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Economic Prosperity Sub Committee

Tuesday, 3 March 2020

Present: Councillor Janet Hunter (Chair)
Councillors K Barrie, J Kirwin, M Thirlaway and J Walker

Apologies: Councillors N Craven, M Rankin and M Wilson

EP20/20 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members appointed.

EP21/20 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Councillor M Thirlaway declared a Registerable Personal Interest during a discussion on the recruitment and retention of care workers because he is employed by Parkside Care Limited.

EP22/20 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 January 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Chair subject to the final sentence of the fourth paragraph of Minute EP19/20 being amended to read “Members highlighted the need to work with neighbouring local authorities to improve and standardise policies and practices across administrative boundaries ensuring all local authorities were seeking to achieve the same high standards of regulation.”

EP23/20 Employment and Skills

The sub-committee met to examine the action taken by the Council and its partners in relation to employment and skills. Mark Barrett, the Council’s Senior Manager, Employment and Skills, and Mo Dixon, the Principal of Tyne Met College, were present at the meeting.

As the Children, Education and Skills Sub-Committee was responsible for scrutinising adult education, work based learning and 14-19 skills, members of that sub-committee had been invited to attend the meeting.

Prior to the meeting members visited Tyne Metropolitan College’s Construction and Engineering Centres. The Construction Centre had opened in 2019. It provided classrooms, learning hubs and demonstration areas, all fully fitted with state-of-the-art equipment and facilities. Trades covered include bricklaying, plastering, dry-lining, painting and decorating, plumbing, joinery, and electrical engineering. Members also visited the Engineering Department and workshops where the College delivered a range of courses including specialist machinery training, refresher courses, management training and apprenticeships to suit the needs and schedules of businesses.

Mo Dixon presented an overview of the College's operation when she highlighted the scope and variety of courses delivered, the college's governance arrangements and its achievements.

Mark Barratt presented an overview of the key issues in relation to employment and skills, he described the current strategic landscape in relation to the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, North of Tyne Combined Authority and set out the Council's approach to identifying and addressing skills gaps.

During the presentation the sub-committee gave particular consideration to:

- a) the distribution of the rates of employment across the borough. The sub-committee asked that ward profiles, showing the employment rate in each individual ward, be circulated to members;
- b) the correlation between the high number of vacancies for care workers and the level of pay and rewards offered;
- c) the success of a Care Academy established in Redcar and the potential to replicate the scheme in North Tyneside. The Academy provided free quality training to future care workers to address an identified skills shortage in the adult social care sector. All graduates from the six-week course were guaranteed a job interview with a local care company;
- d) the impact of the Council's approach to social care commissioning on the recruitment and retention of care workers. It was noted that a study group established by the Adult Social Care, Health & wellbeing Sub-Committee was currently examining the quality of domiciliary/home care provision;
- e) how £57m of European Social Funding was being spent to deliver employability programmes;
- f) the role of the North of Tyne Skills Advisory Panel in obtaining, analysing and sharing data;
- g) the Green New Deal. Members were interested to learn more about what this actually meant;
- h) the Good Work Pledge, developed by the North of Tyne Combined Authority, to enable employers to understand the key elements of "good work", what they can do to achieve this for their employees and what support is available to help them get there. The sub-committee expressed an interest in receiving more details about the pledge once the pilot programme had been completed.

The sub-committee recognised the growing influence of the North of Tyne Combined Authority in delivering employment and skills programmes. Whilst it was noted the Combined Authority had its own scrutiny arrangements it was agreed that the sub-committee had a role to play in reviewing delivery in North Tyneside.