

Local Economy and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Commission

Thursday 2 May 2019

7.00 pm

Ground Floor Meeting Room G01C - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1
2QH

Supplemental Agenda

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1. Introduction

The Commission was established to examine how the provision of training and skills supports residents to access the economic opportunities available in Southwark.

Southwark's residents have a diverse and dynamic range of providers to choose from. schools, university training colleges, further education colleges, sixth forms, adult education, apprenticeship providers, universities as well as employment support providers are all part of the local skills infrastructure. In addition, online provision for a wide variety of skills is expanding rapidly and is currently less well understood.

The Commission's focus has been taking an overview of the developing borough-wide Southwark Skills Strategy and associated delivery plan, and then a deeper dive into the following key issues:

- Adult education provision
- Apprenticeships
- Careers advice, schools and work experience

To fulfil the objectives of the Commission, specific attention was given to examining the linkages between training and skills and Southwark's local economy.

2. Methodology

Officers from Southwark Council with responsibility for adult education and skills provided an overview of lifelong learning provision available to Southwark residents. During its first meeting of the Commission took direct evidence from Southwark Council officers on the current approach in the borough to providing lifelong learning. It also looked at what the council knows about how our residents go about acquiring knowledge.

In the second meeting, the Commission focused on how Southwark's post statutory opportunities are currently arranged; and how development of the Southwark Skills Strategy and associated delivery plan will affect that.

The Strategy has three priorities: that residents have the opportunity to gain the type of skills they need; local employers invest in their workforce and have training provision that means they can recruit locally; and that employers and providers work together so the local skills offer is responsive to the local economy. To achieve this a Partnership Board of key local stakeholders and task and finish groups have been established and are developing their approach.

To explore this, the Commission has taken evidence on:

- Individuals who have taken modern apprenticeships in Southwark and how they have used those opportunities to start successful careers.
- Southwark Adult Learning Service, on their approach to involving adult learners in improving basic skills.
- St Giles, a local charity that identifies and supports young people at risk of NEET to maximise their opportunities.
- Southwark Construction Skills Centre, on applying the lessons learnt with construction apprenticeships to other sectors.

- Careers advisors, on the challenges of using a smaller team needing to monitor school leaver's progress.
- Southwark's Cabinet member and officers overseeing the strategy's development and delivery.

The following attended meetings of the Commission and provided evidence:

- Councillor Kieron Williams, cabinet member for Jobs, Skills and Innovation
- Danny Edwards, strategy & partnerships manager
- Liz Britton (lead officer for secondary and further education, employment & inclusion)
- Dolly Naeem, head of adult learning
- Kate Bagnall, family learning manager
- Catherine Verrinder, Team Leader Southwark Choices
- Neil Gordon-Orr, Strategic Manager Education Access.
- Sheila Luwero, former housing apprentice in 2015
- Elise John-Lewis, Social and Economic Development Manager, Elephant Park
- Luis, caseworker, St Giles

3. The Southwark Skills Strategy

In March 2017 Cabinet noted the recommendations of the Government's 2016 Area Based Review of Skills and endorsed the recommendation to develop a local skills strategy. The resulting Southwark Skills Strategy was developed over the summer of 2017 in partnership with learner representatives, further and higher education providers, businesses (including the council's Business Forum) and schools, with a view to supporting the delivery of a high-quality further education (FE) and skills offer in the borough.

The Southwark Skills Strategy was formally adopted by the council at December 2017 cabinet meeting. It was recommended that officers develop a delivery plan to set a framework for the implementation of the strategy. The plan has therefore been developed in partnership that has included working group meetings, presentations to key stakeholder groups and conversations with individual partners.

The vision of the Strategy aligns with the proposed Council Plan for 2018-22, which sets out a vision for a full employment borough, where everyone has the skills to play a full part in the economy.

It also aligns to the council's Economic Wellbeing Strategy, that *"by 2022 Southwark will have a high-quality skills offer that is accessible and responsive to learner and employer needs. The offer will support all learners to build resilience and develop valuable skills for a strong local economy now and in the future."*

To achieve the vision, the Strategy has three priority aims:

- Residents have the opportunity to gain the type and level of skills they need to access local opportunities and progress in the labour market
- Employers invest in their workforce and have access to training provision that responds to their needs and allows them to recruit locally
- Employers and providers work collaboratively to develop a local skills offer that is responsive to the needs of the local economy

Delivery of the Strategy

The development of the delivery plan has been undertaken in close collaboration with key partners from across the borough. This is so there is a consistency in vision and ambitions across Southwark and the wider sub-region, and to help ensure that available resources are maximised.

The delivery plan is structured over four main themes. This is because of the multifaceted structure of the skills system and of those operating within it and, most importantly, those affected. The four themes are:

- *Learners* – Southwark learners who learn in a number of different settings; schools, colleges, universities, at work, and at home. They learn to build knowledge, to develop specific skills, gain a sense of achievement and self worth.
- *Employers* – The micro, small and medium and large employers in the borough provide opportunities for people to develop work place skills and gain employment opportunities. Their engagement in the skills system helps to ensure training is relevant to their skills needs now and in the future.
- *Providers* – There are many skills providers in the local area. Schools, University Training Colleges (UTCs), Further Education Colleges, Sixth Forms, Adult Education, apprenticeship providers, universities as well as employment support providers are all part of the skills infrastructure, and have been the subject of much policy and funding changes over the years.
- *Funding* – The plan seeks to strengthen local influence over the government funding available to support the skills system such as the Adult Education Budget as well as the Apprenticeship Levy.

A Partnership Board consisting of a range of key local stakeholders has been established to:

- Ensure ongoing cross partnership support for the Strategy
- Endorse and support the delivery of activity as set out in the delivery plan
- Oversee the progress of the delivery plan and review outcomes
- Advise on future skills activity and support effective prioritisation
- Influence and inform sub-regional, regional and national decision makers, ensuring that Southwark's voice is heard

Following the inaugural Skills Partnership meeting in September 2018, task and finish groups have been established to scope out delivery across four agreed areas of focus:

- Sector specific skills offer – looking at health, hospitality and digital sectors, and building on learning from the Southwark Construction Skills Centre (SCSC).
- Labour market insight – understanding employer skills needs and the local skills gap.
- All-age careers information, advice and guidance – addressing the lack of comprehensive careers information, advice and guidance offer, particularly for older people.
- Learner and employer consultation

The delivery plan is integral to the broader sub-regional work that is underway to improve the quality of the FE and skills offer in London and ensure local leadership influences how the Adult Education Budget (AEB) is prioritised. It is also aligned to emerging Mayoral priorities and the delivery of the London Skills Strategy, the AEB commissioning framework and the developing Central London Forward (CLF) Skills Strategy.

The Commission was impressed by the innovative approach taken by Southwark Council's Skills Strategy. The Partnership Board is coordinating a disparate, rapidly changing and nationally badly resourced service area. However, the pace of change in this area, particularly the growth of online provision, combined with the challenge of collecting accurate data will make it difficult to keep up with training needs locally. Continued regular updating of the Skills Strategy delivery plan will be required to ensure relevance.

Commission Recommends

- 1 In a dynamic sector, continued regular updating of the Skills Strategy delivery plan will be required to ensure that local skills need remains well understood.***

4. Adult education

The Commission explored how Southwark Council Adult Learning Service (SALS) provides a wide range of adult learning courses funded or subsidised by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). These include courses direct public funding and education support to people who are disadvantaged and prepare them for further training, employment or self-employment. Courses include Basic Skills in literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages and vocationally-related courses, such as those in Childcare. Most of these courses lead to nationally recognised qualifications. Courses such as those in arts, ceramics, woodwork, health and fitness are in-house and interest-based. These are sometimes described as non-accredited courses.

SALS is working with the Local Economy Team on the development of the action plan to implement the recently approved Southwark Skills Strategy. The priorities include to:

- sustain the quality and standards of provision
- maintain the healthy recruitment, retention and completion rates of learners
- nurture the earned confidence of Ofsted and the ESFA
- influence regional and local AEB devolution in line with Southwark Skills Strategy and emerging local priorities

Southwark's adult learning is primarily delivered through the Thomas Calton Centre. Our adult education service is judged good by Ofsted.

The service attracts residents who might not be ready to go to a larger institution, and is successful in reengaging the most disadvantaged and most distant from the labour market. The family learning sessions, in particular, attract families who might not be reached by large colleges, and deliver literacy and numeracy which underpin readiness for work.

The service also supports family learning in schools. They have found that parents who get started with learning may decide to continue to study. The service can offer English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), literacy and numeracy. It is an entry point for adult learners. Family learning sessions take place in half term when the whole family can come. They also offer outreach sessions in schools.

The service had 3000 enrolments last year, which has been sustained year on year, and achieved 96% completion rate. The service is part funded by an allocation from the Education & Skills agency -

success is measured by enrolment of learners, the length of their courses and their achievement. Poor outcomes from adult education can affect this funding. While enrolment numbers are steady in Southwark, participation is dropping nationally. There is no way to capture evidence about people doing unstructured learning but all the research shows structured learning is dropping. All providers are struggling to recruit people who are furthest. Funding is a significant issue.

The service believe they are the only providers offering pre-entry support for ESOL. Colleges start at entry level. It is resource intensive but a clear need in the borough. They offer 2 types of ESOL courses - those which do and do not lead to external qualification with 300-400 students a year. They also offer combined courses e.g. sewing and ESOL – helping people with language they need for daily life e.g. how to support their children with homework or to talk to doctors.

There is a lack of destination data available – this is a challenge for the sector as a whole.

The Commission recognises the vital work done by SALS in reaching those whose previous experiences of education have been negative. The national restrictions on how funding is provided limits the scope for changes, more devolved funding in this area would allow SALS flexibility to play a larger role in delivering the Skills Strategy.

5. Apprentice programme

The Commission heard evidence to understand the role and value of apprenticeships in the borough. Southwark is a London leader in creating apprenticeships, as part of a wider agenda to make sure every Southwark resident can fulfil their potential and benefit from the jobs and opportunities, with an ambitious target to help 2,500 people into apprenticeships over four years.

The Council has developed the Southwark Apprenticeship Standard to promote high standards in apprentice employment and training, and recognises the crucial role providers have in delivering successful apprenticeships. The council has also led the way by developing its in-house apprenticeship scheme.

The evidence provided by those who had undertaken recent apprenticeships and from the charity St Giles explored in some detail a lack of understanding about the value of apprenticeships as a training option and a route to qualified, and valued employment.

The commission heard from Sheila Luwero, former housing apprentice in 2015. She joined the council after struggling to find employment after degree, as she had no work experience. Sheila explained that her council apprenticeship provided an important bridge between education and work. She told the commission that the Council's advanced housing apprenticeship scheme was perfect for her level of qualification and enabled her to gain work specific skills rapidly through training and support.

As part of her evidence to the commission Sheila explained that many of her peers were in a similar position, and she advised that more needs to be done to explain the importance of work experience to school pupils, students and parents, and that modern apprenticeship can offer a better route into certain professions than university; for example is it possible to qualify as a social worker through an apprenticeship programme.

Luis from St Giles said that the status of apprentices is rising among young people, particularly in niche areas such as sport coaching where young people recognise their value. Modern apprenticeships have much higher standards and requirements, with some leading to Masters level

qualifications. This is underappreciated however, and the perception of apprenticeships as a viable alternative to more academic routes into employment needs to change.

The cabinet member explained that the Council recognises the need to improve communication and advice on apprenticeships and is committed to doing more, specifically mentioning that the Council has developed apprenticeship qualifications in Planning and Health and Social Care.

The report on NEETS said that although there are a number of apprenticeship opportunities available in and around Southwark, take up of these was slow but we are starting to see more 17/18 year olds applying for apprenticeships. Since January 2018, young people in school are expected to be provided with information on technical and vocational education, including apprenticeships.

- Although the Commission understands the take up on apprenticeships is improving and recognises the Council has identified the need to improve communication and advice, the Commission recommends that a priority must be ensuring residents, and those who provide advice and guidance to them, understand the full potential of the apprenticeship route.
- The Commission recognises that understanding of the value of apprenticeships needs to be improved among those who provide support informally and formally to our residents including schools as well as parents and peers.

These are nationwide issues and were recognised in 2018 by the report of the All-Party Parliamentary Apprenticeship Group which concluded that:

- Schools should ensure that all young people have adequate access to careers advice which explains the full range of options available, is delivered by someone with the relevant skills and gives parity of esteem to apprenticeships
- Government should appropriately resource schools to provide high quality careers advice and incentives to give parity of esteem to apprenticeships when advising young people.

The Commission agrees that the biggest restraint on skills provision and awareness is funding levels and Southwark Council should continue to make the case for more resources nationally.

Commission Recommendations:

- 2 A priority must be ensuring residents, and those who provide advice and guidance to them, understand the full potential of the apprenticeship route. Understanding of the value of apprenticeships needs to be improved among those who provide support informally and formally to our residents including schools as well as parents and peers.***
- 3 Southwark Council should continue to make the case nationally for more resources and more devolved funding to support meeting local skills needs.***
- 4 Do more work to promote apprenticeship to all cohorts of learners; explaining the increase in training standards, and the range of qualification attainment levels***

6. Careers advice, schools and work experience

The commission heard about the Skills Strategy task & finish group review of the borough's careers advice offer. They noted that many schools are not meeting new duties around careers advice and guidance and many still do not have a named careers lead. School engagement is challenging and not all schools are meeting their duties to report destination data to the council. The group felt schools would welcome more support to meet requirements and Gatsby benchmarks and acknowledged that there have been particular difficulties in engaging academies. They discussed the importance of getting the right people from businesses to speak in schools to improve engagement. Gaps were also identified in the offer for young people and those who are NEET as there appears to be a lack of access to comprehensive careers information.

The task and finish groups conclusions around some schools careers advice was echoed by the evidence received by the commission from the apprentice and St Giles, with young people having a poor understanding of the employer skill requirements.

The intensive support offered by groups such as St Giles ought to be continued and enhanced where possible and particular consideration given to the advice that investment is made into forms of peer support to enable young people to develop communications skills, share understanding and support each other. The commission received evidence that young people are some of the most lonely and isolated despite high levels of social media engagement.

Everybody emphasised the importance of work experience in both developing skills and finding a good fit for a future career. Work experience opportunities enable young people to broaden their horizons and develop awareness. There are pockets of good practice here and a developing programme: Lend Lease visit schools and their construction taster days engage young people, with some choosing this as a future career. The cabinet member said that there is a commitment to develop 500 paid internship to help young people, and this is particularly important for low income young people who remain at a disadvantage in the workplace even with a degree. The commission heard that Matt Jones, head of ARK academy, is developing a program for young people from 14 - 16 young people to develop employment skills; this is in the early stages.

The cabinet member emphasised that Southwark and the London economy is strong and there is a range of opportunities for young people to develop highly paid careers in Southwark, with significant employer demand in a number of fields.

The commission welcomes the progress that the Skills Strategy is making in this area and in particular the development of a draft Careers Advice Framework, which is intended to provide an overview of what support is available in the borough, how this can best be promoted and where there are gaps in provision. The intention is to refine this framework in consultation with a range of partners.

The commission recommends that as part of developing this Careers Advice Framework it is crucial to continue to engage schools, academy chains, FE Colleges in order to focus on improving the consistency and quality of careers advice. As part of this there ought to a particular focus on developing work experience opportunities, enabling young people to broaden their horizons, understand and develop employment skills and that schools provide pupils with information on technical and vocational education, including apprenticeships.

As well as talking to the current partners and education providers the Commission recommends engaging young people both through traditional groups such as the Youth Council, and utilizing

other networks including social media to ensure that young peoples experiences and voices can guide the emerging Careers Advice Framework . The Skills Strategy T & F groups could hold focus groups with council apprentices and speak to local student bodies.

There also ought to be consideration given to engaging with young people who are at more serious risk of exclusion and becoming embroiled with gangs and the drug trade. The Extended peer review, recently produced by the Violence and Vulnerability Unit, encourages a shared narrative across Southwark partners in understanding the role the drug trade has in fueling serious violence.

They commend South Young Advisors and refer positively to the work of organizations such as Bridges to Work and the importance of providing long term support to prevent and enable people to exit criminality. Young people at risk, and organizations working with them , such as St Giles, ought to have a say in the emerging Careers Advice Framework .

Engaging with groups such as this will help ensure that the emerging Careers Advice Framework reflects the experience of young people and is best able to engage with people most at risk.

Commission Recommendations:

5 *Ensure the emerging Careers Advice Framework:*

- *Continues to engage with schools, academy chains, FE Colleges in order to focus on improving the consistency and quality of careers advice, and in particular ensure that they provide pupils with information on technical and vocational education, including apprenticeships*
- *Engages with young people directly*
- *Engages with groups working with at risk groups to ensure that the framework plays its part in reducing the risk of offending and enhancing the employment prospects of those most at risk of social exclusion.*
- *Bridge the education and employment skills gap amongst young people*
- *Provide a range of work experiences (in school, taster days, internships) ; in order to broaden horizons, develop skills and awareness, and match residents to employer demand*

7. Linking employment support provision with the local economy

Throughout the work of the Commission, the priority was to examine how Southwark residents access the economic opportunities available in Southwark. The provision of the training and skills that provide that opportunity was a key part of the Council Plan.

Luis, an Employment support case worker from St Giles, gave an overview of the intensive support his team gives to young people and others looking for jobs. This includes conducting skills audits, helping young people overcome barriers (such as being a carer or set backs connected to disability), and enabling them to understand the job market and how to find the right role.

People using the service often do not understand how to connect employment language around skills to their experience: for example being a team player can be evidenced by being a member of a community football team. A significant part of their work is enabling young people to understand their aptitudes and skills, build confidence and employment related skill, increase their horizons and help them find a role that will suit them and become a stepping stone to develop a career. This involves encouraging young people to take up volunteer positions and entry level positions to develop skills and awareness.

Elise John-Lewis, Social and Economic Development Manager, Elephant Park, Lend Lease presented on their initiatives to engage local people in a variety of work roles. People know about the trade opportunities in the construction industry; but less about the support and technical services jobs available. Her service links with local services such as Southwark Works, FE Colleges, and local schools, offering a variety of opportunities for people to engage: from taster construction days for school pupils, work experience opportunities for people interested in opportunities, to more structured apprenticeship programmes at the Construction Skills Centre. She emphasized the importance of matching employer requirements with local people entering the labour market through identifying the range of opportunities that would fit different people and developing work specific skills.

The Skills Strategy has decided to build on the strength of the construction skills sectors, and the notable success in linking employers in the construction sector with a large number of job-ready people. It now intend to build on this and decided that the hospitality and catering sector should be prioritised initially as there is a high recruitment gap, good engagement with employers in the borough and a good level of provision in terms of FE college facilities and courses for Southwark residents. The digital and health & social care sectors were also identified as opportunities.

The Commission identified the local need for affordable workspaces to support digital and creative entrepreneurs and the commission was particularly interested in opportunities in the digital sector. A briefing was received on the South London Innovation Corridor programme, which brings together four boroughs (Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark and Wandsworth), into a partnership of higher education, entrepreneur support agencies and employers – aligned around a vision to catalyse inclusive Creative and Digital Industry growth. The £8 million programme will provide an integrated approach to cluster development in central and local growth areas and is comprised of three strands of activity: 1 Workspace; 2. Business Support; 3. Talent Development.

Commission Recommendations:

- 6** *Ensure the Skills Strategy prioritises the digital sector as soon as practical for further development, and that this is linked to the local need for affordable workspaces and the work of the South London Innovation Corridor programme.*

8. Recommendations Summary

- 8.1 In a dynamic sector, continued regular updating of the Skills Strategy delivery plan will be required to ensure that local skills need remains well understood.
- 8.2 A priority must be ensuring residents, and those who provide advice and guidance to them, understand the full potential of the apprenticeship route. Understanding of the value of apprenticeships needs to be improved among those who provide support informally and formally to our residents including schools as well as parents and peers.
- 8.3 Southwark Council should continue to make the case nationally for more resources and more devolved funding to support meeting local skills needs.
- 8.4 Do more work to promote apprenticeship to all cohorts of learners; explaining the increase in training standards, and the range of qualification attainment levels
- 8.5 Ensure the emerging Careers Advice Framework:
- Continues to engage with schools, academy chains, FE Colleges in order to focus on improving the consistency and quality of careers advice, and in particular ensure that they provide pupils with information on technical and vocational education, including apprenticeships
 - Engages with young people directly
 - Engages with groups working with at risk groups to ensure that the framework plays its part in reducing the risk of offending and enhancing the employment prospects of those most at risk of social exclusion.
 - Bridge the education and employment skills gap amongst young people
 - Provide a range of work experiences (in school, taster days, internships) ; in order to broaden horizons, develop skills and awareness, and match residents to employer demand
- 8.6 Ensure the Skills Strategy prioritises the digital sector as soon as practical for further development, and that this is linked to the local need for affordable workspaces and the work of the South London Innovation Corridor programme.

LOCAL ECONOMY and LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMISSION**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2018-19****AGENDA DISTRIBUTION LIST (OPEN)****NOTE:** Original held by Scrutiny Team; all amendments/queries to Fitzroy Williams Tel: 020 7525 7102

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