
Report to: Employment and Skills Panel

Date: 23 February 2021

Subject: **Employment and Skills Plan Refresh**

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1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To update the Panel on the final stage of the Employment and Skills Plan refresh.
- 1.2 To seek the Panel's endorsement to publish the refreshed Employment and Skills priorities and indicative actions as an Employment and Skills Framework.
- 1.3 A presentation will be shared at the meeting to cover the key elements and design proposals for the Framework.

2. Information

- 2.1 In March 2020, the Panel agreed a workplan to refresh the existing Employment and Skills Plan; Skilled People, Better Jobs (2016-2020).
- 2.2 Since publication there has been significant progress against many of the high-level priorities set out in the plan and several significant changes in the landscape. This includes the recent publication of the cross-departmental, DfE led White Paper on FE Reform (Jan 2021), as well as the yet to be published White Paper on devolution. As the detail of these reforms emerge they will require a detailed response, including actions for the Combined Authority and its partners.
- 2.3 It is therefore proposed that in order to remain flexible whilst ensuring that the City Region's employment and skills priorities remain strategic and clear, the work that has been done to refresh the current Employment and Skills Plan is published as an Employment and Skills Framework. The Framework will include high level priorities, indicative actions and a sectoral focus whilst allowing more detailed plans to be formed through of the ongoing agenda of

the Employment and Skills Panel and other more detailed plans . e.g. digital skills will be addressed through the Local Digital Skills Partnership Plan.

Review of the existing plan

2.4 The review of the existing plan has included:

- A review undertaken with key partners and a comprehensive analysis of progress against the existing priorities
- An extensive consultation and engagement phase on the strengths, challenges and refreshed priorities for employment and skills with over 200 key stakeholders and partners including employers, business intermediaries, Local Authorities, universities, colleges, students, headteachers and VCS organisations,.
- An online Your Voice survey ran for four weeks (11 August -6 September) and received 113 responses.
- A joint workshop with BIG and ESP members on the indicative actions for the revised priorities.

Refreshed Priorities

2.5 It was agreed by the Panel, following the review, consultation and engagement phases, that the five main priorities remained broadly the right areas of focus although they needed to be refreshed to capture some of the main changes in the landscape and would benefit from being updated and future-proofed. The priorities have been refreshed as follows:

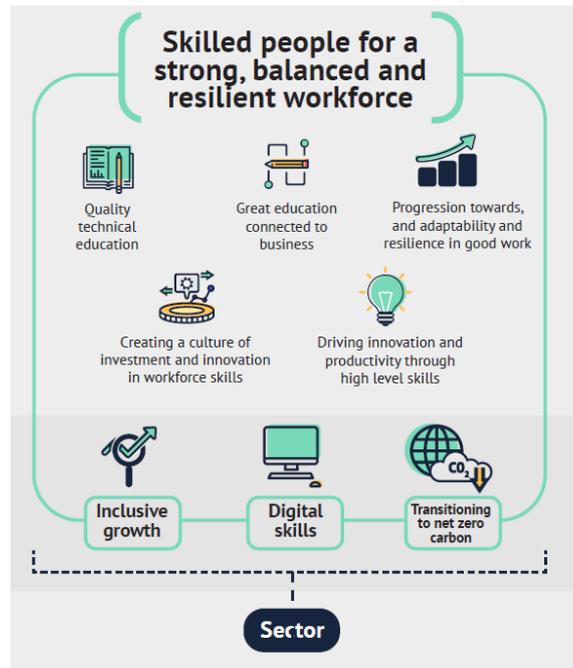
CURRENT	REVISED
More and better apprenticeships	Quality technical education
Great education connected to business	Great education connected to business
Employability, accessing jobs and realising potential	Progression towards, and adaptability and resilience in good work
Building workforce skills and attracting talent	Creating a culture of investment in workforce skills
Raising the bar on high level skills	Driving innovation and productivity through high level skills

Overview of the Employment and Skills Plan Framework

2.6 The Employment and Skills Framework has five priorities (above), three cross cutting themes; inclusive growth, digital skills and working towards net zero.

2.7 The plan also aims to address the main skills and employment barriers in each of the main industrial sectors rather than identifying key sectors as in the previous plan. This will allow a broader engagement with employers as well as the City Region being better able to respond to the changing needs of sectors, particularly in the immediate economic climate created by Covid-19 and EU Exit.

**Figure:
Draft Overview of
the E&S
Framework**



Next Steps

- 2.8 It is proposed that the revised Employment and Skills priorities are published as a Framework that sets out the Region's strategic aims.
- 2.9 The LEP Board will consider the Framework for endorsement at their meeting on 24 February
- 2.10 The Combined Authority will consider the Framework for endorsement at their meeting on 9 March. Subsequent publication of the framework will follow, subject to purdah restrictions.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1 The Employment and Skills Framework is designed to ensure that all skills programme development considers contributions to tackling the climate emergency and our ambitious target to be carbon neutral by 2038, and working towards net zero is a cross cutting theme in the Framework.
- 3.2 The framework sets out an ambition to work with partners through a Green Skills Partnership to develop a plan to address and provide for the specific skills needs required to meet future workforce demand and ensure a just transition for jobs at risk from decarbonisation.
- 3.3 To support the future workforce and employment opportunities presented by the scale of projects such as retrofitting buildings will require, the framework sets out the priorities required to provide quality careers information and inspiration that focuses that highlight the importance of STEM subjects
- 3.4 The priority around Quality Technical Education is clear that qualifications and training provision should be aligned to future skills needs, including in areas where job growth is forecast.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

4.1 The plan has a number of priorities and indicative actions that are expected to demonstrate progress in the following areas:

- % qualified below level 2
- Unemployment rate
- % of employees in quality work
- Apprenticeship starts
- Jobs paying below Real Living Wage
- Employment rate gap for disadvantaged groups
- NEETs

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 The Employment & Skills Panel, acting as the City Region's Skills Advisory Panel, is required to publish Employment and Skills priorities.

7. Staffing Implications

7.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

8. External Consultees

8.1 Over 300 stakeholders were consulted as part of the plan's development, including a Your Voice survey. The consultation and the results of the survey are published at www.yourvoice.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/esp

9. Recommendations

9.1 The Panel is asked to consider endorsement of the publication of an Employment and Skills Framework

10. Background Documents

None.

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Employment and Skills Plan Framework