

Economy Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2013

Present:

Councillor Green – in the Chair

Councillors Barrett, Boyes, Chamberlain, Davies, Hackett, Karney, Keegan (Items ESC/13/53 onwards), Ollerhead, Raikes, Razaq, Richards, Simcock, Smitheman and Stogia.

Councillor S Murphy, Deputy Leader of the Council

Councillor Flanagan, Ward Member for Miles Platting and Newton Heath

John Thornhill, Chief Executive of the Manchester College

Jack Carney, Principal of the Manchester College

Liam Manton, Wates

Kevin Hogan, Headteacher of St Matthews RC High Schools

Rose Marley, Sharp Futures

Nick Wood, Sharp Futures Talent Pool

Tom Rothwell, Sharp Futures Talent Pool

Kerry Parker, Sharp Futures Talent Pool

Apologies

Councillor Pritchard

ESC/13/52 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting on 16 October 2013.

ESC/13/53 The Manchester College

The Committee welcomed John Thornhill and Jack Carney of Manchester College to the meeting. They had submitted a brief report and presentation to the Committee on the strategic review of Manchester College and the strategic plan which had been refreshed as a result of the review.

A member noted that Manchester College had very ambitious targets for offenders and apprentices. Mr Thornhill told the Committee that when the College carried out the strategic review, Manchester had low numbers of apprentices compared to the rest of the country. Manchester College traditionally had the programme for apprentices running alongside the rest of the curriculum, but this did not give the right focus, so a new dedicated service for apprentices was being developed. The College had recruited the most experienced apprenticeship leader in the country, and would work with partners in some specialised areas. There might also be the opportunity of acquiring provision through other providers in the area. Mr Thornhill told the Committee that the provision for offenders was an extremely competitive area, with

organisations like G4S and Serco competing as social enterprises. He said Manchester College would be bidding for contracts in Wales, Scotland and Ireland over the next few years. He said that they would be working with the Probation Service as a partner where possible, but given the significant changes to the Probation Service, this was not always possible. He said that because of this expansion he expected that Manchester College would exceed the targets set.

Mr Thornhill elaborated on how the College would maintain quality of provision during this expansion. The College carried out a benchmarking exercise against all providers for offenders across the country and Manchester College was already the best, with 60% of sites assessed by Ofsted as good or better. Manchester College also had an improvement trend of two years. He said the new inspection framework was stricter, but he was confident that Manchester College would achieve good or better when it was next inspected. Members asked what the self assessment grade would be for 2012/13. Members asked when the College's self assessment would be finished. Mr Carney said this had not yet been reported to the governors, but anticipated that the College would assess itself as either 2, good, or 3, requires improvement. The Deputy Leader, who was also Chair of the Manchester College governing body, told the Committee that the governing body would be focusing on quality. Mr Thornhill reassured the Committee that the College held monitoring meetings with Ofsted every eight weeks. He added that the College also needed to focus on its finances. The Further Education Commission had previously graded the College only satisfactory on its finances, but the College had made improvements and the Commission had now graded it as good.

A member suggested that apprenticeships had moved away from providing practical skills for succeeding in the working world to focusing on technical skills. Mr Thornhill disagreed. He acknowledged that while apprenticeships were different to how they used to be, the sector remained crucial to the local economy and a priority of Manchester College. Mr Carney said that the qualification system was outdated, with its focus on end of year exams, but all employers which worked with the College valued soft skills as much as technical skills. He said the Council was encouraging organisations to move into the area through investment and Manchester College needed to ensure that learners have the skills for the jobs this creates. This was why it was so important to develop measures to assess the wider outcomes of the provision, rather than just qualifications. A ten point employability framework was being developed which measured skills, including behavioural, emotional and social skills as well as technical skills and qualifications.

Members asked if the College measured how many of its students progressed to employment. Mr Carney said that further education colleges struggle to track this data. Manchester College knew where 70-80% of the students went, but the remaining 20-30% were difficult to track. Mr Carney said approximately 30-40% of students went on to employment. The Chair noted that further education colleges are challenged to look six to 12 months into the future to track the destination of leavers, and this was proving a significant bureaucratic challenge for colleges.

The Committee thanked Mr Thornhill and Mr Carney for attending and wished them luck in the unannounced inspection.

Decision

To thank Mr Thornhill and Mr Carney for attending the meeting and providing the Committee with the update on the strategic review and work to develop wider measures of success for further education.

ESC/13/54 Manchester Adult Education Service

The Committee considered a report of the Head of the Manchester Adult Education Service (MAES) which provided an update on the MAES business model, its course provision and its contribution to enabling residents to have the right mix of skills to benefit from the city's economic opportunities. The Head of MAES explained that MAES and Manchester College provide 85% of level 1 and 2 skills provision in Manchester. MAES predominantly targets those with no or very low level qualifications, who are generally over 25, with many over 45. MAES works with job centres plus, the local regeneration teams and a wide range of voluntary sector partners to identify people. Adults who have low skills who are not on MAES or Manchester College courses may be in employment or participating in a Work Programme or other pre employment course. The barriers to them securing employment include that they may have never worked or not worked for a long time, and lack the skills and behaviour that employers expect. MAES focuses on building confidence and resilience, literacy, numeracy, language, and digital skills.

A member welcomed the plans to develop awareness of jobcentre plus for students of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), but noted that many people who needed to develop their language skills were not seeking jobs. She also noted that it linked closely to the Council's work on behavioural change. The Head of MAES said that it had just been announced that the Council and partners had received £1m to develop an ESOL project which would focus on the language skills residents need for everyday life and to be an active citizen. She confirmed that over the last two years MAES had been linking ESOL to behavioural change, through focusing on the census; democratic rights and responsibilities; and waste and recycling. The Deputy Leader added that the new funding would also support this work, as well work with supermarkets, and other local business to develop their skills in supporting people who do not speak English.

A member asked how work clubs share best practice. The Head of Regeneration told the Committee that the Council had commissioned Sheffield Hallam University to carry out some research on work clubs, which found the range in the city was very diverse, with outcomes varying. She offered to share this with the Committee which the Committee agreed to. She said there was a network of work club leaders where they shared best practice and news.

A member asked how MAES tailored delivery to enable people to develop skills for growing industries. He noted that while it offered courses on health and social care, it did not for life sciences, a key industry of growth in Manchester. The Head of MAES said that MAES and Manchester College had a clear set of pathways which it delivered. MAES focused on basic skills like maths, English, digital, employability skills and behaviours then encouraged students to move onto Manchester College, or other providers to gain vocational skills and qualifications and progress to

employment or higher education. She reassured members that the provision was geared towards developing skills for growing industries.

The Committee noted that MAES would produce a self assessment after Christmas, and asked the Head of MAES to bring this back at an appropriate time. The Deputy Leader informed the Committee that MAES had recently been inspected by Ofsted and offered to circulate the results to the members when she could release them, which the Committee agreed to.

Decision

1. To ask the Head of Regeneration to circulate the research on work clubs.
2. To add an item to the work programme to review the Manchester Adult Education Service self assessment when appropriate.
3. To ask that the results of the recent Ofsted inspection of the Manchester Adult Education Service are circulated to members when they can be released.

ESC/13/55 Links between business and schools in Manchester

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Education and Skills which reviewed the links between businesses and schools in Manchester. The Committee welcomed Liam Manton of Wates, a construction company, and Kevin Hogan, Headteacher of St Matthews RC High School. Mr Manton told the Committee that corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a high priority for Wates. It is the third year of a partnership with St Matthews and more recently the project focused on a core group of students studying the construction BTEC. Mr Hogan explained that there were a range of activities in the project. Wates supported the leadership team as well as students, giving a presentation on how the school presented itself to the community. Wates offered work inspiration placements, which are high quality work experience placements, not just in construction, but other parts of the business such as finance, marketing, bidding for contracts. The focus of the project was on wider skills such as creativity, innovation and team work. The latest programme focused on a core group of students at risk of not entering education, employment or training on leaving the school. The Committee welcomed the success of this project and agreed to invite some of the young people who have taken part in the project to a future meeting to hear about what impact the project has had on them.

Members were keen to know what benefits Wates got from having such strong CSR and what other organisations could learn from them. Mr Manton said a lot of the CSR was focused on maximising local employment in the business, for example making sure there are opportunities for the students who take part in the programme, and engaging with local learning hubs. He said in Wates the focus on CSR was pushed from the management, and businesses should not do it to increase profitability. He said Wates' core values were profitability, safety and CSR.

The Committee discussed the Manchester Business Survey, which found 32% of businesses were already working with schools, and a further 20% planned to do so in the future. Members asked how the Council could support this and encourage more

businesses to work with schools. The Director of Education and Skills said there while there was some good practice in the city, it was not consistent, but businesses were enthusiastic. He said the Council aimed to create a simple guide presenting a set of options for engaging, explaining what each looks like in practice, which businesses and schools would be able to choose from. The Council also intended to create links between businesses and skills to match them on appropriate projects. He said those not planning on working with schools were predominantly small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which may not know what they can be doing. He said the work to develop a guide would help with this, and the Council worked with the Chamber of Commerce to support them.

A member noted that private schools are very successful in working with businesses, and asked if there was anything the state sector could learn from them. The Director of Education and Skills did not know much about activities carried out in the independent sector, but noted that it was largely based on alumni. He and the Committee agreed that as the state sector produced plenty of successful alumni, this was something the state sector could learn from.

A member asked whether there was a balance of genders in the students involved in the programme. Mr Hogan said this was a concern, but reassured the Committee that there were opportunities for girls to be involved in the project with Wates. In particular, female employees of Wates went to the school and worked with female students on confidence and their aspirations. The Committee also agreed that it was also important to work with primary schools. Mr Hogan said this was an area that St Matthews wanted to develop with Wates, with the cluster of primary schools which work closely with St Matthews.

A member asked whether this was being shared with the other Greater Manchester local authorities. The Director Education and Skills said it was not currently, but this was a goal and formed part of the discussions with the Chamber of Commerce.

The Committee was keen that the impact that programme between schools and businesses have is monitored to determine what works. The Director of Education and Skills was not aware of any monitoring taking place, but agreed it was important as any funding should be directed towards the most effective type of programme.

Decision

1. To invite the young people from St Matthew's RC High School who have taken part in the programme with Wates to a future meeting of the Committee to hear from them what impact the programme has had.
2. To recommend that the Director of Education and Skills ensure that different projects are monitored to see what impact they have and promote the types of programme which have the most impact.

ESC/13/56 **Apprentice activities update and an investigation into other core cities**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Regeneration which provided an

update on activities undertaken and planned by the Council to support apprenticeships. The Committee welcomed Rose Marley, of Sharp Futures, to the meeting along with three young people who were part of the Sharp futures Talent Pool: Nick Wood, Tom Rothwell and Kerry Parker.

Ms Marley explained that Sharp Futures was an agency to which supported young people in apprenticeships in the creative digital sector. Sharp Futures had an unusual model which is extremely flexible and suitable for creative digital businesses, which enabled them to book an apprentice for a short period of time, as little as an hour, with short notice. This was crucial, because few digital businesses had the capacity to recruit a full time apprentice as they were too small and did not have the facilities to provide training. This model meant that apprentices, of which Sharp Futures currently had five, could gain varied experience in different organisations. Ms Marley explained that the creative digital sector was forecast to grow by 65%, and demand for Sharp Futures apprentices was very high, but Sharp Futures did not have the capacity to grow to meet demand.

The Committee welcomed Councillor Flanagan, ward member for Miles Platting and Newton Heath in which the Sharp Project was located, to the meeting. He commended Sharp Futures for their work, but raised concerns about its future if it was not able to develop the capacity it needed. The Head of Regeneration explained that the Council provided initial funding for Sharp Futures to support it when it was first established. She said the problem for funding Sharp Futures is that its particular model meant it did not qualify for mainstream apprenticeship funding from the National Apprenticeship Service. She reassured the Committee that the Council was working with Sharp Futures to develop a model for bidding for funding, while being mindful that its flexibility is its strength.

The Committee agreed to add an item to the work programme to look into Sharp Futures in more detail, to determine if funding can be found for Sharp Futures and how the model can be expanded. The Committee thanked Rose Marley, Nick Wood, Tom Rothwell and Kerry Parker for attending.

Decision

To add an item to the work programme to look into Sharp Futures in more detail, to determine if funding can be found for Sharp Futures and how the model can be expanded.

ESC/13/57 Overview Report

The Committee considered a report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which provided a summary of the key decisions due to be taken that are relevant to its remit, an update on actions taken as a result of recommendations and the current work programme. The Overview Report also included the most recent Real Time Economy Dashboard.

Decision

To agree the work programme.