

# Policy and Resources Committee

**23 September 2015**

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

**Yes**

## Review of Careers Guidance in Maidstone

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Lead Director or Head of Service</b>	Paul Riley, Head of Finance and Resources
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Orla Sweeney, Democratic Services Officer
<b>Classification</b>	Non-exempt
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

### **This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:**

The Committee notes the report and approves the recommendations:

1. That Maidstone Borough Council engage schools in its mentoring scheme, exploring the possibility of offering direct mentoring where appropriate, or training to develop a peer mentoring scheme directly with schools or in partnership with local businesses.
2. That schools in Maidstone engage with Maidstone Borough Council via the Maidstone Careers Advisors Networking in relation to its mentoring scheme.
3. That Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council work with schools in Maidstone to explore the inclusion of the 'Young Chamber' or a similar external entrepreneurial programme at every school in the district. The County and District could consider 'seed' funding the programme with the proviso that the scheme pays for itself through its fundraising outcomes.
4. Careers should be considered alongside national curriculum subjects. The transferable 'soft skills' that are being learned and developed should be recognised by students as part of their careers guidance in Maidstone schools. This should be taken forward by the Maidstone Careers Education, Information and Guidance network.
5. That the Maidstone Careers Education, Information and Guidance

network utilise 'free' tools such as the Careers Coach (via Kent colleges) and focus as a body on ways to combine their financial resources to greater effect to achieve improved outcomes.

6. That schools in Maidstone engage nationally (with Government departments and agencies) and locally (with Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council) to understand how to best to 'unlock' funding for careers guidance.
7. That Maidstone Borough Council work with Kent County Council and partners to assist schools in finding a suitable project that would assist the careers guidance agenda in Maidstone in order to benefit all schools in the district.
8. That the Committee supports Maidstone Borough Council's continued involvement in helping drive the skills and employability agenda forward in Maidstone.
9. That Maidstone Borough Council assists all schools in Maidstone by encouraging employers to work with schools to help develop employability skills as part of their Career's Guidance, helping ensure they have skills suitable for employment in Maidstone and therefore work experience placements.

**This report relates to the following corporate priorities:**

- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough  
Good careers guidance supports the Council's priority to secure a successful economy for the borough by assisting school leavers to obtain appropriate employment.

**Timetable**

<b><i>Meeting</i></b>	<b><i>Date</i></b>
Policy and Resources Committee	23 September 2015

# Review of Careers Guidance in Maidstone

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To consider and agree the recommendations made by the Economic and Commercial Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee which reflect the findings of its review of Careers Guidance in Maidstone as undertaken in May 2015.
- 1.2 The provisions for Careers Guidance arrangements has changed significantly following the introduction of the Education Act 2011 which placed a duty on schools to secure access to independent careers guidance for their pupils.
- 1.3 The Committee set the objective to improve the provision of careers advice for the residents of the borough, setting the following parameters for the review:
  - To assess the quality and level of provision of careers advice in Maidstone
  - To identify best practice from elsewhere in order to improve the provision of Careers Guidance in Maidstone
- 1.4 It is intended that the report and recommendations be circulated to the appropriate organisations and bodies, as specified, to ensure the recommendations are implemented.

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## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Economic and Commercial Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee, responding to an awareness of national and local criticism of the perceived lack of skills young people were in possession of on entering the workplace, conducted a review on careers guidance available to Maidstone residents.
- 2.2 The Committee wished to establish the quality and level of careers guidance in Maidstone, making recommendations for improvements where identified from the evidence gathered.
- 2.3 The Committee found its focus immediately drawn to the 16-24 age group who were not in education, employment or training (NEET).

- 2.4 According to a recent parliamentary report on NEETs, published on 6 February 2015 referencing the fourth quarter of 2014, 963,000 people aged 16-24 were NEET. This equated to 61% of unemployed 16-24 year olds being NEET, with the remaining 39% in education or training.
- 2.5 The Committee were very aware that the need for effective careers guidance affected a much larger group than 16-24 year olds. For example those affected by redundancy and re-entering the workplace at different stages in life experienced obstacles, including developing a new skills set. The Committee accepted that its review had to be narrow in order to remain focused but hoped that the report would provide a foundation for future evaluations of careers guidance in Maidstone.
- 2.6 Overarching this review was, first and foremost, the Education Act 2011. Ofsted's thematic review of careers guidance conducted between December 2012 and March 2013 provided the Committee with further focus as it reinforced the requirement for independent, impartial careers guidance.
- 2.7 The establishment of the National Career's Council in 2013 to provide careers provision for young adults in England, and the publication of 'An Aspirational Nation' in June 2013 and subsequent statutory guidance from the Government in September 2013 in the shape of its 'Inspiration Vision Statement', provided the Committee with a substantial framework to reference.
- 2.8 Kent County Council produced District Data Packs, designed to help schools identify where local skills gaps were and the dominant employment sectors are in the local area. The Maidstone District Data Pack highlighted the need for additional vocational courses in the following areas: Wholesale and Retail, Child development and Wellbeing, Human Health and Social Work, Engineering, Manufacturing technologies, ICT and Administration.
- 2.9 A wide range of witnesses were interviewed as part of the inquiry, including schools, businesses, business forums, careers advice providers and professional bodies.
- 2.10 A reoccurring theme was found to be the lack of what were referred to as 'soft skills'. In defining what was meant by this, witnesses made reference to a combination of the following: decision making, showing commitment, flexibility, time management, leadership skills, creativity and problem solving skills, being a team player, accepting responsibility and an ability to work under pressure.

- 2.11 It was found that there was an abundance of careers guidance available but it was lacking a vehicle that signposted those seeking careers guidance to the appropriate provider.
- 2.12 The Career's Guidance Network in Maidstone, consisting of Careers Advisers employed by schools in Maidstone, was attended by the Committee during the course of the review. This provided an important forum for Maidstone schools to raise issues and establish solutions by looking externally at best practice in other sectors.
- 2.13 The delivery of Career's Guidance by Careers Advisors employed by schools raised questions about its value in terms of independence and impartiality. However the counterbalance to this was the level of knowledge and understanding displayed by careers advisors, coupled with the opportunities the network in Maidstone provided for joint working between schools and external providers to the benefit of the student.
- 2.14 Whilst Scrutiny should look outwardly and consider the work of partners, other public sector organisations and the private sector, it is important too, to consider the role of Maidstone Borough Council and its role and influence in order to form meaningful recommendations.
- 2.15 The Committee asked all those it interviewed as part of this review what they considered to be Maidstone Borough Council's role. The message was very clear. They wanted a Council who was visible and supportive, providing a brokerage role.
- 2.16 Fittingly in a press release from the Department for Education on 10 December 2014 the Education Secretary Nicky Morgan announced the creation of a new careers and enterprise company for schools. It stated that there was a need for greater support and brokerage in this area.
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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 The Policy and Resources Committee could choose to consider the review of Careers Guidance in Maidstone and the recommendations of the Economic and Commercial Development Overview and Scrutiny to Maidstone Borough Council in order to enable its recommendations to be taken forward and implemented.
- 3.2 The Policy and Resources Committee could decide not to consider the review of Careers Guidance and the recommendations made, however this would mean that the undertakings of the Committee

and the evidence it had gathered internally and from external witnesses would not be utilised.

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#### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 The preferred option (at paragraph 3.1) is that the Policy and Resources Committee consider the review of Careers Guidance in Maidstone and the recommendations of the Economic and Commercial Development Overview and Scrutiny to Maidstone Borough Council in order to enable its recommendations to be taken forward and implemented.
- 4.2 Once the report has been considered and the recommendations have been agreed the Head of Economic and Commercial Development would be tasked with ensuring that the recommendations feed into appropriate work streams, taking forward the Council's 'brokerage' role as set out in the review.
- 4.3 The Democratic Services team would have responsibility for circulating the report to the external bodies and individual witnesses interviewed as a follow up to the review inquiry.
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#### **5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 5.1 Not applicable to this report.
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#### **6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 6.1 Once the report has been considered and the recommendations have been agreed the Head of Economic and Commercial Development should be tasked with ensuring that the recommendations feed into appropriate work streams.
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#### **7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Impact on Corporate</b>		[Head of Service or

<b>Priorities</b>		Manager]
<b>Risk Management</b>		[Head of Service or Manager]
<b>Financial</b>		[Section 151 Officer & Finance Team]
<b>Staffing</b>		[Head of Service]
<b>Legal</b>		[Legal Team]
<b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b>		[Policy & Information Manager]
<b>Environmental/Sustainable Development</b>		[Head of Service or Manager]
<b>Community Safety</b>		[Head of Service or Manager]
<b>Human Rights Act</b>		[Head of Service or Manager]
<b>Procurement</b>		[Head of Service & Section 151 Officer]
<b>Asset Management</b>		[Head of Service & Manager]

## 5 REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Review of Careers Guidance in Maidstone

## 6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None