

Note: These minutes are draft until they have been confirmed at the next meeting of the Economic Prosperity Sub-Committee scheduled to be held on 11 November 2015.

## **Economic Prosperity Sub-Committee**

**22 October 2015**

Present: Councillor J Hunter (Chair)  
Councillors, S L Cox, P Earley, F Lott, M Madden,  
D McMeekan and J Walker.  
Jamie Clark, Young Cabinet Member for Ready for Work  
and Life.

### **EP12/10/15 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Cassidy, P Mason and J Pickard.

### **EP13/10/15 Substitute Members**

Pursuant to the Council's constitution the appointment of the following substitute member was reported:-

Councillor P Earley for Councillor J Cassidy

### **EP14/10/15 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

Councillor J Hunter declared a registerable personal interest in the item relating to apprenticeships (Minute EP16/10/15) because she was a Governor of TyneMet College.

Councillor S L Cox declared a registerable personal interest in the item relating to apprenticeships (Minute EP16/10/15) because he was employed by TyneMet College.

### **EP15/10/15 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 July 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

### **EP16/10/15 Apprenticeships**

The sub-committee met to examine the impact of apprenticeships in North Tyneside, the Council's response to supporting apprenticeships and what more the Council could do to promote good practice.

Shona Duncan, the Council's Principal Manager for Employment and Skills, presented a report to the sub-committee to provide relevant background information to the topic.

The Apprenticeship Growth Partnership had been set up during the summer of 2015 to bring together employers, providers, schools and others across the region to work together towards clear, shared goals and targets for apprenticeship growth. The partnership would focus on the following four priority areas:

- a) a substantial activity programme to improve school engagement in apprenticeships;
- b) a programme of pre-apprenticeship activity to improve the work-readiness of young people;
- c) Information for employers new to apprenticeships; and
- d) enhanced marketing and PR campaigns to support increased take-up and quality.

In February 2014 the Children Education and Skills Sub-Committee had examined apprenticeships and had made a series of recommendations. The sub-committee were presented with a progress report on the implementation of the recommendations. The recommendations and the action taken had centred on the development and award of a North Tyneside apprenticeship standard, a review of the Council's marketing strategy and employer engagement, the maximisation of opportunities to illustrate the benefits and rewards of apprenticeships and ensuring mechanisms were in place to capture information on the success of apprenticeships.

An Apprenticeship Week was to be held in week commencing 14 March 2016. It would involve local partners working together to deliver a range of activities aimed at promoting the benefits of apprentices to employers and young people.

The sub-committee were provided with a statistical overview of apprenticeships in North Tyneside which showed that the number of apprenticeship starts both nationally and locally had peaked in 2011/12 before dipping. In the North East, 18% of all work places employed apprentices in 2012/13, the highest of any English region.

In preparing to undertake this scrutiny exercise members of the sub-committee had visited Chirton Engineering Ltd to learn about its apprenticeships and to speak directly with apprentices about their experiences. A record of the visit was submitted. During the visit it had been reported that Chirton Engineering Ltd had constructed a facility to accommodate a 50 place training facility for young people but the development had been placed on hold as the anticipated funding had not been forthcoming. The sub-committee were advised that work was underway to explore alternative options for the future use of the facility.

In order to discuss in more detail the impact of apprenticeships in North Tyneside, key individuals involved in supporting apprenticeships have been invited to the meeting.

Audrey Kingham, Deputy Principal, and Pat Blyth, Head of Apprenticeships, from TyneMet College attended the meeting. The College was a major training provider for apprentices, with approximately 1500 apprentices engaged with the College, across 40 different employment sectors. TyneMet had witnessed a significant growth in the numbers of young people securing apprenticeships as a result of close working with partners and schools. Through initiatives such as apprentices acting as ambassadors in schools there was now a clearer understanding of the career pathways available and outdated and inaccurate perceptions were being dispelled.

TyneMet College placed great emphasis on the quality and sustainability of apprenticeships. The quality of its training was externally inspected by Ofsted. The College had to change what it offered each year to meet the expectations from businesses and any new demands from inward investment into the local economy. The College had established thematic employer forums for this purpose. The majority of apprentices secured permanent

employment at the conclusion of their apprenticeships. This was due in part to the College's assessment of employers and avoidance of those considered to be poor employers.

The College had also been proactive in helping to shape the future development of apprenticeships. It had secured seats on national bodies such as a Trailblazer Committee, established to review the national standards, and a Provider Readiness Group.

In the future the College hoped to increase the numbers of 16-18 year olds entering apprenticeships through campaigns to identify and prepare individuals in the age range to be ready for work and to create a pool of prospective apprentices to meet needs of employers.

Kehri Ellis, the Chief Executive of the North Tyneside Learning Trust attended the meeting. Through its Apprenticeship Bursary, the Trust had supported employers in North Tyneside, including many trust schools, to create over 80 apprenticeships for young people in a range of disciplines including office administration, sport and ICT. The benefits of engaging trust schools as employers were fourfold:-

- a) young people employed as apprentices in schools provided a role model for other young people;
- b) schools benefited from the additional workforce capacity provided by apprentices;
- c) the Apprenticeship Bursary provided 50% of the funding necessary to employ an apprentice, to be match funded by the school. The apprentices were therefore very cost effective human resource for schools; and
- d) primary schools had employed ICT apprentices who had helped to deliver the new National Curriculum.

In terms of quality, the Trust was grateful it could call upon a range of excellent training providers with a track record of success. The Trust was also proud to report that it had been awarded the Council's Apprenticeship Standard.

Following the presentations to the sub-committee, members discussed with Audrey Kingham, Pat Blyth, Kehri Ellis, Jamie Clark and Shona Duncan the following areas where the Council, and its partners, could do more to promote apprenticeships and increase their take up:-

- a) Jamie Clark offered the assistance of the Youth Council to help shape the content and delivery of the Apprenticeship Week. Ready for Life was a primary campaign for the Youth Council this year and careers advice was to be one of four key themes for a new Council web based app for young people. Shona Duncan acknowledged that there was scope for greater engagement with young people on how to promote apprenticeships;
- b) The sub-committee acknowledged that TyneMet College wished to do more to promote apprenticeships in schools, including primary schools, but access was often restricted to selected groups of young people, there was little funding available for this type of activity and there was a financial incentive for schools to encourage young people to remain at school;
- c) It was suggested that promotional material should be directly delivered to young people through role models or electronic media rather than young people having to seek access to the available material e.g. on display at Langdale Centre;
- d) There was potential to promote apprenticeships through the careers advice and support provided within schools. It was suggested that the sub-committee, together with the Children Education and Skills Sub-Committee could undertake further work to assess its effectiveness;

- e) Whilst it was noted that the North Tyneside Business Awards included an award for Apprentice Employer Award, it was suggested that an Apprentice of the Year Award would provide a figurehead and a role model for others and help raise the profile of apprenticeships;
- f) The sub-committee discussed the need for more activities targeted at parents in an attempt to challenge preconceived views of apprenticeships, particularly in relation to the choices available to young women. In this regard, it was noted that the Children, Education and Skills Sub-Committee had previously reported on ways to encourage young women to study STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and a STEM Centre was soon to be opened at TyneMet College.

The Chair thanked Audrey Kingham, Pat Blyth, Kehri Ellis, Jamie Clark and Shona Duncan for attending the meeting and for their contributions to the discussion. In reflecting on the discussion, the sub-committee was assured that the Council was involved in a wide variety of work with partners to support apprenticeships and promote good practice. Through these partnerships North Tyneside appeared to have a strong network of training providers and employers committed to the provision of good quality and sustainable apprenticeships. The scrutiny exercise had however identified a number of areas where the Council and its partners could develop and refine its approach and the sub-committee asked that officers take these into account in delivering future activity.

It was **agreed** that (1) the information presented to the sub-committee in relation to the work currently being undertaken by the Council and its partners, to support apprenticeships and promote good practice, be noted;  
(2) the Council's Principal Manager for Employment and Skills be requested to take into account the suggestions discussed by the sub-committee, and set out above, in developing and refining the Council's approach to supporting and promoting apprenticeships; and  
(3) the sub-committee include in its work programme for 2016 a further examination of apprenticeships to review the identified areas for development and their impact.