

Committee: **Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **8th September 2020**

Report Subject: **Cardiff Capital Region & Welsh Government Aspire Roll Out**

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

Report Submitted by: **Richard Crook, Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services**
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Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
19.08.20	20.08.20	25.08.20			08.09.20	14.10.20		

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is:

- 1.1 To gain endorsement for the submission of a proposal to Cardiff Capital Region to roll out the Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme and to become the host authority.
- 1.2 To gain endorsement for the submission of a proposal to Welsh Government to merge the Aspire Blaenau Gwent and Aspire Merthyr Tydfil programmes from September 2021, aiming to retain funding for both local authorities to work with the education sectors aiming to facilitate apprenticeships within the manufacturing sector.
- 1.3 Both proposals will work in parallel with each other under the same management structure which will be cost effective for both funders.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Aspire Shared Apprentice Programme was initially setup in 2015, with funding from WG, as a response to identified market failure within the engineering and advanced manufacturing sector within Blaenau Gwent. It proved so successful that it was expanded to include provision in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council in 2017 and the project has been extended to September 2021 in both localities.
- 2.2 In 2019 it won the '**Large** Employer of The Year' award at the Apprenticeship Awards Cymru 2019 (AAC), which took place at the International Convention Centre, Newport. The award category entitled 'Large and Macro Employer of the Year' recognises and celebrates the employer's commitment to

developing their workforce through apprenticeships, whilst also supporting their employees during training

2.3 **The Aspire Offer to Apprentices across the CCRC D Region**

- The programme will provide an accessible platform for young people to access bespoke apprenticeship opportunities in the region facilitated by a programme management team liaising with local colleges and apprenticeship learning provider.
- The Aspire Team will provide a range of support from advice on their application form; to encouragement, preparatory guidance for interviews and the selection processes. Feedback will be provided to unsuccessful applicants at all stages of the application and recruitment processes and signposting will be provided to other similar advertised vacancies that may be of interest.
- The successful candidates will become part of a cohort that gives them an identity and peer to peer support in the first few months of their working life as an apprentice.
- They will also be supported by a mentor throughout the term of the apprenticeship helping them resolve educational and social impediments to the completion of their apprenticeship. The mentors will also act as a point of mediation between the apprentice, the employer and the educational provider.

2.4 **The Aspire Offer to Businesses across the CCRC D region**

- One of the main appeals of the Shared Apprenticeship Programme to businesses is that flexible approach that can be offered, depending on business needs and capacity.
- The main attributes of the Programme are:
 - The creation of 'Partnership Agreement' between industry and the Programme
 - Continued investment in business engagement building upon local level connections
 - The Aspire Team undertake the recruitment process for employers
 - Employers make final recruitment decisions
 - All apprenticeship level positions are paid for
 - Regular reports on the progress of individual apprentices
 - Short surveys are completed at the end of the apprenticeship and feedback is provided to the apprentice and employer
 - The employer has a qualified employee to help take the business forward.

- 2.5 To date the Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme has:
- Recruited and supported 79 apprentices placed in 20 Businesses
 - 55% of apprentices within cohorts 1 to 5 have progressed onto higher education / HNC.
 - 100% of apprentices on cohort 1 have been employed, of which 64% retained within host employer
 - Framework completed – cohort 1 – 94%
 - 100% of apprentices in cohorts 1-5 have had the opportunity to rotate to another company to fulfil skills gaps
- 2.6 With the submission of the joint proposal costs can be streamlined and alongside the City Deal Proposal become more a cost effective model with the programme management being led by the existing teams in place. The models would have the capabilities to operate across the city region with the additional recruitment of mentors.
- 2.7 It is envisaged that not all 10 authorities may require the support to facilitate apprenticeships, the programme may specifically operate in sectors. It is anticipated that the semi-conductor cluster and the pharmaceutical clusters across the region will most definitely benefit from the programme
- 2.8 It is suggested in both proposals that Blaenau Gwent will be the Lead authority, this will mean that the authority will become the joint employer with host companies across the region.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1: (Preferred option):**

Consider and endorse the submission of two proposals, one to City Deal and the other to Welsh Government by the end of summer 2020
Approval provide a strategic context and clear focus to support a partnership and collaborative approach to implementing specific actions and associated Employment and Skills delivery.

3.2 **Option 2:**

Do not consider or endorse the submission of proposals

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 Employment and Skills Plan mentions the Shared Apprenticeship Programme as a tool to support the achievement of the WG apprenticeship target.
- Tech Valleys
- Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan: Forge new pathways to prosperity through employment and skills development
- Corporate Plan: Economic Development and Regeneration

- Regeneration Priorities: employment and skills, enterprise and innovation.

5. Implications Against Each Option

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

Short Term

To date there has been no confirmation of funding post 2022 and this is Welsh Government funding.

Long Term

It is anticipated that the Welsh Government Proposal will be for £2.2m over 6 Years

The City Deal Proposal will be for £2.6m - £3.3m to over 6 academic years' dependant on the level of financial support to SMEs.

It is anticipated that each Local Authority will contribute to the running of the programme within their respective authority circa £20k– as with Blaenau Gwent & Merthyr currently.

Internal Finance Team have been party to initial discussions and the proposals and further meetings are planned to scrutinise the funding and to ensure all programme management costs are covered.

5.2 *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

Demand for the service across the region doesn't materialise; mitigated through market research, early business/LA engagement and a phased approach to delivery.

Demand for the service exceeds resource available; this will be managed within the realms of the funding, some areas may not require the service and because the programme will be centrally funded the programme management team can allocate resource where required.

Duplication of provisions/lack of engagement from FEs; mitigated through early engagement with providers and colleges. Over the last few months a number of meetings have been held to discuss apprenticeship allocation and how best Aspire could potentially facilitate opportunities and support recruitment and compliment their service.

5.3 *Legal*

Legal advice and joint contracts of employment have been agreed for the programme currently and it is expected that these will remain the same future host employers.

In addition to contracts of employment, there are training agreements in place with the apprentice, Aspire, host employer and training provider.

5.4 **Human Resources**

Throughout the process and discussions with both funders, conversations and advice has been sought from OD.

The proposal offers efficiencies between two local authorities through one management team to oversee the regional delivery.

The intention is to:

- Retain BGCBC team within the structure
- MTCBC – retain current staffing team along with the recruitment of an additional mentor
- All officers associated with the regional delivery would be employed by BGCBC

There are ongoing discussions with finance to explore the options and whether the funding can cover any costs associated with any future redundancy cost pressures.

All staff within the programme management team will have fixed term contracts for the duration of the programme which is up to 6 years.

Additional team members will be offered fixed term contracts for 1-2 years' dependant on the caseload.

Continuous employment carried over from other LAs will be a further consideration, if a secondment opportunity is not achievable.

Should there be any consideration to Toupee arrangements for staff from current partner LAs, OD would be engaged as part of the negotiations prior to any formal agreement being made.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

To date the Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Scheme has:

- Recruited and supported 79 apprentices placed in 20 Businesses
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- 100% of apprentices on cohort 1 have been employed, of which 64% retained within host employer
- Framework completed – cohort 1 – 94%
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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***

- Recruit and support over 300 apprentices across the region over 6 years
- 20% of apprentices to progress onto higher education / HNC.
- 70% of apprentices to be employed within host employer
- 100% of apprentices to have had the opportunity to rotate to another company to fulfil skills gaps

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 proposals have been developed in consultation/discussions with;

- Merthyr Tydfil Council
- Welsh Government
- City Deal
- Regional Skills Partnership
- Coleg Gwent
- Coleg Y Cymoedd
- Coleg Merthyr Tydfil
- Torfaen Council
- RCT Council

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

- The proposals aim to meet the needs businesses; future skills planning and fulfil current skills gaps. The success within two local authorities demonstrate the need for a coordinated approach to facilitate the recruitment for business and engagement with learning providers.
- The team are continually working with education to identify progression routes onto higher education as industry requires these higher level skills and with this apprenticeship pathway it provides alternative routes to employment for young people

- The proposals are offering employers and local authorities to demonstrate the employment opportunities within local areas providing skilled young people locally and meeting regional needs

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***

- The proposals are integral to collaborative working across the city regain and with individual local authorities, that is the key to its success, to date there has been RSP engagement, partner LA and FE discussions, business engagement,
- There are currently Joint Contracts of employment in place with all current employers with apprentices and these documents will be shared and part of the proposal,
- It is vital that the team works closely as they have done in the past with FE. It will be important to utilise the apprenticeship contract within individual providers for each area. Relationship with the FE to support delivery

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

The contents of the plan will link closely with Education.

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

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

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1

A baseline, aligned to the proposals will be developed to measure the medium and long term impact of the programme. An annual review and update on progress will be prepared and reported through scrutiny, executive and the PSB.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- N/A