

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Cabinet in the Community

Meeting held 26 March 2014

PRESENT: Councillors Pat Midgley, Leigh Bramall, Ben Curran, Julie Dore, Jackie Drayton, Mazher Iqbal, Mary Lea and Jack Scott

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Councillor Pat Midgley, Chair of the East Local Area Partnership, welcomed members of the public to the meeting. She explained that a recent partnership meeting had been held where young people had been invited to discuss the themes of employment and education. This aimed to see how young people had been affected by changes in society and government legislation. Some of those people working within that field had not been able to attend the meeting as they were running youth sessions at the same time.

2. SHEFFIELD COLLEGE PRESENTATION

2.1 Dave Dale, Partnerships Manager at Sheffield College, delivered a presentation on the College's JCP Programme. This aimed to get young people into employment and had begun 8 years ago. The scheme had grown from supporting 3 people in the first instance.

2.2 The College ran a variety of route to employment programmes and worked with a number of employers, with Sheffield Teaching Hospitals the biggest. 100 young people had been employed in the last year as healthcare assistants. The College also worked with a number of referral agencies with Job Centre Plus the biggest.

2.3 The College had worked closely with Tesco and 117 young people had been employed. 1000 people had applied for the posts and 300 of those had been identified as not having the skills required to work in Tesco. This had identified a need for the Job Centre to support those who did not have the basic skills required to work in Tesco.

2.4 Over the course of this year, which was due to end on August 1st, 703 people had gained employment and 568 more were projected to start by July 31st.

2.5 The key to the programme was to work with those farthest away from the job market to support their needs and make them ready for work.

2.6 Following the presentation, Councillor Midgley thanked Mr Dale for his presentation and allowing the meeting to be held in the College. She commended the work of the College and commented that, at a time when times were very hard for young people, any assistance and support they were provided with was to be welcomed.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Question 1 John Wills asked How many young adults in Sheffield are being helped into permanent employment by apprenticeships? Was there any concern about the quality of the current schemes?

Answer 1 Councillor Leigh Bramall, Cabinet Member for Business, Skills and Development, informed Mr Wills that a written answer had been provided to this question which was on the sheet circulated at the meeting. He commented that figures for the Council run schemes had been tracked and were included in the written response. He welcomed the Council's success in achieving devolution in this respect with Council run schemes such as the 100 apprentices scheme.

Most apprenticeship schemes were nationally run and co-ordinated by the Skills Funding Agency. All apprenticeships were inspected by OFSTED. The question he would raise with nationally run schemes was whether employers were getting the skills they wanted from the apprenticeships whereas the Council's scheme was specifically designed for what employers wanted.

Councillor Jackie Drayton, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families reported that she had recently attended an awards ceremony for the 100 apprentices. 80 out of the 100 had gained employment which highlighted the success of the scheme.

The Council ran a wrap around scheme to assist those employers who may wish to take on an apprentice but didn't have the time commitments to complete all the necessary paperwork. A fair had been held where hundreds of employers had attended and many had declared that they would take on an apprentice.

Businesses wanted to take people on who had the right skills. The Council had worked with their partners on the Made in Sheffield curriculum which answered the needs of employers by teaching young people employability skills. The pre-apprenticeship scheme ran by the Council assisted those who were then taken on by the 100 apprentices scheme.

Question 2 John Wills then asked what measures were in place to ensure that transport costs were not a barrier to young people gaining employment?

Answer 2 Councillor Leigh Bramall reported that bus fees were the responsibility of the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTTE). A number of bus

passes for young people were available. The Council was committed to delivering a Living Wage for apprentices.

Question 3

Sylvia Atkinson, representing the Darnall Forum, asked whether the employment statistics currently included people on zero hours contracts and therefore had a tendency to overstate the employment figures. What proportion of the people in work and getting into work in the last year did this include?

Answer 3

Councillor Leigh Bramall commented that the Council did not hold statistics on different kinds of employment and these were held nationally. A recent Parliament briefing paper had stated that 1.39% of the workforce was employed on zero hour contracts. On certain occasions the Council was not allowed access to the national statistics.

Councillor Julie Dore, Leader of the Council, added that, although it was reported that an extra 1 million jobs had been created, around half of these were people employed on zero hour contracts, part time workers and the self employed.

Councillor Mazher Iqbal, Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion, commented that, in respect of zero hour contracts in Sheffield, some employees preferred to be employed on them as it suited their lifestyle. In Sheffield those employed on zero hour contracts had the same terms and conditions as full time staff which was not the case nationally. It was the Government's responsibility to ensure that they legislated to ensure the workforce across the country got a fair deal.

Councillor Mary Lea, Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Independent Living, stated that she recognised that zero hour contracts were a national issue in the care sector. In Sheffield the Council worked with home care providers to ensure employees had enough working hours that they needed and were not working flexibly to suit the needs of the company. The Council was working with its home care provider to try and achieve a Living Wage and an Ethical Care Charter.

A member of the public, who was a voluntary sector provider, commented that her organisation had invested heavily into making themselves contract ready. However, the commissioners were passing down the public sector cuts to the providers. With the value of the contract being so tight delivering a Living Wage at the same time was impossible.

Councillor Jackie Drayton commented that the Council were looking closely at child poverty and the impact of benefit cuts on women. The Government were targeting public services and Local Government in particular. This inevitably led to staff redundancies. Whilst the Government talked about the private sector taking over these jobs the majority of women in the public sector were paid £9 whilst in the private sector it was £6.

Councillor Ben Curran, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources stated that since the Government began its austerity programme, the Council had faced a 50% cut to its budget. As a result saving money was key but at the same time the Council did not want to encourage a race to the bottom. The Council insisted on a Living Wage being paid when putting contracts out to tender and the aspiration was to make Sheffield a Living Wage City.

Councillor Julie Dore commented that price should not be the only factor when appointing contractors. The Council believed in good terms and conditions and better value for the employee. Councillor Dore was constantly hearing about the fact that there was a growing economy, more people in employment and less people claiming benefits. However, at the same time productivity was not improving and this was common sense as the staff were on low wages and zero hour contract which was bound to affect the productivity.

The member of the public who worked for the voluntary sector provider commented that there was inconsistency in the approach across the Council. She accepted that some departments did not just look at cost when awarding contracts whilst in other departments they looked at the lowest cost whilst value for money was secondary.

Councillor Mazher Iqbal reported that he had recently met with representatives of CUBE, a consortium of third sector providers, and stated that where anomalies occurred in contracts these should be reported to the Council so the Council could meet with procurement officers and the organisations involved to see what the Council could do to resolve the issue.

Question 4 Sylvia Atkinson asked how the funding to assist people into work was shared across wards?

Answer 4 Councillor Leigh Bramall reported that the East Local Area Partnership

received 9% of the employment and skills budget. He could find out the figures for Darnall in particular if requested. The size of the budget did not allow any further targeting of funds over and above what was done currently.

Question 5 Ryan Meeds asked why he was not able to get a job as a result of not obtaining any qualifications from school?

Answer 5 Councillor Dore responded that the Council's 100 apprenticeships scheme was established to support people like Ryan. From a visit to Forgemasters in 2011, Councillor Dore had realised that employers were only taking on apprentices who had 5 A-C's at G.C.S.E level. £500k had been committed to the Council's apprenticeship scheme which offered employers a wage subsidy. This was targeted at those who had not achieved a level 2. A pre-apprenticeship programme was in place which lasted 6 weeks to get people ready for the full apprenticeship programme.

Question 6 Jo-Anne Von Levesley referred to a recent discussion she had had with a parent from Darnall who had asked why there was not any gym/fitness equipment in local parks as could be seen in local parks such as Millhouses or Ecclesall?

Answer 6 Councillor Leigh Bramall informed Ms. Levesley that a large amount of the equipment had been paid for and installed by Friends of Parks Groups. Under the previous administration Community Assemblies wards were allocated a budget and wards such as in the South West did not have issues that other areas had such as employment so were able to spend more of their budget on installing fitness equipment, which also helped.

Councillor Mary Lea added that she was involved with work on regeneration of parks in the Darnall area. The issue with the fitness equipment was not just about the installation but the cost of the maintenance.

Councillor Leigh Bramall added that a policy had been agreed to not support Friends of Groups with bids for such equipment unless maintenance funding was also provided as the maintenance bill would fall on the Council otherwise.

A resident of Darnall commented that she was involved in walks, running clubs and jogs in parks so there was physical activity available in the area. There was also a weight management service for those aged 7 and above.

Councillor Mary Lea acknowledged that not everybody wanted to use a gym and a good long walk was just as important. The Move More strategy agreed by the Council was a way of achieving that.

Question 7 A member of the public referred to a recent email he had received seeking help for local schoolchildren to use the recently refurbished Woodbourn Road athletics stadium and asked if the Cabinet could assist with ensuring that this happened.

Answer 7 Councillor Mazher Iqbal commented that £60-80k of funding had been set aside to encourage people to do sport. Sheffield Hallam managed the Woodbourn Road site and he was happy to work with schools groups to facilitate the use of the stadium.

Councillor Jackie Drayton added that she was hoping to get schools recreational facilities to open for longer. Each school received a government grant to provide sport for its pupils.

Question 8 A member of the public commented that one of the major problems with pathways to employment was that there was still too big a focus on academic qualifications when some people were not academically minded. More focus should be placed on academic qualifications.

Answer 8 Councillor Jackie Drayton reported that Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, had made it very clear that the curriculum in schools would be very heavily focused on academic achievement. Providing work experience was no longer a requirement for schools. This devalued vocational education and Councillor Drayton knew that lots of children would come out with even less qualifications than they had in the past.

Councillor Julie Dore commented that one of the biggest changes over the last ten years was the removal of the responsibility for training from the employer to the state and this needed to be reversed. Employers were now realising there was a skills shortage in the country which would take years to rectify.

Councillor Mazher Iqbal commented that young people wanted to work. It was the responsibility of colleges and other agencies to draw down funding

for a young person to get a job.

Question 9

A member of the public commented that the Council had previously ran a contract called Future Proof and asked what had happened in respect of this?

Answer 9

Councillor Julie Dore reported that although the Council no longer ran Future Proof they ran an employability programme and taken over the work programme.

Councillor Jackie Drayton commented that Sheffield had previously run the Future Proof contract but this had been on a regional level. She believed that, although Sheffield did not win the contract to continue running the programme, it was still being delivered in the area but she would clarify this.

Councillor Pat Midgley commented that the situation seemed as though it was almost a competition for people's vulnerabilities and the system was making it more complex for young people to find apprenticeships or work.

Janet Sharpe, Interim Director of Housing, Sheffield City Council reported that the Council was looking at working with contractors to end the confusion which existed. Money had been spent in local areas to break down contracts to get young people into jobs. The Council expected all contractors to employ young people. Employers wanted signposting to the right people.

The City Stewardship Programme was being brought to an end to redesign it so it had a closer fit to the Council. There were lots of positions available which did not require someone to have 5 A-C's at G.C.S.E level. Any individual who could not find a route after completing the City Stewardship Programme would be found an alternative in the interim.

Question 10

A member of the public commented that some children often went to local primary schools such as Springfield which had a low qualification rate and then progressed to secondary schools such as Silverdale and High Storrs which had a high qualification rate and this affected their learning. Was the Council, therefore, doing anything to improve teaching in low performing schools?

Answer 10

Councillor Jackie Drayton commented that primary schools in the East of the City had risen faster than anywhere in the City or nationally showing a 23% improvement at Key Stage 2 level. Some schools in the area had received recognition from Government of being in the top 200 improving schools.

Councillor Drayton acknowledged that there were still challenges such as those children eligible for pupil premium, BME children and those with special needs. It was important to work together to improve less performing schools through sharing experience and teachers.

Councillor Mazher Iqbal reported that at a school where he was a governor each child had a personal educational plan. There were disparities of achievement and attainment in schools. There was a need to take a holistic household approach and provide support for young people.

Councillor Julie Dore commented that a school could have the best teachers in the world but if a child's lifestyle was poor it made it very difficult for the child to progress in school. At the same time the cuts to the public services means that less support was available.

Councillor Jackie Drayton concluded the meeting by stating that there was still a need to challenge schools and every school needed to be a great school with good governance and leadership with every lesson being good or outstanding. Governors needed to challenge headteachers and schools to ensure that teaching and learning was a priority.