

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **11th March 2020**

Report Subject: **Employment and Skills Plan 2020-2023**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr D Davies, Executive Member Regeneration and Economic Development**

Report Submitted by: **Richard Crook, Director Regeneration and Community Services**
Bethan McPherson, Team Manager Connected Communities

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
04.02.20	11.02.20	26.02.20			05.03.20	11.03.20		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the development of the Blaenau Gwent Employment and Skills Plan (Appendix 1) and to seek for approval by the Executive Committee.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Enhancing the skills and work readiness of individuals in Blaenau Gwent is critical to ensuring residents can capitalise on the available employment (including enterprise and self-employment) opportunities, stemming from current demands, emerging investment and growth occurring locally, regionally and beyond, including initiatives such as the CCRCD, Tech Valleys and the Valleys Task Force.
- 2.2 At a national and regional level there is recognition of a growing employment demand within a number of key sectors (Advanced Materials and Manufacturing, Financial and Professional Services, Construction, Information and Communication Technology, Human Foundational Economy). It is imperative that locally, plans are in place outlining the approach that will be taken to ensure Blaenau Gwent and its residents can capitalise on the opportunities.
- 2.3 The plan is not specific to any given sector, ensuring support and provision can be developed and provided in those areas where it is required, including enterprise and business start-up. The plan does however highlight the importance of areas such as STEM, Digital and Advanced Technology to underpin and support wider needs of the economy.

- 2.4 Identified within the Corporate plan is a commitment to “work with partners to provide effective employment support and access to skills development”. The Employment and Skills Plan provides a mechanism through which a co-ordinated approach can be delivered which is responsive to identified need.
- 2.5 There are four regeneration priorities agreed for the Council which interrelate with regional, national and European initiatives and funding opportunities; with Employment and Skills being one of the identified priorities.
- 2.6 The plan is designed to represent the needs of the authority and has been developed based on statistical data, strategic documents, surveys and stakeholder engagement events.
- 2.7 The plan, see attached Appendix 1, focuses on five priority areas, namely;
1. **Business and Enterprise** Facilitate growth and innovation by understanding and responding to local economic need.
 2. **Learning and Skills** Ensure that the skills provision is responsive and accessible to residents.
 3. **Social Mobility, Inclusion and Employability** Create a motivated and skilled community, through appropriate employment support, at every stage of an individual’s journey.
 4. **Education and Schools** Raise awareness of opportunity and the aspirations of young people and support their pathway into work.
 5. **Procurement and Community Benefits** Maximise employment and skills related opportunities through utilisation of contract social clauses.
- 2.8 The main Employment and Skills Plan is supported by an action plan that is designed to be a live and evolving document, outlining specific actions to support delivery of the wider plan.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 The report will be considered by the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 5th March 2020 and any comments will be presented verbally to the Executive Committee.
- 3.2 **Option 1:** Consider the plan and make specific recommendations prior to approval.
- Option 2 (Preferred option):** Consider and approve the Blaenau Gwent Employment and Skills Plan.

Approval of the plan would provide a strategic context and clear focus to support a partnership and collaborative approach to implementing specific actions and associated Employment and Skills delivery.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

- Cardiff Capital Region: Regional Skills Partnership
- Tech Valleys
- Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan: Forge new pathways to prosperity
- Corporate Plan: Economic Development and Regeneration
- Regeneration Priorities: Town centres, employment and skills, housing, enterprise and innovation.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

There is no immediate impact on budget associated with the plan. There is currently no internal budget for delivery; any financial requirements associated with specific actions will be met through:

- Partner led delivery
- External funding streams
- Realignment of internal budgets

More broadly the activity outlined within the plan is seeking to raise skill and employability levels within Blaenau Gwent in turn seeking to increase local economic productivity, local wage levels and retention of spend locally.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The risks associated with option 1 are:

- Uncoordinated approach to ensure that employment and skills provisions align with current and emerging business need.
- Duplication or unfilled gaps in available support provision.
- Reduced impact on efforts to raise attainment, skills and employment levels of Blaenau Gwent residents.

To mitigate this risk, there has been a range of consultation and engagement activities to ensure a co-ordinated approach, reflective of need.

The risks associated with option 2 is:

- Partners do not fully embrace the approach and work in isolation, continued engagement and collaborative delivery would minimise this risk.

To mitigate this risk, relationships would be maintain through a less co-ordinated approach such as partner meetings.

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal implications associated with the report

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no immediate resource implications associated with the report.

Coordination of the plan will be undertaken by officers within the Regeneration Division. The team may also support and facilitate any working groups and/or partnerships where necessary. Specific actions within the Employment and Skills Plan/Action Plan will have assigned leads that will include a range of external partner's organisations.

Developmental work to explore new initiatives or opportunities may require additional resource however where possible a collaborative approach with wider stakeholders will be adopted to minimise impact on existing staff. Alternatively external funding will be explored to fund additional resource as part of future delivery.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Key statistics are outlined within the plan providing a baseline against which delivery will be measured.

Measures will be developed to complement specific actions within the plan.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

The Employment and Skills plan will outline specific priorities and associated actions to:

- Increase the number of employment opportunities available
- Increase the range of employment opportunities available
- Ensure appropriate employment provision to support people into work and progress once in work
- Train and upskill local residents aligned to demand or growth sectors
- Raised awareness of opportunities to support educational attainment and aspiration
- Increased employment and skills opportunities secured through community benefits.

6.3 **Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)**

To date the emerging Employment and Skills plan has been developed in consultation/discussions with;

- Employment and Skills Stakeholder event (Sep 2019)
- PSB Maximising opportunities for prosperity stakeholder event (July 2019)
- Head Teacher STEM Survey
- Attendance at STEM Head Teacher Conference
- Representation at Tech Valleys and Head Teacher meetings
- Blaenau Gwent Skills Database participant survey

- Employability Provider survey
- STEM Inspiration Event Employer and Pupil survey
- Mapping of local employment and skills provision
- Stakeholder Meetings

The final draft Blaenau Gwent Employment and Skills Plan is also being shared with stakeholders for information and final consideration. Any comments/observations as part of this consultation exercise, will be considered and incorporated as appropriate into the plan, presented to Scrutiny and Executive.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The plan has been developed as a proactive document, to ensure that long term, local residents are equipped with the necessary skills to undertake the jobs that will be available both now and in the future.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Within the plan there is acknowledgement of current employment, skills and attainment figures relating to the local population and our relatively weak performance comparative to other areas within the region. The plan seeks to address this by putting in place measures to address current performance.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Many of the existing interventions are based on collaborative/partnership working and are identified within the plan. The plan outlines the proposed governance arrangements for delivery, which will be established through the PSB under 'To Forge New Pathways to Prosperity' and may include a main board and supporting sub/working groups; made up with representatives from key sectors and stakeholders.

Lead partners will be identified to drive forward specific actions, engaging with relevant partners as necessary.

6.7 ***Integration(across service areas)***

The contents of the plan will link closely with Education.

6.8 ***EqIA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

The plan is aimed at ensuring Blaenau Gwent Prospers, this is inclusive of all our efforts to raise skills and employment levels for residents.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 A baseline, aligned to the action plan will be developed to measure the medium and long term impact of the plan. An annual review and update on progress will be prepared and reported through Scrutiny, Executive and the PSB.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 – Draft Blaenau Gwent Employment and Skills Plan 2020-23*

