

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Panel Report

Public

Date of Meeting: 19th January 2011

Title: Economy and Skills Workshop

Report of: Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Report reference: OS 05/12

Summary:

This report provides a summary of the Economy & Skills workshop that was organised on behalf of the E&E Scrutiny Panel. The workshop was held on 15th November 2011 and involved several local education and training providers, Connexions, Job Centre Plus and a selection of local employers.

The report makes recommendations which are intended to enhance the good work that this undertaken in this area and foster further relationships and communication channels between all of the partners concerned.

Recommendations:

Members are asked to:

1. Approve the report as an accurate reflection of the content of the workshop
2. Approve the recommendations within the report to be directed to the Carlisle Economic Partnership.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Economy & Skills Workshop was designed to look at the training and skills development available in the Carlisle district that will produce a suitable educated and trained workforce to meet the demands of employers within the district and in turn contribute to the economic well-being of Carlisle.
- 1.2 A number of education and training providers and several local employers were invited to attend the workshop and a list of attendees is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.3 Representatives from Richard Rose Central Academy, Carlisle College, National Apprenticeship Scheme and the University of Cumbria all gave informative presentations on the education and training they provide and how this links to the Carlisle Economy. Copies of the presentations can be found at Appendix 2.
- 1.4 The second part of the workshop consisted of a general debate and discussion around the issues identified within the presentations.

2. Key Points from Open Forum Debate

- 2.1 A number of the employers present mentioned that they were now taking on either apprentices or trainees on a regular basis. This covered a range of sectors from hospitality through manufacturing and to professional services.
- 2.2 Job Centre Plus advised that there were a number of unfilled local vacancies in 3 growth sectors – Hospitality, Retail, and Care Services. It was pointed out that there were 2 new care homes due to be built in Carlisle with over 200 new jobs and it was questioned how these vacancies would be filled. It was identified that demand in this sector in particular was growing in demand due to the aging demographic.
- 2.3 There was a general discussion around aspirations and expected wage levels versus the reality of actual wage levels in certain sectors. It was highlighted that there are a number of “invisible” jobs in particular within the Health Service and the Public Sector and a general lack of knowledge of the range of careers available. The discussion included how general awareness could be raised about careers in certain sectors.
- 2.4 It was also identified that within the Carlisle district many employers are based out of the city centre and it could be argued that these are unknown to young people determining their career options.
- 2.5 Discussion took place about the potential to fit into curriculum development at both Richard Rose and Carlisle College to meet shortfalls in skill levels in certain sectors as above. Such work force planning to meet expected skills could take 2 – 5 yrs with such a link back to curriculum in schools and colleges.

- 2.6 A discussion took place around procurement for publicly funded contracts potentially should include provision for local employment and training within such contracts. The contract for the Homeless Resource Centre in Caldewgate, as built by Lambert Gill, was cited as a good example.
- 2.7 It was noted however that EU Procurement Law for contracts above a certain level had to be universally advertised hence not always possible to result in employment for local people.
- 2.8 Systems Group provided training elsewhere for Tesco Distribution Centres where agreements were in place to employ/train local people. Was this possible in Carlisle through the planning system (S106 Agreements) and was there a possibility to share best practice across Local Authorities?
- 2.9 A Councillor commented that there were no unemployed people in the room – was this an omission, and that the Trade Union movement had also provided for many years the opportunity for training and skills development.
- 2.10 A Councillor questioned if there was a confidence issue and mentioned that up to 2,000 young people leave Cumbria every year, so how can we better use of existing assets to retain them, and is this a challenge to the University of Cumbria to assist in this process by offering sufficiently attractive / vocational courses.
- 2.11 A Councillor mentioned that there was plans for 500 – 700 student residencies within Denton Holme and how the University of Cumbria would work to integrate into the local community, perhaps with a view to them wanting to stay in Carlisle following their studies.
- 2.12 A Councillor questioned as to how entrepreneurial aptitudes and skills were being developed within Carlisle. Was there a case to be made for a Small Business development centre? It was noted that FreeRange Artists, based in Carlyle Court, was looking to do this for the Creative Industry sector, and that the Chamber of Commerce already ran an Enterprise Club and had a number of potential business mentors.
- 2.13 Connexions brought up the issue of hard to reach groups especially in the 16 – 18 year old age range. This was as much about their personal circumstances as their willingness to develop their skills. A connection was to be made with the City Council Community Engagement team on this issue.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 There was a general consensus that the workshop had been a worthwhile session and there was an appetite for this type of forum to exchange views and to communicate more effectively with each other. It is important that medium and small businesses are included within any local employers forum established.

- 3.2 The workshop highlighted some excellent examples of education and training providers working together and also with local employers to fill identified gaps.
- 3.3 There was an agreement that it would be useful if employers were able to identify their future plans and skills requirements as far as reasonable practicable so that providers are able to prepare accordingly. It would also be valuable if employers were able to identify gaps in skills and training and it was agreed that there should be a central point to collate and disperse this information.
- 3.4 This information could enable providers to develop and introduce courses based on a specific demand. It was appreciated that it may not be possible to provide specialist training to one small employer but if a number of small businesses within the same field identified a training requirement special arrangements could be made.
- 3.5 Developers approach the City Council well in advance when they have potential projects, for example building a new care home, and this would be an ideal opportunity for planning and economic development have a role in identifying future trends.
- 3.6 Although it was appreciated that EU law must be followed with regard to tendering large capital projects, Members were concerned that local companies were unable to compete with large national companies and would like to see more agreements and/or sub-contracts which enable the employment of local people.

4. Recommendations

That the Carlisle Economic Partnership look to develop a forum for providers and employers to share and exchange information with regard to skills provision and demand.

That a key contact is established for employers and providers to record potential demand for skills and gaps in provision.

That the Assistant Director (Community Engagement) follow up with Connexions their concerns of communication with the hard to reach 16-18 year olds.

Economy & Skills Workshop

15th November 2011

Attendees

Kate Holt	Richard Rose Central Academy	Speaker
Jaq Longrigg	Carlisle College	Speaker
Phil Bell	National Apprenticeship Service	Speaker
Michele Lawty-Jones	University of Cumbria	Speaker
Trudi Dane	Job Centre Plus	
David Leadbetter	Connexions	
Alan Senior	Gen II Engineering & Technology Training	
Tony Higgins	System Training	
Sue Kirkham	Armstrong Watson	
David Crossley	Crown & Mitre Hotel	
Julie Campbell	David Allen	
Cliff Spooner	World Group	
Dawn Kendrick	United Biscuits	
Cllr C Rutherford		Chair
Cllr S Bowditch		
Cllr B Craig		
Cllr H Bradley		
Cllr M Bowman		
Cllr C Bowman		
Cllr H McDevitt		
Cllr M Bowman		
Cllr W Whalen		
Chris Pearson	Carlisle City Council	
Kerry Martin	Carlisle City Council	
Jane Meek	Carlisle City Council	
Nicola Edwards	Carlisle City Council	
Sheila Norton	Carlisle City Council	