

Economic Prosperity Sub Committee

Tuesday, 29 November 2022

Present: Councillor M Wilson (Chair)
Councillors M Hall, V Jamieson, J Kirwin, L Marshall,
M Murphy, B Pickard, O Scargill and J Walker

In attendance:
Councillor H Johnson

Apologies: Councillors L Bones , J Montague and G Westwater

EP13/22 Appointment of Substitute Members

Pursuant to the Council's constitution the appointment of the following substitute members was reported:-

Councillor O Scargill for Councillor L Bones

EP14/22 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

EP15/22 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 October 2022 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

EP16/22 Inclusive Economy

Councillor Hannah Johnson, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Inclusion, Employment and Skills had accepted an invitation to meet with the sub-committee to examine the Cabinet's overarching approach to building a more inclusive North Tyneside, particularly using the local economy as a route to make that happen.

Councillor Johnson presented details of the approach when she highlighted:

- a) the synergies with the Health & Wellbeing Board's Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Equally Well: A healthier fairer future for North Tyneside;
- b) the role of the North of Tyne Inclusive Economy Board and how it related to other regional bodies and partnerships;
- c) investment in digital inclusion driven by the North East Local Enterprise Partnership through its digital inclusion strategy;
- d) how the UK Shared Prosperity Fund interventions would be planned and delivered;
- e) the priorities contained in the North of Tyne Combined Authority's (NTCA) Strategic Skills Plan "Opportunities for All";
- f) the purpose, ambitions and priorities in the North of Tyne Employability Plan;

- g) the range of employability support in North Tyneside, including the Connexions service;
- h) how the variety of skills funding was utilised, including the Adult Education Budget devolved to NTCA;
- i) the adult learning opportunities available in North Tyneside, including the innovative multiply programme which aimed to help people improve their maths in daily life; and
- j) a case study showing how local people had been offered a welding training course leading to participants securing employment and training at Smulders UK in Wallsend.

The sub-committee asked questions of Councillor Johnson and made comments when the following topics were discussed:

- a) North Tyneside's performance in minimising the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) which was below the regional average and how the data was obtained by tracking young people. The sub-committee asked to be provided with more detailed data in relation to NEETs
- b) Members of the sub-committee were invited to attend the launch of the Working Well Hub in the Beacon Centre, North Shields at 11.00am on Friday 2 December 2022. Early indications were that the Hub was successful in attracting and engaging people and the model would be evaluated before it was extended or developed in a different way in other areas of the Borough.
- c) Councillor Johnson provided more details on the flexible nature and scope of the Multiply Programme to meet the needs of individual participants.
- d) Members of the sub-committee were reminded that the unemployment rate in each of their wards were made available together with other economic statistics as part of the ward profiles.
- e) The sub-committee questioned the effectiveness of skills training in securing employment for participants. In response Councillor Johnson highlighted the importance of the devolved Adult Education Budget in gaining more control over the quality of training provided and ensuring it met the needs of individuals.
- f) The sub-committee heard how the Council as an employer ensured that there was inclusion within its workforce, for example provision was made within the apprenticeship scheme for young people with special educational needs and care leavers. Members asked to be provided with more details.
- g) It was noted that the impact of European funding being replaced by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was yet to be fully understood but it was anticipated that this would result in a 25% reduction in funding. There was however a significant amount of skills funding available to tackle employability and bridge skills gaps in the labour market.
- h) Members sought more details of the Get Into programme which provided short term taster sessions possibly leading to more formal training. The programme had been delivered in conjunction with employers such as Smulders, Greggs and the Council's Property Services Team.
- i) The sub-committee discussed what was meant by an Inclusive Economy and how the Council's approach was focussed on both people with protected characteristics and those areas of economic deprivation where disadvantage and inequalities were compounded.

The Chair thanked Councillor Johnson for her presentation and for answering the sub-committee's questions.

EP17/22 State of the Economy

The sub-committee was presented with data which provided an indication of the state of the economy in North Tyneside. The data included the numbers of people claiming Universal Credit, the town centre vacancy rate, the number of new business start-ups, the number of companies in distress, out of work benefit claimants, levels of earnings and qualifications within the population and the number of apprenticeships.

It was **agreed** that members refer any questions arising from the data to the Democratic Services Officer so that a written reply could be provided.