

## **Appendix A: Report of Skills and Employability Officer 24/09/13**

### **Maidstone Borough Council**

#### **Economic & Commercial Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Tuesday 24 September 2013**

#### **Update on Skills and Employability Projects**

**Report prepared by** Jennifer Sibley, Employability and Skills Project Officer

#### **1. Update on Skills and Employability Projects**

- 1.1 Maidstone Borough Council appointed a Skills & Employability Project Officer in October 2012 to develop the council's work in tackling youth unemployment, in partnership with KCC, Jobcentre Plus, businesses and a range of other partners.
- 1.2 The work is overseen by the "Tackling Worklessness and Poverty Board", formerly a sub group of the Locality Board.
- 1.3 Youth unemployment (18-24 year olds) currently stands at 585 people (August 2013, NOMIS) out of 2,135 people overall who are unemployed.
- 1.4 The council has undertaken various projects since October 2012 to tackle youth unemployment:
  - 1.4.1 Work experience – the council has made 24 placements to young people aged between 16 and 24. Twelve of these young people have found paid employment, four with the council.
  - 1.4.2 Mentoring – the council runs the Steps to Employment mentoring programme to young people. So far seven young people have joined the programme with six now in employment. The opportunity to be mentors has been extended to council staff, with fourteen staff members coming forward to volunteer regular support to young people, and a further four offering ad hoc support (such as mock interviews and CV checks).
  - 1.4.3 Business visits – Cllr Greer together with the Employability & Skills Project Officer have visited five of Maidstone's businesses to discuss them offering work experience and Apprenticeships to Maidstone's young people. These have overall been very positive. Where businesses have identified skills shortages, the council will work with them and Jobcentre Plus to train up local people.
  - 1.4.4 Inspiring the Future – the council has teamed up with Inspiring the Future which operates a website that links businesses and schools, with business people volunteering to go into schools to talk to

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students about their job and the route they took to get there. The council is running a campaign to get 100 business people to sign up in 100 days.

- 1.4.5 Training providers website – as a member of the Maidstone Employment and Skills Forum, the council has commissioned a website that will link training providers with people looking for training opportunities. This will ensure people can find training that suits their needs first time, and this will empower people to be able to access training direct, rather than rely on others to tell them about opportunities. The website should launch in November 2013.
- 1.4.6 Skills Exchange Hub – the council is exploring the possibility of establishing this in Maidstone. It is a website that facilitates secondments of staff rather than making redundancies from companies experiencing decline to companies experiencing growth.
- 1.4.7 The papers attached to this report demonstrate the evidence base for these projects in Maidstone. Each report has a series of recommendations. In summary, national research indicates that:
  - Young people identify work experience as a barrier to work – it is not possible to get a job without experience, it is not possible to get experience without a job.
  - Apprenticeships and vocational education/employment routes should be promoted to young people and employers as they give young people experience and valuable skills about the workplace.
  - Young people suffer from a lack of awareness of the world of work, the jobs available, and what employers want from their new recruits.
  - Whilst employers can be wary of recruiting young people, overall when they do employ young people, they are generally positive about the experience.

## **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to consider the recommendations given on each briefing paper.

## **3. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1 The recommendations in the briefing papers provide an evidence-based framework for the skills and employability projects the council and its partners pursue going forward.
- 3.2 It would ensure that skills and employability projects have two priorities:
  - Ensuring that Maidstone's unemployed young people receive interventions that support them into work.

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- Ensuring that Maidstone's business community can support the local economy, meet their needs, recruit local people and address suitable skills shortages.

### **4. Impact on Corporate Objectives**

- 4.1 These recommendations will support the achievement of Maidstone Borough Council's priorities relating to Great Opportunity by ensuring that Maidstone's residents are ready for work and have the skills businesses need from them. Addressing skills shortages and helping Maidstone's businesses recruit local people will boost the employment rate.