

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

December 2019

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Regeneration and Housing – Lead Cabinet Member – Nigel Cooke

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GOVERNING BODY FOR THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SERVICE

SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the work of the Learning and Skills Service in supporting residents, employers and community partners with learning opportunities and employment initiatives to meet local social and economic priorities.

REASONS FOR PRODUCING THIS REPORT

To demonstrate the ongoing success of the Learning and Skills Service and its Governing Body as an advisory committee empowered by Cabinet to provide challenge, support and strategic oversight.

This report is for information only. No decisions are required.

DETAIL

Governance and management of the Service

1. The Governing Body was established in October 2016 and since its inception has supported the Service through a period of transition and sustained improvements. The Governing Body provides challenge and insight from different sectors whilst ensuring the Service continues to meet the needs and priorities of Stockton Borough Council.
2. The value of the contribution of the Governing Body, along with the management arrangements for the Service have been validated by independent advisors, Ofsted inspectors, and most recently following a Matrix assessment.
3. Governors play an active role in quality assurance and improvement processes, such as by conducting observations of teaching and learning and participating in the annual self-assessment. This process identifies both good practice and areas for improvement resulting in the development of a Quality Improvement Plan. This plan is scrutinised and progress against identified targets is monitored by governors.

4. The structure of the Governing Body for the 19/20 academic year is as follows:

Position	Full name	Role and Responsibilities
Chair of Governors	Councillor Nigel Cooke	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing (also Link Governor for Equality and Diversity)
Vice Chair of Governors	Frances Hoy	Personnel Manager for NIFCO UK Ltd and employer representative
Member	Councillor Jim Beall	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture (also link governor for safeguarding)
Member	Reuben Kench	Director of Culture, Leisure and Events for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Member	Craig Taylor	Adult Learning and Skills Manager for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Member	Katie Horbury	Learner representative
Member	Jacqui Taylor	Education and employer representative
Member	Chris Renahan	Economic Growth Manager for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Member	Karen Grundy	Community Programme Manager for Catalyst and voluntary/community sector representative

Performance of the Learning and Skills Service

5. There were over 4,500 enrolments during the 18/19 academic year. Whilst figures are still being finalised by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), the Service's own internal performance data indicates that the Service has ended the academic year with learner achievement higher than ever before and performance significantly higher than national and local benchmarks.

Programme Type	Achievement Rate	National Average	Tees Valley Average
Adult Skills	92.7%	88.3%	90.7%
Apprenticeships	73.8%	67.3%	69.5%
Community Learning	98.9%	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

6. The service is also keen to recognise not only the tangible achievements of learners such as those achieving recognised qualifications, but also the 'softer skills' which learners develop to support them in life. The feedback table below demonstrates that the vast majority of learners were able to improve skills, increase their confidence, and have a greater understanding of their own health and well-being which ultimately help them to achieve or move closer to achieving their aspirations.

Statement	Positive Responses
I feel more confident in my own ability	95%
My well-being has improved	95%
I feel more aware of my own strengths and area for development	97%
I have clearer goals and ambitions for the future	96%
I feel able to develop my own skills outside of the classroom	97%
I feel more able to take part in my own community	95%
I feel more confident to access services on-line	92%
I feel more confident with my English	87%
I feel more confident with my maths	81%

7. The Service continues to work closely in the community and with partner organisations in order to develop learning programmes targeting those most vulnerable and those requiring the most support in order to develop personal, social and economic growth. As a result, 64% of learners engage from a disadvantaged area and 26% of learners who participate are identified as having no prior attainment / qualifications.
8. As well as supporting those who are most vulnerable, the Service delivers higher level qualifications aligned to local and national economic priorities including apprenticeships. The Service has made year-on-year progress in the achievement rates of its apprenticeships which have risen since 15/16 by 14.8% to 73.8% and now perform 6.5% above the national average. In addition, following completion of their apprenticeship, 94% of apprentices enter into a positive destination, with 86% entering employment. This demonstrates that the majority apprentices develop and apply the skills required to meet the needs of local employers.

Update on devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) to the Tees Valley Combined Authority

9. Following devolution of the Adult Education Budget to Tees Valley Combined Authority, the Service was successful in the recent commissioning process to become an approved TVCA training provider and secured a grant funding award of £1.67m for delivery of adult learning programmes commencing August 2019.
10. Of the 33 training providers issued funding awards by TVCA, the contract allocation issued to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is the fourth largest, demonstrating the significant and vital role the Learning and Skills Service has been afforded to meet local needs.

11. TVCA have identified that AEB funding will help support a more responsive and flexible skills system, target the training paths needed to better connect with business demand, drive business growth, and help Tees Valley residents gain the skills and qualifications required for the forecasted future job roles.
12. As a result, the Service has developed a new 5-Year Strategic Plan to help shape its direction and ensure it is closely aligned to meet local needs.

Learning and Skills Service 5-Year Strategic Plan 2019-2023

13. The Learning and Skills Service 5-Year Strategic Plan sets out the vision, ambition and intentions for the Service over the next 5 years and was approved by the Governing Body in September 2019.
14. It has been developed to closely align to the priorities of the TVCA Strategic and Economic Plan and the subsequent TVCA Strategic Skills Plan in order to support the drive for economic growth and job creation.
15. The strategy also complements both the Stockton-on-Tees 'Big Plan, Bright Future' Council Plan and Economic Growth plan. As a result, there is a unified focus and determination by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council to provide a thriving and productive Tees Valley economy with opportunities for all, including those most vulnerable.
16. For many in the communities we serve, lifelong learning has the potential to not only increase employment opportunities and support the local economy, but also provide a platform for residents to transform their lives such as through social engagement and improving health and wellbeing. The strategy retains a determined focus that the Learning and Skills Service are strongly positioned to engage, support and empower those we serve in order to take their first steps on a long term journey with the ultimate aim to create a brighter future.

As a result, five overarching strategic aims have been developed. They are:

- 1) Enable learners and apprentices to reach their full potential and achieve their highest possible outcomes
- 2) Deliver a curriculum to meet the needs of the people that we serve including employers, residents and community partners
- 3) Implement a new Careers Education, Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) service to support lifelong learning and career aspirations
- 4) Retain and further develop our highly capable team to continue to make a positive contribution for the whole council and the people we serve
- 5) Achieve financial growth to further support the people that we serve

Positive outcome of the Matrix assessment

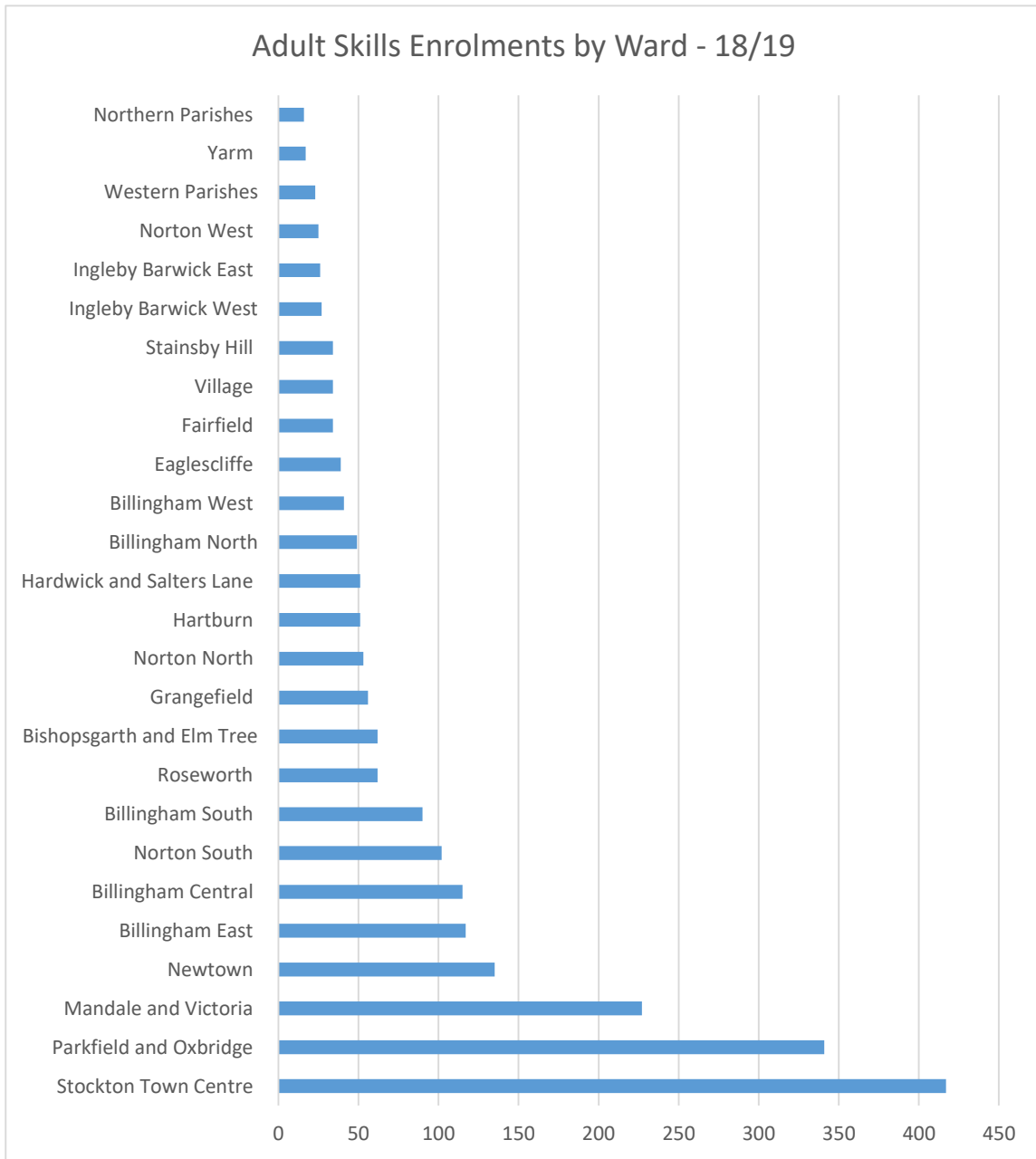
17. The Matrix Award is a quality standard for organisations to assess and measure their advice and support services in order to effectively support individuals in their choice of career, learning, work and life goals.
18. The Service was subject to a 3-day Matrix assessment in June 2019 in which it successfully re-attained the award for the quality of its information, advice and guidance (IAG) with significant positive feedback received.
19. The assessment identified that “managers and staff members are acutely aware of the significance of the service (as is the Chair of the Governing Body) and the contribution it makes to the overall success and achievement of all concerned”.
20. Several comments were received from learners and partners during the assessment which included:
 - “They have a good reputation, they work in sync with local communities and what the labour market needs”
 - “Very supportive, I would put Stockton Learning and Skills Service at the top of all who we deal with as we don’t get as much back from other providers”
 - “We have never had a bad report from anyone we have referred to Stockton Learning and Skills Service”
 - “They do provide support over and above what you expect. They had a welfare officer visit to advise us about housing benefits and it resulted in me not having to pay any rent for three months”
 - “They are always there for you. I have had training elsewhere where the tutor has not known anything about the subject they teach. Here my learning has stuck, I would come back any day”
21. Four key strengths were identified during the assessment. They are:
 - 1) Stockton Learning and Skills Service engages with learners described as being furthest away from the labour market and from learning. The impact of the IAG service is proving successful and, in many respects, enduring.
 - 2) Evidence obtained during the assessment highlight the commitment senior managers have made towards the continuous professional development of all members of staff to enable them to deliver a good IAG service.
 - 3) Stockton Learning and Skills Service is effectively led. Managers are strongly committed to the notion of continuous improvement having developed clear Mission, Vision, Values and Objectives through which staff members share in future development / direction of the service.
 - 4) Of particular note is the approach taken by Stockton Learning and Skills Service to engage all staff members in the on-going and future development of the service. Members of staff reported favourably about the Service and their involvement in the planning and consultation processes.

Routes to Work Programme

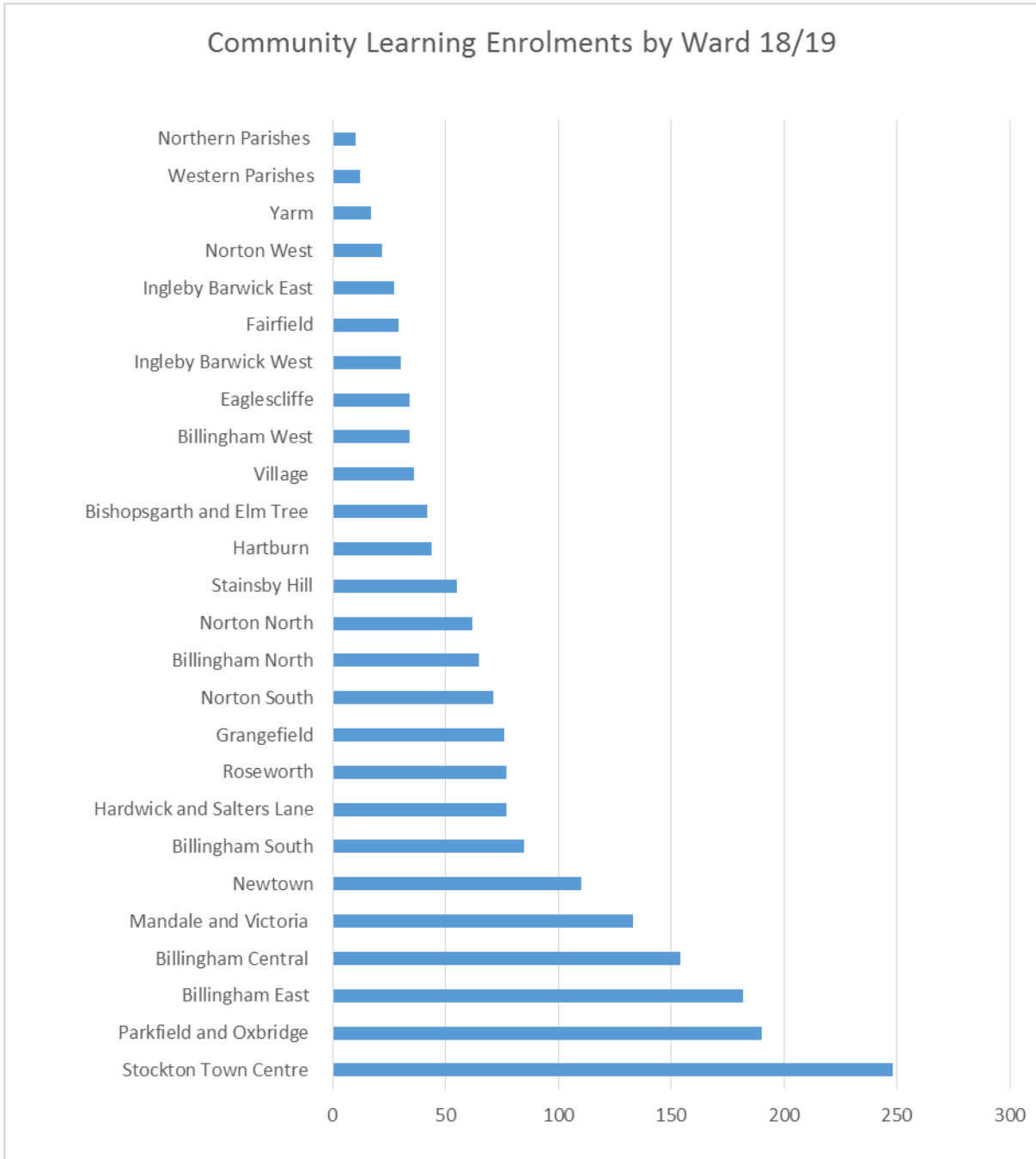
22. The Routes to Work programme is led by Tees Valley Combined Authority and delivered by each local authority. It aims to support up to 2500 people into employment, specifically targeting those aged 30 and over and facing the greatest difficulties to entering employment. This includes a wide variety of barriers such as those who have been out of work for a long period, those who face physical and mental health challenges, or those who have previously had a claim for Employment Support Allowance rejected.
23. The Learning and Skills Service is the lead provider within Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and is working in partnership with other service areas including the Welfare Support Team and STEPs supported employment service.
24. Each client who accesses the programme is allocated a key worker to support them in their transition to employment. The key worker collaborates with their client to identify existing barriers and ensure that the support implemented is tailored to meet the specific needs of each individual.
25. Over the three year life of the project, there is a target to engage and actively support 625 Stockton-on-Tees residents with a target of progressing 94 individuals into employment by the end of the project in March 2021.
26. As at 31st October 2019, the Service is making significant progress in achieving this target with 423 clients (67% of overall target) actively supported and 39 individuals (41% of overall target) successfully entering employment.
27. The Routes to Work Team continue to work in collaboration with TVCA and partners and has recently commissioned Thirteen Group to support the project in order to engage with those actively seeking employment and identified as having accommodation as a significant barrier.
28. The Routes to Work Team will continue to work in innovative ways thanks to the flexibilities that have been afforded through the remit of this project by TVCA and look to further strengthen the partnership work and support available to overcome the diverse barriers faced by clients.

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Appendix 1



Appendix 2



Appendix 3

The table below identifies the courses implemented by the service which are designed to significantly contribute to the achievement of council and/or combined authority strategic priorities.

Council Priority	Number of Courses	Number of enrolments
Stockton-on-Tees at the heart of a vibrant and economically successful Tees Valley, providing real opportunities for residents	340	2894
A safe Stockton-on-Tees	4	45
Life chances are improved for children and young people, particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable to poor outcomes	54	364
Every child has the best start in life	19	131
Ill health is prevented wherever possible	70	647
Enhanced quality of life for people with care and support needs	22	166
Stronger more cohesive communities	55	508
High quality, affordable cultural and leisure experiences for people to experience and be inspired by	46	429

TVCA Priority	Number of Courses	Number of enrolments
Business and Professional Services	34	174
Digital and Creative	60	488
Health and Social Care	148	1189
General Skills for Employment (English, Maths, ICT, Employability)	353	3263
Other	8	70