



SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF CHILDREN AND LIFELONG LEARNING AND ECONOMY, CULTURE AND TOURISM SCRUTINY PANEL

11th September 2025 at 2.00pm

Present: Councillors Boyd, Cairns, Crofts, Clough, Farren, Holland, Mickleburgh, Morland and Patrick

Co-opted Members: Canon Ian Robinson (Church of England)

Officers in attendance:

- Damien Jaines-White (Assistant Director Regeneration)
- Amy Rogers (Strategic Lead - Skills and Employability)
- Beverly O'Brien (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Karen Linton (Deputy Service Director – Skills and Employability and Education Transport)

JSPCT.9 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED – That Councillor Holland be appointed Chair for this joint scrutiny panel meeting.

COUNCILLOR HOLLAND IN THE CHAIR

JSPCT.10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lindley, K. Swinburn, Parkinson, Silvester and Wheatley.

JSPCT.11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Holland declared a non-registrable interest in JSPCT.12 as he did ad hoc consultancy to Model Tech Partnership, which was mentioned in the report.

JSPCT.12 SKILLS ACTION PLAN – PROGRESS UPDATE

The joint panel considered a report from the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure on the progress made in the last six months on the delivery of the skills action plan.

The Chair asked for more detail on the impact that devolution would have on the Skills Strategy. Ms Rogers explained that they led on three workstreams which were handed over to the combined authority (as referred to in section 1.5 of the report). Mr Jaines-White mentioned the devolution budget and explained that, subject to tests being passed, they would work closely with the Department for Education (DfE) which would ultimately lead to academic influence from 2027/28. The Combined Authority had responsibility for the funding and had the ability to feed into other solutions.

Councillor Morland asked if we had contingency plans in place if the combined authority didn't take place. Councillor Patrick moved for the meeting to go into closed session so Officers could give a more informative answer. Councillor Morland seconded this.

RESOLVED - That the public and press be excluded for the following business on the grounds that its discussion was likely to disclose confidential information within paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

Mr Jaines-White went into detail about what contingency plans would be put in place. Councillors showed some concerns on how the Skills Strategy agenda would progress, particularly if certain situations that had been published recently panned out. Mr Jaines-White confirmed that we were an organisation in our own right, so we would still have controls over certain policies in place.

The joint panel asked more questions around the adult skills funding, localism and devolution. Officers present clarified Members queries.

The joint panel then went back into open session, where the public and press were invited back in, if present.

Members asked for some clarifications around qualification and employment data. One Member asked about the high volume of people not knowing where to go for advice. Ms Rogers explained that the people who were targeted were those who came into contact with services. These were particularly people who needed the resources, so that's why the numbers were high. She explained that all this information would help refresh the next Skills Strategy.

One Member raised concerns that they were not identifying people who were carers and being excluded from the service. Another Member asked how had the Council looked at how we were going to liaise with them going forward. Ms Rogers explained that a lot of work had already been done,

based out in the community, particularly working with them and how we can help promote that. When they applied through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, they mapped out where the different interventions were. They were now using Family Hubs to help. Ms Linton added that support services delivered services out in community venues. Not in Education Employment Training (NEET) Practitioners that work directly with individuals also signposted to different venues to suit that individual's needs. A panel member thought it would be helpful if there was a one stop shop, where all queries could be directed, and the public would then know first-hand where to go.

Another panel member asked whether there were action plans in place to inform adults/young adults to get them on track to certain careers ladders. Ms Rogers stated that there was a skills newsletter and Invest webpage which included a guide around apprenticeships. She stated that it was more around businesses not understanding what they were able to do.

Members raised concerns around the language used to get people to the centre. They wondered whether certain things needed re-wording. Ms Rogers stated that there were constraints, the national career service was a contract, and they were restricted on how they were able to market it. She said that where they could change the language they would look into it, but Ms Rogers added that their language on advertising was very different to the report.

The Chair asked when the next refresh of the Skills Strategy was due. Ms Rogers explained that the Skills Strategy was designed around a three-year delivery, so they would be looking at a refresh of the whole strategy. However, she noted that all data included in this report was updated and figures included were the most recent ones.

The Chair asked if there was an Action Tracker newer than 2024. If there was, he asked that it be sent to the joint panel for information. He then went on to ask about schools playing a key part in this agenda. He wondered how well Officers liaised with them, particularly local schools and whether their careers advice was any good. Ms Rogers stated that they worked well with the careers hub and were all on board. Ms Linton added that the Education Act specified that all schools had to procure impartial career guidance to their students. She explained that secondary schools were fully academised, so each school would do it differently.

One Member asked where we were with NEETS. They wondered if numbers were currently high and they wondered what that was down to. Ms Linton explained that it was a real mix of issues. but that all young people who were NEET were supported by a NEET practitioner.

RESOLVED – That the report on the Skills Action Plan delivery be noted.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 3.40 p.m.