Report of the Strategic Director to the meeting of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 6th September 2016.

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Subject:

Review of Post-16 education in Bradford

Summary statement:

This report outlines the context of the recent review of post-16 education and training that was undertaken in Bradford, and the case for change and next steps for action that emerged from the Review.

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Portfolio:
Children & Young People's Services

Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Children & Young People's Services

1.   SUMMARY

1.1   This is a period of significant change for post-16 education and training locally and nationally and the Council with the support, participation and cooperation of a range of key partners has led a local review of post-16 provision within the District to ensure that we have a sustainable, high quality offer that delivers the best outcomes for our young no matter where they start.

2.   BACKGROUND

2.1   Post-16 education is changing significantly. National reforms are changing the curriculum, the accountability framework, funding and will significantly expand the apprenticeship programme.

2.2   The pattern of post-16 delivery in Bradford was inspected by Ofsted in 2015. In their subsequent report on Local Authority arrangements for school improvement in Bradford, questions were raised about the quality and the longer-term financial viability of the offer.

2.3   The changes in funding from the introduction of a new 16-19 formula in 2008/09 to equalise rates of funding per learner have seen a significant reduction in levels of funding received by Bradford institutions. Alignment of funding with subsequent policy changes, such as the Wolf Report, and the removal of protections have meant further funding reductions.

2.4   Alongside this Adult Skills funding has also been reformed and allocations for Colleges have reduced at a time when many Colleges nationally had capital to loans to repay predicated on income projections based on the old funding arrangements. In response to this the Government announced a programme of national area based reviews of further education (FE) to deliver efficiencies and increase the financial sustainability of the FE sector. West Yorkshire was prioritised in the first tranche of these reviews. It has always been clear that the Council would have a clear role in feeding in the requirements of the District to the Steering Group.

2.5   Bradford as a District has shown significant improvement over a sustained period of time in the numbers of our young people participating in education and training. The DfE publishes data based on the November to January average rate of NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). For 2015/16 Bradford recorded their best ever performance against this measure, is better than the national rate and in terms of percentage reduction was the 5th most improved Local Authority nationally. These improvements in participation however have not translated into improved outcomes for our young people on a similar scale and indeed unemployment of 19-24 year olds remains above the national average.

2.6   In the context of these drivers and pressures, but above all to ensure we can meet the needs of our young people, and deliver the skills needed by the local economy

now and in the future, Bradford Council commissioned a review of post-16 provision across the District. This was undertaken in partnership with schools, colleges, the University of Bradford, West Yorkshire Learning Providers and business. A list of partners is included in the report "A joint approach to post-16 education improvement in Bradford and the need for change" at Appendix 2.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 The Review outlined a clear case for change that has been accepted by all partners.

Specifically:

Outcomes need to rapidly improve for all young people in all settings.
Overall the outcomes for young people by the age of 19 do not compare well to national and regional figures. Attainment of Level 2 (equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grade A*-C) and Level 3 (equivalent to 2 A Levels) at age 19 are at best stabilising, and at worst declining.

3.2 Of those who complete a Level 3 qualification, progression rates into Higher Education (HE) are actually quite positive for the District and in terms of progression to any HE destination Bradford performs better than is the case nationally (52% locally, 48% nationally), although for progressions into the top third of HE institutions, Russell Group and Oxford or Cambridge Bradford is below the national rate. However, the key challenge is that significantly fewer of our young people actually attain Level 3 compared to their peers nationally (50.6% in Bradford, 60.3% nationally).

3.3 Despite some recent improvements, our young people's academic results are below average and they also achieve fewer qualifications than the national average. Fewer of Bradford's A Level students achieve three A Levels than is the case nationally.

3.4 There are also significant differences in performance levels in post-16 education depending on where learners live and their backgrounds. This is not just in the levels of outcomes achieved by young people but also in the quality of learning that young people experience.

3.5 This is not to say that there is not good practice in our post-16 settings. Vocational results in schools generally compare favourably to the national picture, the recent White Paper "The Post-16 Skills Plan" (see Background documents) though will introduce significant change to technical provision which could jeopardise that. The District needs post-16 provision that is both ready for these changes and that can rapidly deliver better academic outcomes across the whole of the area.

3.6 **Guidance needs to improve.**
All students need to access learning suitable for their needs and clearly understand progression routes from that provision. Data indicates that too many of our young people are making the wrong choices at key transition points. This demonstrates a

clear need for informed and unbiased information, advice and guidance (IAG) in all settings and better transition support.

The development and implementation of the Bradford Pathways programme with its focus on our young people's routes into different sectors of the economy is aligned with, and ahead of, the White Paper and the development of resources to support the programme will underpin guidance and improve our young people's choices and decision making. This will also enable parents and carers to help their children with these transitions and empower them to make better informed decisions about future education, and ultimately employment, prospects.

3.7 **Choice is limited.**
Currently many of our schools' sixth forms are small and the academic and vocational pathways they provide offer a limited choice for young people. The colleges provide mainly vocational programmes but also some significant A Level provision.

The approach is not joined up and as a result is costly, duplicates learning opportunities, does not provide high quality learning experiences and ultimately impacts negatively on outcomes for learners.

There are clear gaps in the range and types of qualifications and programmes at all levels and the A Level offer does not match local economic need. The District needs a comprehensive range of high quality options to be available to all our young people throughout the area; this emphasis on quality and broad curriculum choices must be at the heart of our sixth forms, colleges and other post-16 settings.

3.8 **The current offer is not financially sustainable.**
Population projections show an increase in youth population and there is a pressing need to create additional capacity in secondary school for ages 11-16 years old. This is at a time when the Government is consulting on the future of 11-16 funding and this will mean increasing pressures on school budgets.

Allied to this there are twenty schools which have sixth forms with less than 250 young people. Of these 20 schools, five had between 200 and 250 students, nine had between 100 and 199 students and six had less than 100 young people in their 6th form in May.

Studies demonstrate that sixth forms with less than 250 students can be inefficient. Those schools with small sixth forms face increasing challenges to be able to afford to deliver a viable sixth form offer. Research has also identified an association between the size of a sixth form and its A Level results whereby statistically larger sixth forms will perform better than smaller ones.

In order to achieve financial sustainability, schools may consider greater specialisation post-16 and thus to focus on a narrower range of subjects and indeed this may also have a positive impact on outcomes. However whilst this may achieve financial efficiency it by definition limits the range of subjects on offer and choice

available to students in the immediate and longer term reducing the range of career pathways available to them.

3.9   A list of schools with less than 250 students in the May 2016 census is at Appendix 3. It should not be assumed that all of these are financially inefficient.

3.10   Subsequent to the Review a steering group drawing on representation from schools, colleges, the University of Bradford, West Yorkshire Learning Providers, business and Chaired by the Council has worked collaboratively to develop a recommended framework for improvement as set out in Section 9. However the Council acknowledges that this is the first step and that we need a broader debate engaging education and business leaders from across the District.

4.   FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

4.1   There are no financial and resource implications arising out of this report.

5.   RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

5.1   There are no significant risks to the Council arising out of the recommendations in this report.

6.   LEGAL APPRAISAL

6.1   There are no legal issues arising out of this report.

7.   OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1   EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

There are no issues arising from the Council's Equality & Diversity Strategy to consider as part of this report.

7.2   SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Improved outcomes and skills levels will improve the range and quality of opportunities available to our young people in the labour market, and their ability to contribute to society and their communities.

7.3   GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

The contents of this report do not directly impact Council's own and the wider District's carbon footprint and emissions from other greenhouse gasses.

7.4   COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct Community Safety implications arising out of this report.

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

There are no Human Rights Act implications arising out of this report.

7.6 TRADE UNION

There are no Trades Union implications for the Council arising out of this report.

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

As a result of the recommendations there may be Wards that currently have a sixth form that do not in the future, however it is not possible at this point to state which Wards this would apply to.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

8.1   None.

9. OPTIONS

The Council and its partners will together to deliver against the four key priority areas set out at 9.1 to 9.4:

9.1   Delivering Sustainable, High Quality Post-16 Provision

The key actions and considerations in this area are:

- *rationalising sixth forms across the District;* The Council believes that a school sixth form with fewer than 250 young people is unviable. For those schools not part of a multi-academy trust this may be achieved through closure of their sixth form or by delivering a post-16 offer in collaboration with a partner school or college.

- *collaboration based on geographical factors, communities of interest or provider strengths;* Schools and colleges must work together to broaden their curriculum offer and realise economies of scale.

- *collaboration within multi-academy trusts (MATs);* The Council would like to see MATs reviewing and considering the future of their sixth form provision strategically across the whole trust, with a view to combining their provision into a single sixth form centre or to stop offering sixth form provision.

- *the development of new sixth form colleges and post-16 free schools;* This needs to be done through a coordinated approach that considers geographical factors to ensure equality of access for all our young people and avoids unhelpful competition impacting on financial security. The Council want to see the development of four new sixth form colleges that offer a wide range of high quality academic pathways, with two located within the city centre and two located in the north of the District.

The Council wants to ensure that all post-16 settings in the District give our young people the best possible post-16 learning experience. To meet the needs of our young people and local economy, our post-16 institutions must deliver high quality teaching and learning, in the best facilities available and with clear links, through the Bradford Pathways programme, to progressions into either the labour market or Higher Education. The ethos of these settings must be to deliver a better quality experience that equips our young people for the very best opportunities available to them in later life.

- developing a financial modelling tool to enable sixth forms to stress-test what they offer.

9.2 Championing and Supporting Better Leadership

The key actions and considerations in this area are to:

- Develop geographical partnerships to develop and share expertise.

- Set up peer-to-peer support for teachers and leaders.

- Intervene where leadership lacks the skills or capacity to improve.

- Provide robust data on performance to highlight good and outstanding practice.

- Provide robust data on what our local economy needs now and in the future.

9.3 Promote Networks and Partnerships that can Raise Standards

The key actions and considerations in this area are to:

- Signpost and broker relationships.

- Support collective approaches that tackle underachievement.

- Work with schools and colleges to direct resources to where they are needed.

- Bring schools and colleges together to work to raise aspiration.

- Work with schools and colleges and intervene at an early stage to tackle areas of concern.

9.4 Continue to Focus on 16-19 Outcomes at all Levels

The key actions and considerations in this area are to:

- Develop a post-16 action plan to improve standards.

- Develop a post-16 partnership to focus on improving educational standards and

outcomes.

- Develop an effective transition process between Year 11 and all post-16 destinations.

- Make certain independent information, advice and guidance (IAG) is available to all our young people and families to inform their decision making.

- Champion the view that vocational and academic choices have equal value

- Implement Bradford Pathways so that young people have access to a learning pathway that gives them a rich and balanced curriculum linked to their career goals.

- Promote teaching which aims to shift performance for all students.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Recommended:

- That the Committee note the contents of the report and work with partners to promote and deliver the actions set out in section 9 and specifically 9.1.

- That the Committee support the Council with the engagement of a broad range of partners from education and business with the development of the post-16 agenda and partnerships in Bradford.

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1 – Post-16 education and training in Bradford and the need for change.

11.2 Appendix 2 – A joint approach to post-16 education improvement in Bradford and the need for change.

11.3 Appendix 3 – Bradford School Sixth Forms with less than 250 Students.

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

12.1 Post-16 Skills Plan White Paper

12.2 Wolf Report

12.3 Area Based Reviews of FE

12.4 Key Stage 5 Destinations Data