

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM ONLY

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

12 DECEMBER 2024

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing – Councillor 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 the local community with learning opportunities during the 23/24 academic year. The report also demonstrates the ongoing success of the Governing Body as an advisory committee empowered by Cabinet to provide challenge, support and strategic oversight.

Recommended that the report be noted.

DETAIL

Governance and management of the Service

1. The Governing Body was first established in October 2016 and since that time has supported the Service by utilising its skillset, experience and knowledge across different sectors to provide challenge and insight to ensure the Service continues to meet the needs and priorities of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.
2. The Service is fully funded by external grants allocated by funding bodies including Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) and the Department for Education (DfE). These grant allocations contribute to the overall Council financial position and are regularly reviewed through close governance and performance monitoring.
3. The value of the contribution from the Governing Body along with the management arrangements for the Service have been validated by independent advisors, Ofsted inspectors, and external quality standard assessors.
4. Governors play an active role in quality assurance and improvement. In order to ensure that the Governing Body continues to remain strongly positioned, its membership is regularly reviewed. The current membership of the Governing Body is as follows:

Position	Full name	Role
Chair of Governors	Councillor Nigel Cooke	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing (Link Governor for Equality and Diversity)
Member	Chris Renahan	Assistant Director - Inclusive Growth and Development for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council SBC Senior Management Team Representative
Member	Craig Taylor	Adult Learning and Skills Manager for Stockton- on-Tees Borough Council Staff Representative
Member	Julie Marsden	Economic Development Manager for Stockton- on-Tees Borough Council Economic Growth and Regeneration Representative (Link Governor for Safeguarding)
Member	Lucy Owens	Chief Executive for Catalyst Voluntary and Community Sector Representative
Member	Lynsey Robinson	Director, Digital City, Teesside University Employer Representative for Digital Sector
Member	VACANT	Learner Representative

Overview of the Learning and Skills Service

5. The Service has a broad and diverse remit to deliver learning programmes to support residents and businesses to meet their full economic potential whilst also increasing prosperity, wellbeing and cohesion in our communities.
6. Adult Skills programmes delivered are traditionally accredited programmes up to level 3 which support residents and employers to gain skills and qualifications needed in the workplace. These programmes predominantly include key skills including English, Maths, ICT and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). Various employment programmes linked to local priority sectors such as Health and Care are also delivered, for example, through the delivery of the Care Academy in partnership with the SBC Employment and Training Hub.
7. Learning for Inclusion programmes utilise funding ringfenced to local authorities to address specific needs of adults such as isolation, social exclusion, health and wellbeing, and strengthening communities. Many of these non-accredited programmes are delivered in close

collaboration with partner organisations aligned to the Power Our Future Programme to enable positive outcomes within our communities.

8. Apprenticeship programmes are also delivered to support local business growth and provide work based skills development opportunities to our residents. These apprenticeship programmes also support the SBC workforce development programme to continue to train and develop the workforce through programmes such as Customer Service, Business Administration, Early Years, Care, Librarianship and Team Leading.

Performance of the Learning and Skills Service

9. There were over 3500 enrolments on adult learning and apprenticeship programmes during the 23/24 academic year.
10. The overall achievement rate for all Adult Learning programmes was 93.0%, of which, the Adult Skills (accredited programmes) achievement rate was 91.9%. This is higher the current national benchmark by 5.1% and is a significant increase from the 87.5% achievement rate obtained in the previous academic year.
11. Similarly, the achievement rate for Learning for Inclusion (non-accredited) programmes was 95.3%. This is higher than the national benchmark by 2.4% and an increase from 93.9% obtained in the previous academic year.
12. Apprenticeship programmes also continue to perform well following challenges faced in the sector since the pandemic. In a letter released in June 2022, the Secretary of State for Skills “set a stretching ambition to reach a 67% achievement rate on apprenticeship standards by 2025”. The Service apprenticeship achievement rate for 23/24 was 67.5%, meeting this government target in advance and is performing higher than the current national benchmark by 13.2%.
13. 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 their wider lives. The feedback table below demonstrates that the vast majority of learners were able to improve their 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 their aspirations.

Statement	Positive Responses
I feel more confident in my own ability	96%
I am more open to new ideas and experiences	91%
I am more aware of my own strengths and area for development	90%
I feel more able to take part in my own community	84%
My well-being has improved	88%
I have clearer goals and ambitions for the future	81%
I feel more confident to access services on-line	81%

14. The impact of the Service is also demonstrated with the positive destinations attained by learners and apprentices following completion of their programmes. 82% of learners progress to either higher level learning or an employment outcome which is an increase of 1.9% compared to the previous academic year.

15. The Service also continues to strategically target its funding to support those in greatest need and help tackle inequalities in the borough. As a result, 44.5% of learners engage from a disadvantaged area and 19.5% of learners are identified as having no prior attainment / qualifications.

Multiply Programme

16. In 2022, the UK government committed that the first priority of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund would be for Multiply, a programme with the aim increase the levels of functional numeracy in the adult population and facilitate more adults to achieve maths qualifications and improve their employment prospects.
17. TVCA secured funding from the Department for Education and commissioned the 5 Local Authority Learning and Skills Services to deliver 'community level engagement interventions' though working in the heart of our communities and that complement the existing numeracy work being undertaken through the use of our core Adult Education Budget funding.
18. Multiply delivery commenced in December 2022 and will conclude in March 2025. Funding was specifically targeted at adult learners aged 19+ who have not previously attained a GCSE Grade 4 / C or higher Maths qualification. Through targeting this hard to reach cohort, the Service has worked in flexible and innovative ways to encourage participation of those in greatest need such as providing short bitesize programmes leading to more substantial learning.
19. The Service has also utilised its close working partnerships to support those in greatest need such as through collaborating with schools targeting parents to support their children, or through family hubs, particularly during the cost of living crisis to support vulnerable adults to manage their limited budgets.
20. As a result, the Service has successfully facilitated 889 starts onto these programmes, which is likely to increase to over 1000 by the end of the programme, further demonstrating the vital role the Service plays in helping to address inequalities in the Borough.

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