

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 10 March 2020

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 21 April 2020

Report of: Director (DB)

Title: Skills Strategy for Exeter

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

It is a council function to agree the strategy. The Executive is then responsible for implementing that strategy.

1. What is the report about?

This report is about the Skills Strategy for Exeter.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 To approve the Skills Strategy for Exeter.
- 2.2 To approve the associated action plan to enable the Skills & Business Manager to proceed with the outlined work programme.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

- 3.1 In November 2018, Executive approved the development of the Skills Strategy for Exeter and supported the outlined priorities.
- 3.2 The Skills Strategy for Exeter has now been developed, and supports the delivery of key objectives in the Corporate Plan and Vision for Exeter.
- 3.3 Skills are a key pillar of productivity, through the adoption and delivery of the Skills Strategy, Exeter City Council will be supporting businesses, the workforce and residents to contribute to the economic success of the city.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources.

- 4.1 The financial resource requirements for the delivery of the strategy have been highlighted through the accompanying action plan. These are currently modest in line with the allocated budget available, c. £25k per annum.
- 4.2 A key strand of the strategy is to identify suitable funding streams that will support the delivery of the priorities where required.

- 4.3 The non-financial resources are primarily provided through the Skills & Business Manager post, who will be responsible for overseeing the delivery of the strategy, and all the associated work streams.
- 4.4 There will occasionally be a requirement for support from other officers, such as the Growth and Commercialisation Manager, Data Analytics Apprentice and Communications Team. As well as time from other services across the council as appropriate and in line with the priorities, such as; Customer Services, Housing and Communities.
- 4.5 The existing Building Greater Exeter Project, and project manager post are already budgeted for, and are identified within the strategy.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

There are no additional financial implications for the Council to consider.

6. What are the legal aspects?

- 6.1 There are no legal aspects to this report or the Skills Strategy

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Report details:

Background

- 8.1 Following Executive approval in November 2018, the Skills Strategy for Exeter has been produced. This has been through a process of gathering the evidence base using national and local data sources to assess the performance of the city in relation to employment and skills. The full evidence base is available as an annexe to the strategy.
- 8.2 A business survey was also conducted in 2019, using a sector representative sample of Exeter businesses. This provided feedback on the key issues that businesses are facing in relation to the skills of their workforce, and employment issues – recruitment and retention. The full results of the business survey are available as an annexe to the strategy.
- 8.3 In addition a more detailed piece of work focussing on 4 key growth potential sectors for the city has been undertaken, covering the sectors; Digital, Knowledge Industries, Health and Care and Professional Services. This report is available as an annexe to the strategy.
- 8.4 Through the development of the evidence base, areas for further research have been identified to enable a more in depth understanding of some of the skills issues and priorities impacting on the city.
- 8.5 The key indicators for the city in relation to employment and skills are contained within the strategy, these include; economic activity, out of work benefit, self-employment, salaries, qualification levels, GCSE attainment, apprenticeships starts and achievements and graduate retention. These will form the basis of an annual

briefing on the skills and employment performance of the city, to be shared within Exeter City Council and externally with partners and stakeholders.

Priorities

- 8.6 Through reviewing the evidence base, the following priority areas have been identified for action in the strategy;

- Growth in more highly qualified jobs

Much of the forecast employment growth in the city will be in the more highly qualified occupations of professional, scientific and technical, human health and social work and business admin and support service roles. Approaches to support these sectors to recruit, retain and continue to develop the skills of the required workforce.

- Matching local young people's skills with job growth forecasts

Continuous support to raise aspirations and awareness in the city's young people. To improve understanding of the opportunities available to them through; schools, parents, teachers and influencers. Ensuring skills and qualifications match to opportunities and link to lifelong learning.

- Apprenticeships

Address the business survey findings that only 20% of businesses employ an apprentice, and the associated issues that have been identified. Work with the business community and training providers to develop a coherent and joined up approach to support businesses to better understand and access apprenticeships.

- Vacancy and recruitment issues

Understand the granular issues in relation to hard to fill vacancies and recruitment challenges. Address support for businesses to access all areas of the labour market, promote the ABC model of "*A job – a Better job – a Career*", to support entry level roles and progression.

- Inclusion

Support the harder to reach population to move closer to the labour market, promote tools to support this, such as the Disability Confident scheme, and maximise the opportunities with programmes such as Building Greater Exeter. Agree and support an approach to promoting 'Fair Wages'. Develop the links to the Sport England programme and links between physical health and mental wellbeing. Links also to the role of digital inclusion in supporting this area of work.

- Sectors

Develop and agree dedicated plans for sectors that have been identified through the evidence base. These currently include; Digital, Health and Care, Knowledge Creation and Transfer, Professional Services and Construction.

- Self-Employment

Undertake further research to enable a better understanding of the significant increase in self-employment in the city and the impact of this on the labour market as a whole.

- Zero Net Carbon

The development of skills has a role to play in the commitment to becoming Zero Net Carbon. We will work with the University of Exeter and Exeter City Futures on this emerging area of work.

8.7 In addition to the priorities, there are a number of underpinning areas of work that need to be undertaken to support the overall delivery of the Skills Strategy, these are;

- Strategic Intelligence – maintaining and developing the evidence base, undertaking further research where required;
- Partnerships - working collaboratively with a number of organisations across the city to support the delivery of the priorities;
- Communications / Celebrating Success – communicating the success of the activity and projects delivered, promote initiatives and partner news from across the city. Research and consider any appropriate ‘status’ for the city to support and promote commitment to skills;
- Funding – undertake an ongoing process of identifying appropriate funding streams to support the delivery of the strategy, either for Exeter City Council or partners to apply for;
- Reporting and Monitoring – develop a programme to monitor and report on the delivery of the strategy;
- Governance – develop an appropriate structure to support the delivery of the strategy and undertake ongoing review of priorities – includes links to LEP and Greater Exeter structures.

8.8 The Action Plan to deliver the Skills Strategy will cover an initial 2 year period, with a full review at the end of 2021 to establish impact and success. The priorities will also be reviewed and a new action plan will be developed to continue to deliver the identified priorities.

Next Steps

- 8.9 Publish the Skills Strategy and associated documents as appropriate.
- 8.10 Engage relevant partners to form the Exeter Skills Advisory Group that will support the delivery of the strategy. Convene the first meeting for early 2020.
- 8.11 Undertake initial prioritisation activity for the action plan, particularly in relation to areas that have been identified as requiring more research or a more detailed action plan.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

The table below sets out how the Skills Strategy contributes to the priorities in the Corporate Plan

CORPORATE PLAN 2019 – 2021	
PRIORITY	Contribution of Skills Strategy
Tackling Congestion and Accessibility	<p>Linked to the priority of attracting and retaining the right workforce.</p> <p>Supporting businesses to address these challenges with flexible and agile working.</p>
Building Great Communities	<p>Supporting inclusion – economically and socially.</p> <p>Access to the labour market, utilising programmes such as Building Greater Exeter. Supporting skills development and lifelong learning.</p>
Promoting Healthy and Active Lifestyles	Supporting the link between physical health, mental wellbeing and being economically active, enabling inclusion.
Providing Value for Money Services	Maximising partnership working opportunities, funding streams, supporting collaboration to address the priorities within the strategy.
Leading a Well-Run council	Taking a role of leadership and influence to address the priorities in the strategy.

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

The identified risks are highlighted in the table below.

Risk	Likelihood	Mitigation
Identified priorities need significant budget (more than available) to deliver	Medium	<p>The City Council needs to be aware of this, and be prepared to support bids and applications to external funding streams in order to meet the needs of the strategy.</p> <p>Engagement and support to partners may also secure funding and delivery of priorities.</p>
Lack of partner support / engagement	Low	A range of organisations / partners / stakeholders have already been

		engaged in the process, and thus far have been very supportive.
Unable to deliver against the priorities identified	Low	Currently, it is considered that the priorities that have been identified and the resulting actions are achievable in terms of delivery, This will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Skills Advisory Group.
New priorities and opportunities are identified not currently in the Strategy – potential to detract from existing work plan	Medium	The Skills Advisory Group will take responsibility for supporting and guiding on changes to the agreed strategy and action plan, taking account of the impact on existing work programmes.

11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

11.4 In recommending this proposal potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act and an Equalities Impact Assessment has been included in the background papers for Member's attention.

12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

12.1 No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

13. Are there any other options?

13.1 The alternative options were explored as part of approval by Executive in November 2018, with the chosen approach to develop the Skills Strategy for Exeter.

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Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

Contact for enquiries:

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