup> 'Proportionate Universalism' is an approach developed by Sir Michael Marmot and applied throughout health and other services in the UK. The resourcing and delivering of universal services is at scale and intensity proportionate to the degree of need.

- 1) Consider the content of the report and appendices
- 2) Identify any recommendations for Cabinet

The Cabinet is asked to:

- 1) Consider any recommendations or comments from Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee
- 2) Approve the Coventry Skills Strategy 2022-2030.
- 3) Receive an annual monitoring report on the progress towards the Strategy's aspirations and the progress each 'Action Group' has made against the 8 priorities.

**List of Appendices included:**

Coventry Skills Strategy 2022-2030

**Background papers:**

None

**Other useful documents**

West Midlands Combined Authority Regional Skills Plan 2016  
West Midlands Combined Authority AEB Plan 2022-2025  
West Midlands Combined Authority Plan for Growth 2022.

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

Yes – Scrutiny Coordination Committee, 28<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

No

## Coventry Skills Strategy 2022-2030

### 1. Context and Background

- 1.1 This is the first ever citywide skills strategy, taking a holistic approach to the skills system from early years through to lifelong learning to achieve the best outcomes for our residents and businesses. It is one of the key strategies for delivering the objectives of the new One Coventry Plan 2022-2030, and is strongly integrated with the new Coventry Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027. Its purpose is to serve as a framework for action with partners learning and developing creative solutions to skills challenges together.
- 1.2 In the last 5 years Coventry has successfully raised skills levels driving down the numbers of residents with no qualifications by 14,700 and achieved a substantial increase in the numbers of residents qualified at NVQ2 with 43,700 more residents qualified to NVQ2 or above. We have also made significant progress in becoming a more highly skilled City with 37,000 more residents qualified to NVQ3 or above. Coventry's school Ofsted results have also significantly improved with 92% of Primary Schools and 86% of Secondary Schools now rated as good or outstanding.
- 1.3 However, like any major city Coventry still faces challenges. The city is responding to economic challenges presented by the recession caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, growing challenges around adjusting to new UK-EU trading regulations after Brexit and wider global supply chain disruption, and ongoing cost of living and cost of doing business challenges. We trail national averages for skills levels and this strategy considers ways to level up in order to provide the skills we need to meet the challenges we face.
- 1.4 We want Coventry residents to have skills that match the needs of local employers, not only for now, but also for the vacancies of the future. We want to ensure learning and skills provision meets the needs of all Coventry's communities, is fully inclusive and plays a key role in reducing poverty. We want to build aspiration throughout all educational levels, with Coventry's young people inspired to learn, seeing clear pathways to the jobs they strive towards.
- 1.5 In developing the Strategy, we have consulted directly with a wide variety of stakeholders including officers across Coventry City Council, key external partners including skills providers and voluntary and community sector organisations and members of the public through the One Coventry Plan consultation process and Strategy Carousel events (over 100 stakeholders in total). In addition, we held a Citywide Skills Survey which was open between 16th November 2021 to 11th January 2022 and was completed by 259 residents. The Skills Survey played a key role in informing the priorities for the Skills Strategy. A full list of stakeholder engagement is attached in **Appendix D**.
- 1.6 The Skills Strategy will be one of the foremost strategies in delivering the objectives of the 2022-2030 One Coventry Plan. It will be central to the objective of Increasing Economic Prosperity by ensuring businesses have the skills they need to survive, thrive and grow. It will improve outcomes and tackle inequalities for communities by ensuring those who need it most get the skills needed to secure good quality employment and progress within the workplace. The strategy will be key to delivering the objectives of Tackling the Causes and Consequences of Climate Change by providing the green skills needed both now and in the future. The Council's role as a Partner, Enabler and Leader will be crucial in working collaboratively with funders such as WMCA, external skills providers, universities, employers and the voluntary and community sector. Finally, by supporting more residents into better jobs the Skills Strategy plays a crucial role in Improving the Financial Sustainability of the Council by increasing Council Tax income and reducing costs associated with unemployment/low paid employment.

- 1.7 Partnership work will be integral to the roll-out and delivery of this strategy. This strategy serves as a 'framework for action' and the Action Groups formed to achieve our priorities will involve many Service Areas across the Council, and work with external skills providers, universities, employers and the voluntary and community sector. In addition, the Council will work closely with regional funders such as WMCA and national funding bodies such as ESFA. Coventry City Council's Employment and Skills Service will be responsible for overall co-ordination of the Strategy but will collaborate particularly closely with the Economic Development Service on our shared priorities. In addition, the Employment and Skills Service will work closely with colleagues from Education, the Migration Team, Climate Change and Sustainability and Early Help amongst others.

## 2 Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

- 2.1 Option 1: The Council can choose not to have a Coventry Skills Strategy, and to instead rely on the strategic plans of WMCA such as the Regional Skills Plan 2016 and the AEB Plan 2022-2025. The risk with this approach is that it does not have a local focus which considers the needs of Coventry residents and businesses and the priorities that are locally important to specific neighbourhoods within the city. It would also reduce opportunities for focused interactions with key local stakeholders.
- 2.2 Option 2 is the development of a Coventry Skills Strategy that gives Coventry a new skills focus and takes a holistic view of Coventry skills system. It places Coventry residents and businesses at the heart of the skills system focusing on getting the best outcomes for our City – increasing skills levels, raising aspiration, building effective progression pathways, ensuring the skills system serves our communities, is inclusive and supports those with highest needs, and ensuring we get the right skills for our businesses and the green skills needed to protect our climate.
- 2.3 It is recommended that the Cabinet supports Option 2 and endorses the Coventry Skills Strategy.

## 3 Results of Consultation Undertaken

- 3.1 Over 100 stakeholders were consulted to inform the Skills Strategy Priorities and detail. These included officers within the Authority across all Divisions, key local and regional skills partners (these included local universities, colleges and independent training providers), voluntary and community sector organisations, and members of the public through the One Coventry Plan consultation process (this included attendance at the Strategy Carousel event) and the Skills Survey. A full list of the stakeholders consulted is attached in **Appendix D**.
- 3.2 Through the consultation process, we were able to determine the most important priorities for Coventry's Skills System. We presented the strategy to the One Coventry Leadership Team in July 2022, alongside the new Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027 to secure endorsement of all Council Directors.
- 3.3 It is also worth noting that the Council's Scrutiny Committee will be considering the Coventry Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027 on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

## 4 Timetable for Implementing This Decision

- 4.1 The Coventry Skills Strategy 2022-2030 is an 8-year strategy in line with the One Coventry Plan. Progress will be reported annually to the relevant Cabinet Members (Jobs, Regeneration & Climate Change, and Education and Skills) and to Cabinet.

## 5 **Comments from Director of Finance and the Director of Law and Governance**

### 5.1 **Financial implications**

- 5.1.1 Coventry City Council will take the lead role as an enabler for change with the Skills Strategy, working with funders to shape skills resources and with delivery partners to ensure city-wide provision leads to a comprehensive and quality skills offer for our residents. Implementation of the Strategy will be led by Employment & Skills Service officers who will co-ordinate the Collaborative Action Plans agreed across the network of skills providers.
- 5.1.2 The ability to deliver the skills strategy will depend on sufficient available resources across the city. The vast majority of skills funding is from grant, either direct from Government departments or via devolved administrations such as West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). Funding sources are currently in a period of transition as WMCA seeks to further align skills funding to an employment focus but the City Council is already working closely with WMCA in order to influence funding policy, minimise potential funding turbulence and shape the commissioning of skills provision across the FE sector. It is impossible to guarantee the consistent availability of grant funding over the longer-term life of this strategy, but as set out above Council officers will continue to liaise with appropriate funding bodies and seek to maximise funding opportunities to support the Skills Strategy from external grant sources.

### 5.2 **Legal Implications**

- 5.2.1 There are no direct legal implications arising out of this report at this stage, save for noting the Council's duty under the Equality Act 2010
- 5.2.2 Whilst there is no statutory duty to produce a Skills Strategy doing so provides an important framework for helping to deliver the Council's statutory obligations and will help drive forward the One Coventry Plan 2022-2030.
- 5.2.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity. The Council must further take into account its wider Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under s. 149 of the Equality Act 2010 when making its decisions. The public sector equality duty (s.49, Equality Act 2010) requires the Council when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, advance equality of opportunity between those who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not share the protected characteristic and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (this involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to (a) tackle prejudice and (b) promote understanding). As such, Diversity, Equality and Inclusion are key priorities within this strategy, and cut across all other priorities.  
A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is attached in **Appendix E**.
- 5.2.4 The Council will consider the impact of any projects or changes to service delivery that might arise as a result of implementing work coming out of this strategy on those protected equality characteristics. Individual proposals will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment

wherever relevant prior to any decision taken to proceed, including the identification of mitigating action, where possible.

## 6 Other implications

### 6.1 How will this contribute to the Council Plan ([www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/))?

6.1.1 The Coventry Skills Strategy 2022-2030 will be one of the foremost strategies for delivering the One Coventry Plan and its five objectives:

6.1.2 **Increasing the Economic Prosperity of the City and Region.** The Coventry Skills strategy will contribute heavily towards delivering this objective, by ensuring that businesses get the skills they need to survive, thrive and grow. In addition, supporting residents to get the skills they need to enter work increases their spending power, contributing to Coventry's circular economy. This will increase further for residents supported to upskill within the workplace and move into higher paid roles.

6.1.3 **Improving Outcomes and Tackling Inequalities Within our Communities.** The Coventry Skills Strategy plays a key role in achieving this objective. It does this by ensuring that our skills system meets the needs of all Coventry's communities and is fully inclusive. This includes ensuring that we improve job outcomes and skills levels for communities from more deprived areas of the city and for residents from ethnic minorities, including newly arrived communities. The strategy also ensures that we continue to shape our skills system to provide the most support for those with the highest needs such as disabilities, health conditions, single parents, substance misuse issues and ex-offenders using a 'proportionate universalism' approach. Finally, the strategy considers how we support businesses to maximise their social value commitments, especially employing more Coventry residents with higher needs.

6.1.4 **Tackle the Causes and Consequences of Climate Change.** The Coventry Skills Strategy makes a significant contribution to this objective by ensuring that we provide the green skills that businesses need both now and in the future. In addition, we will ensure schools, colleges and adult education providers are embedding climate change content into their curriculums. We will shape school and college careers advice to inspire young people to see the potential of green jobs and inspire the 'green' innovators of the future.

6.1.5 **Continued Financial Sustainability of the Council.** Supporting residents to gain the skills they need to get into work will increase Council Tax revenue and decrease other costs to the Council. The Manchester New Economic Toolkit (2019), a Government approved tool, estimates that the average economic value to the local economy of a long term unemployed person entering work is £14,790 per annum. In addition, supporting businesses to get the skills they need will help more businesses to survive, thrive and grow which has a positive impact on Business Rates revenue.

6.1.6 **Council's Role as a Partner, Leader and Enabler.** Partnership working is integral to the Coventry Skills Strategy. The Coventry Skills Strategy serves as a 'framework for action' with action groups formed to achieve our priorities. These action groups will be led by Coventry City Council Employment and Skills Service and include colleagues from the Economic Development Service, Education, The Migration Team, Climate Change and Sustainability and Early Help amongst others. In addition, we will include a range of external partners such as schools, colleges, universities, independent training providers, WMCA, DWP and the voluntary and community sector.

### 6.2 How is Risk Being Managed?

6.2.1 The Council has a strong track record of managing risks and maintaining significant financial controls and well-established procedures when handling public funds. The key risks associated with the strategy, and how they will be managed include:

- ***Economic uncertainty.*** With the Bank of England forecasting a recession for late 2022 and throughout 2023, the Council will need to act flexibly and be able to adapt projects and services best support residents and businesses.
- ***The changing public funding environment.*** With the UK no longer able to access EU Structural Funds beyond June 2023, the way many business, skills and employment support activities will be funded in Coventry and other areas of the UK will change. This could also entail changes in the quantum of funds, focus of the funds, and how the funding is administered. Coventry City Council is proactively responding to these changes through identifying more innovative ways of funding its priorities (including both through core and external funding sources), and further strengthening partnership approaches to delivery.
- ***Securing commitment of partners to work jointly on delivery of the strategy.*** Stakeholders both internal and external to the Council have responded very positively to the strategy, and we envisage that already strong partnership working arrangements will be enhanced in delivering the strategy through our Action Groups.

### 6.3 What is the Impact on the Organisation?

#### 6.3.1 HR Implications

The implications of this strategy in terms of funding the staff that will be directly responsible for delivering many of the activities, and facilitating successful partnership work, has been covered in Section 5.1. In respect of the wider Council, the Coventry Skills Strategy 2022-2030 will have wide reaching positive impacts on the residents of Coventry. These include improving health and wellbeing, targeting vulnerable groups and boosting local businesses and job creation. This should reduce reliance on other Council services (thereby mitigating against risks of the need to find extra financial resources for additional staff) and have public health benefits.

#### 6.3.2 Equality and Consultation Analysis (ECA)s

One of the key priorities of the Coventry Skills Strategy is to ensure that our skills system meets the needs of all Coventry communities. In addition, there is a priority around 'inclusion' ensuring that our skills system is fully inclusive including good destinations for all ethnic groups. Finally, the strategy has a priority of ensuring that the skills system meets the needs of those who may be considered to have 'higher needs' such as health conditions, disabilities, single parents, care leavers, those with substance misuse issues and ex-offenders.

A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is attached in **Appendix E**.

#### 6.3.3 Implications for (or impact on) Climate Change and the Environment

As detailed above, the strategy will have positive impacts on climate change and the environment, and will be one of the most important strategies in achieving the One Coventry Plan's objective of "Tackling the Causes and Consequences of Climate Change". This strategy will also be strongly aligned with the new Coventry Climate Change Strategy.

#### **6.3.4 Implications for Partner Organisations?**

The Strategy will be delivered in partnership with stakeholders across the city, sub-region and West Midlands region. The strategy serves as a 'framework for action' and the actions will not be able to be delivered by the Council on its own. Engaging partners will be crucial to the success of the strategy's Action Plans.

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