

**GREATER BIRMINGHAM AND SOLIHULL LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP  
JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

<b>Report to:</b>	Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership Joint Scrutiny Committee
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> December 2022
<b>Subject/Report Title:</b>	People and Skills Update
<b>Report From:</b>	Name: Spencer Wilson Tel.: 0748 3079298 e-mail: spencer.wilson@gslep.co.uk
<b>Report Author/Lead Contact Officer:</b>	Spencer Wilson, Director of Skills and Employment
<b>Area Affected:</b>	The Joint Scrutiny Committee is constituted by Members from District / Borough Councils in Staffordshire and Worcestershire, together with one Member each from Birmingham City Council and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.
<b>Public/Private Report:</b>	This report is to be considered in the public session of the GBSLEP Joint Scrutiny Committee.
<b>Exempt by Virtue of Paragraph:</b>	Not applicable, the report is to be considered in the public session of the meeting.
<b>1. Purpose of Report</b>	
1.1 To update the Joint Scrutiny Committee on work being undertaken by the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) within the skills and employment directorate, including specific initiatives to support young people and address the current labour market disconnect (high levels of unemployment alongside high number of unfilled job vacancies), business support activity through the GBSLEP Skills Service and place-based skills interventions aligned to the Birmingham City Centre Enterprise Zone.	
<b>2. Recommendation</b>	
2.1 To note the GBSLEP's work to date in the development and implementation of the variety of employment and skills focused initiatives and the progress in attaining associated goals.	
2.2 To note and comment on the ongoing and proposed actions to sustain progress and the actions taken to protect delivery this while minimising risk.	

### 3. Background of the Report/Current Activity

3.1 The Committee in December 2021 considered a report on employment and skills performance against the GBSLEP's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), as set out in the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) 2016-2030, measuring the strength of the local economy. This report updates members on the employment and skills activity of GBSLEP over the past year within the current economic environment.

#### Young People focused employment and skills activity

3.2 GBSLEP continues to prioritise the employment and skills needs of young people, who were badly affected by the pandemic and now by the recession and economic uncertainty. GBSLEP most recently did this by bringing together a number of delivery partners from the public and third sector that support young people. The aim of bringing them together is to stimulate collaboration and coordination and to generate maximum impact and added value.

3.3 In addition, GBSLEP has delivered and/or funded several employment and skills interventions specifically focused on young people, including:

#### Apprenticeships and work-based learning

3.4 GBSLEP continues to deliver a range of apprenticeship and work-based learning support primarily through the **GBSLEP Skills Service** and associated Skills and Apprenticeship Hub ESF project, including a range of initiatives and support services aimed at young people.

3.5 £1.2m of ESF was awarded by DWP to expand the **Skills Hub** provision. The Skills Hub supports businesses to identify and address their skills needs to improve productivity through the creation of a Training Needs Analysis and implementation of an associated Skills Delivery Plan, in association with appropriate delivery partners, that will address associated workforce planning and development needs.

3.6 The total project value is £2.332m, with £1.132m match funding provided through the existing GBSLEP skills budgets. The funding timeline runs from 1 April 2021 to 31 December 2023. There has been a small reduction in the scale of the Skills Hub project to compensate for reduced GBSLEP funding available and this has been endorsed by GBSLEP Board and the Employment and Skills Board.

3.7 Two claims have been submitted and paid. Spend to date is £715,248.09 against which approximately £360,000.00 of ESF can be claimed. To date, through the first two claims signed off by DWP, over £282,000.00 of ESF has already been paid to GBSLEP. As of December 2022, 112 ESF compliant training needs analyses of local SMEs have been undertaken through the Skills Service. After a slow start this puts the project on track to deliver targeted outcomes on or even ahead of schedule.

- 3.8 The activity of the Skills Hub will ensure that businesses are not only aware of their skills needs but also of how addressing these, through the services and support available, will improve business performance and productivity increasing (in the current economic climate) chances of survival and opportunities for future success and growth.

#### Young Persons' Jobs Fund

- 3.9 £1m of ESF/Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) grant was awarded to GBSLEP to offer a wage subsidy scheme to young people (16-30) not in employment, education or training (NEETs). The total project cost was £1.5m, with £500k match funding provided mostly by employers through private sector match in the form of a wage contribution.
- 3.10 Changes to the local economy, including the current labour market disconnect which sees high levels of unemployment and high job vacancy rates, made the recruitment of young people onto the project very difficult with actual activity well below that targeted.
- 3.11 Reluctantly, and to minimise risk during the LEP transition period, the decision was made by Members at November GBSLEP Board to cease delivery of the project moving forwards.
- 3.12 Discussions with DWP have resulted in a plan to complete the project by the end of 2022, retaining funds already claimed and continuing to fund those young people and employers already engaged in the project.

#### Birmingham City Council Apprenticeship Levy Transfer

- 3.13 The Skills Service also manages the Apprenticeship Levy transfer on behalf of Birmingham City Council (BCC). To date, 55 apprenticeships have been facilitated with a Levy transfer value of £492,918. The overall amount requested is £682,723 with 82 applications received.
- 3.14 This initiative will help ensure that the underspent apprenticeship levy contributions of BCC (which are high due to the large workforce and associated wages of the Council) are spent on local apprenticeship provision and not lost to the City and region.

#### Ladder for Greater Birmingham

- 3.15 GBSLEP continues to liaise with the Ladder for Greater Birmingham to develop a model to continue support into a fourth year and align this activity with that of the Skills Service. The 'Ladder' promotes the benefits of apprenticeships to both young people and employers, through targeted media content and events such as the annual Apprenticeship Awards and supports participants through their apprenticeship to a mutually successful conclusion.
- 3.16 GBSLEP supported the Ladder Academy through the Growing Places Fund youth focused capital funding opportunity which is now underway.

3.17 The Ladder is one of the most successful GBSLEP skills interventions with over 2500 new apprenticeship starts created through the first three years of intervention and an additional 1000+ predicted through a fourth phase.

#### Reverse Mentoring & Partnerships for People and Place

3.18 GBSLEP continues to support Birmingham City Council with the £300,000 DLUHC funded Partnerships for People and Place (PfPP) project. PfPP helps young people in East Birmingham navigate post-16 transition from full time education into work or further training. 80 young people at risk of becoming NEET, across 5 partner schools, currently benefit from 1:1 and group support from dedicated Progression Coaches.

3.19 GBSLEP leads on employer engagement across key growth sectors, providing site visits to educate young people about their organisations and provide them with a chance to hear directly from professionals about their roles. Employers such as HSBC, The Repertory Theatre, Tyseley Energy Park, Birmingham Women and Children's Hospital and HS2 have been engaged.

3.20 GBSLEP will also lead on the Reverse Mentoring project at the end of PfPP, enabling young people to exercise what they have learnt through the project directly with employers, sharing insights, experience, mind-set, future hopes and aspirations to shape how employers run future recruitment.

3.21 The Growth Hub and Skills Service teams are currently onboarding 20-30 employers for the initiative due to take place in January 2023. Wider partners such as Digital Innovators, Speakers for Schools, Birmingham Education Partnership, the Prince's Trust and the Young Combined Authority have also been engaged to support with delivery of the event, to highlight careers pathways and support young people into positive destinations.

#### Generation 22 (Gen22)

3.22 The Gen22 programme is a key strand of the legacy of the very successful Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. Gen22 delivers great social value impact by providing disengaged young people an opportunity to gain employability through a Games related 30 hour volunteering assignment. Gen22 sees 6000 new jobs and 1000 social action placements created for 18-24 year olds. The Games Legacy Director recognises the importance of the GBSLEPs initial involvement and £50,000 investment, which enabled the licensing scheme that underpinned the scheme and acted as the catalyst.

#### Careers Advice

3.23 GBSLEP continues to work with the West Midlands Combined Authority, Birmingham City Council, Solihull MBC and the Careers and Enterprise Company to ensure the successful integration of careers hub services into partner organisations as part of the LEP integration. This involves ensuring the continuity of adequate funding during this period.

- 3.24 The GBSLEP Skills Service is also working with partners to deliver careers advice and support to meet employer need.

#### Headspace

- 3.25 The programme, led by Creative Alliance and funded by GBSLEP, to support young creatives into work has recently completed with, of the 52 who started the programme, 35 reporting that they are in sustainable employment: 18 in full-time jobs and 17 now have more sustainable freelance work as a result of the £60,000 GBSLEP investment. Most of these are from the 30% most deprived areas of the UK. Post project Creative Alliance is still aiming for 80% into employment through continued contact and support. The Headspace Impact Report is now available: <https://creativealliance.org.uk/headspace-programme-impact-report/>

#### Digital Innovators Launch Pad

- 3.26 This scheme works with companies to develop real world work experience opportunities for students in local colleges. Through employer connections it also creates new apprenticeship opportunities and to date has already created 62 new job opportunities (including 12 Traineeships), 27 new apprenticeships and 5 new businesses.

#### Serendip Ideator

- 3.27 This project brings specialist support to upskill young people 14-24 who are at risk of leaving education or vocational learning, or those impacted by the pandemic, by providing them opportunities to develop experience through real world challenges and connecting them with employers to create jobs or pathways to further learning. To date 350 young learners have been engaged and received careers advice across 5 education provider partners and 10 employers with one full scale project designed.
- 3.28 Together the Digital Innovators Launch Pad and Serendip Ideator form an eco-system where employers can provide real world training to students, enhancing available skills provision to meet the actual needs of employers now. The programmes tap into regional opportunities such as HS2 to develop a pipeline of opportunities, enabling local students to benefit from inward investment that the city and region is receiving.
- 3.29 As noted, many of these initiatives and partners have been brought together by GBSLEP to develop a coordinated response to the employment and skills issues faced by young people. These discussions continue.

### **Place based employment and skills activity**

#### Young People Place Study

- 3.30 The GBSLEP commissioned work, undertaken by the University of Bath, to deliver a focused piece of local research to understand the issues facing younger communities in relation to Place, providing an opportunity to explore the possibilities of Place and how young people interact with towns and local

centres, for employment, leisure and a place to call home that they feel proud of, is currently with the University in the final drafting stage.

#### Birmingham City Centre Enterprise Zone

- 3.31 GBSLEP is developing the skills focused offer around the City Centre Enterprise Zone (EZ). This has included the appointment of an EZ Skills Coordinator and the commissioning of initial skills analysis work (although it should be noted that this Coordinator will be leaving GBSLEP at the start of 2023).
- 3.32 The aim is to address the employment and skills needs of investors, both existing and potential future, to act as a catalyst for new investment and ensure existing investment is retained and grown.
- 3.33 The work is also designed to ensure as much of the investment that comes into the EZ as possible is retained in the City and local communities, by ensuring local people have the skills necessary to take advantage of the employment opportunities created through EZ investment.
- 3.34 The initial analysis work has been completed by consultants and is undergoing final additions before sign-off.
- 3.35 This work, and that of the GBSLEP Skills Executive, will form the basis of an EZ Skills Strategy, overseen by the EZ Skills Coordinator (who will then coordinate the development of a two-year EZ Skills Project Portfolio which, in turn, will seek EZ funding to deliver the prioritised activity highlighted and evidenced in the Portfolio through a series of specific targeted interventions.
- 3.36 Initial constructive discussions with the EZ programme management team have already been undertaken along the lines highlighted, this will all be subject to the outcome of the LEP integration process on EZ activity and management with Birmingham City Council.

#### **4 Scrutiny**

- 4.1 The development and delivery of GBSLEP's Skills and Employment activity and initiatives has been overseen by both the LEP Board and the Employment and Skills Board. The membership of both bodies has informed and challenged all the work that has been undertaken, bringing to bear expertise and experience from across the public, private and academic sectors.
- 4.2 Accordingly, difficult decisions have been made by both Boards to ensure that employment and skills provision reflects the current (and often changing) needs within the local economy while, more recently, ensuring that provision is appropriate within the context of LEP transition and any associated risk is minimised.
- 4.3 The Employment and Skills Board and main GBSLEP Board will continue to oversee the progress and impact of GBSLEP's skills and employment activity.

#### **5 Implications**

5.1 The work outlined in the report is all designed to support the growth and productivity (through increasing the skills level of the local workforce) and subsequently the recovery and performance of the local economy. Performance, and specifically outputs and outcomes, will be monitored to measure the effectiveness of the LEP's activity.

**6 List of Appendices**

6.1 N/A

**9. Background Papers Used to Compile this Report**

9.1 N/A

**10. List of Other Relevant Documents**

10.1 N/A