



Subject:	Employability and Skills Framework – Update
Date:	12 October 2016
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Lisa Toland, Head of Economic Initiatives & International Development

Is this report restricted?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of the report is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Update members on the Employability & Skills Framework and progress to date on the implementation on the associated year one Action Plan.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Note the final version of the Employability and Skills Framework and progress to date. – Approve the proposed approach of engaging through Party Group Leaders to agree the pilot areas for Employability Outreach Pilots.
3.0	Main report
3.1	At the 24 June meeting of Strategic Policy & Resources Committee Members approved the final version of the Employability & Skills Framework and associated year one Action Plan. This Framework underpins all of the priorities identified under the Belfast Agenda. These are <i>Business and the Economy, Living Here, Working and Learning and City Development</i> . Achievement of the Employability and Skills Framework objectives will have a positive correlation on growing the city economy by influencing our ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attract more investment into Belfast;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foster more business growth in Belfast; - Strengthen business relationships; - Make Belfast easy to do business with; - Maximise impact of city region; and - Reduce poverty and economic inequality.
3.2	<p>The Framework was developed to understand the specifics of the employability and skills challenges in Belfast and to identify how a collaborative, outcomes-based, long-term approach could bring about a step change in employment rates and skills levels. It identified four key aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aim 1: To increase access to employment by supporting the development of lower and entry level skills and by addressing barriers preventing access to jobs; - Aim 2: To generate higher level skills which meet the demands of employers and investors; - Aim 3: To facilitate career progression routes across all skill levels; and - Aim 4: To develop a culture of entrepreneurship at all levels. <p>The employability and skills issues facing the city are multi-faceted and complex. Economic inactivity is one of the most significant impediments to the city. Despite significant investments to tackle this issue, evidence would suggest the scale of challenge has not been effectively addressed. This highlights the need to do things differently through a long term strategic and collaborative approach tackling issues such as skills gaps, family cultures, health problems, mobility, access to childcare and changes to welfare benefits etc.</p>
3.3	<p>Aligned to the principles of the Belfast Agenda, the Employability and Skills Framework contains the following overarching principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Citywide approach; - Long-term approach; - Outcome and needs-based; - Aspirational and Ambitious; and - Inclusive Growth.
3.4	<p>At the 24 June meeting of SP&R members approved the Framework's year 1 Action Plan. Whilst delivery of this plan is ongoing key areas of progress are outlined below.</p> <p>1. Hospitality Pilot Project (Addressing Aim 1) - the hospitality sector has been</p>

recognised as one of the growing sectors within the city, attributed in part to key investments such as the Belfast Waterfront, new hotel developments etc. In response to expected employment growth, Council's Officers have been working with key partners to develop a Hospitality Employment Academy to provide a bespoke skills programme for the unemployed to equip them with the industry-specific skills for working in this sector. The project involves intensive work with existing and future employers, early intervention programmes with key target groups and development of specific skills programmes. To prevent duplication and achieve cost efficiencies, programme delivery has been designed to utilise existing resources already part-funded through ESF (European Social Fund) with Council funding used to provide 'top up' training required to tailor the programme to employer needs, working alongside Belfast Met. The pilot aims to support 70 people into employment with the first cohort of training expected to commence in late October 2016.

2. Belfast Employability Programme (Addressing Aim 1) – As members will be aware, SP&R committee of 20 May 2016 approved the development of a Council-led employability model for the city, specifically aimed at getting those furthest from the labour market into real jobs. The 'Belfast Works' project seeks to move individuals currently furthest removed from the labour market through stages of training and development to a point where they are 'job ready' and able to compete for a job that would be ring fenced to them once they have completed the full training - i.e. a pathway of support for individuals to move from unemployment into employment, offering access to real jobs available from Council, stakeholders and those arising from new investments.

This is a different model to what often happens at present, which in many cases results in 'churn', whereby individuals may undertake employability training to a certain point but they do not necessarily progress through a joined-up pipeline to a second or third stage that gets them to a point where they are job ready. Further, jobs may exist or be in the pipeline in the city but they are not ring fenced. Belfast City Council however, as a large employer has, through the OD Department, designed and delivered an employability training programme and ring fenced our jobs to individuals who have completed the employability training and development programme. This project will build on that work by partnering with other large employers (for example, Belfast Trust and the hotel and hospitality sector) to identify jobs that could be made available for ring-fencing to individuals who are currently far from the labour market (for example, 16-24 not in employment, education or training) once they have completed a training and development programme that gets them 'job ready'.

The model is relatively simple as a concept but in reality will be extremely complex to put

into operation. The most significant issue is resources and this is currently being examined as part of the estimating process.

This project will of course also require effective partnership and co-design and delivery with key stakeholders and to this end the Chief Executive has had positive initial discussions with senior officials in the Department for Communities; the Director of Organisational Development has met with her counterpart in Belfast Trust and secured commitment from them for involvement in this project; and staff from OD/ HR and the Development Department have started initial work with Belfast Metropolitan College but there will be a number of potential providers required to co-design and deliver the training and development element and stages of the 'pipeline'. A further report on this model and the resourcing requirements will be brought through SP&R Committee.

3. Employability Outreach Pilots (Addressing Aim 1) - At the August meeting of SP&R committee approval was given to undertake two pilot projects (Sport Changes Life and Active Communities Network), subject to pilot areas being identified. These projects are aimed at engaging young people, mainly aged 16-24 year olds who are or at risk of becoming NEET's. The aim of these projects is to use sport as a means of positively engaging with young people, to address their personal challenges and support them towards an ultimate goal of progressing into employment or further training. Council Officers are identifying the potential pilot areas for these projects, based upon an analysis of deprivation and NEETs data. It is proposed that engagement will take place through Party Group Leaders to agree the pilot areas for these projects with the intention of commencing pilot delivery in the forthcoming weeks.

4. Access to Employment Opportunities (Addressing all aims) - As members will be aware a complexity of training support is available across the city, however a key challenge exists in linking training provision to employer needs and 'real' job opportunities. Awareness of and access to employment opportunities available can be difficult to determine due to the variety of recruitment mediums utilised by employers. To address this, the Council has been supporting a number of job fairs and careers events including:

- LEMIS+ Job Fair which recently took place in City Hall with over 50 local employers participating;
- Skills NI event taking place on the 8-9 November 2016 in Titanic Exhibition Centre. This careers event aims to involve up to 80 exhibitors and targeting 5,000 young people and their families;
- Digital Futures Programme delivered by Digital DNA, will engage with 4,000 13-17

years olds across Belfast to develop new skills in computer programming and to promote career opportunities within the creative sector.

In addition discussions are also taking place with Department for Communities to host a joint large scale job fair in February/March 2017.

5. Entrepreneurship (Addressing Aim 4) is one the available routes into employment. In addition to mainstream provision through the Go For It programme, the Council has also recently launched new initiatives including Go Social to assist new social entrepreneurs and a new wave of the Belfast Enterprise Academy targeting student entrepreneurs. A range of enterprise awareness activities are also scheduled for Global Entrepreneurship Week taking place from the 14th -18th November to promote enterprise awareness, youth entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship.

6. Maximising investments – to maximise the employment opportunities arising from Council and other investments work is underway in the following areas:

- Delivery of the **Innovation Factory’s** social regeneration activities to encourage the creation of new businesses, by working with local schools, provision of work placements and outreach activities with local communities. Through the operation of the facility 6 new jobs have been created alone, in addition 6 new businesses have been secured as tenants of the facility, this is expected to increase in the forthcoming weeks with a further 25 warm leads currently in progress;
- **In partnership** with the City Centre team, engagement is taking place with key development projects to maximise the impact of employment opportunities created through their investment. This includes working with major retailers, who are planning expansion, or considering new investment to look at opportunities such as pre-employment programmes.
- Working with Corporate Procurement Services (CPS) to identify the potential for inclusion of social clauses in upcoming tenders. In order to ensure that these clauses can have a positive impact in local areas, we are making linkages between contractors and relevant local training providers. The next major opportunity is the Leisure Transformation Programme and work is currently under way to define the relevant social clause requirements.

4.0	Financial & Resource Implications
	The Hospitality Pilot Project, the Belfast Employability Programme, the Employability Outreach Pilots and the Entrepreneurship Support programmes, as well as the work to maximise the employability impact of wider Council investment, are being supported by

	<p>existing budgets which have already been approved by the Council.</p> <p>Work is currently under way to consider the financial implications of delivering the year 2 work programme, as part of the estimates process. This will include an assessment of the staff resource required to ensure effective project development, management, delivery and oversight.</p>
5.0	Equality & Good Relations Implications
	<p>An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on the draft Employability and Skills Framework. As a result, extra engagement activity took place with organisations working with ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and young people. On an ongoing basis the outreach and engagement activity will ensure that all under-represented groups are able to participate.</p>
6.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
6.1	Appendix 1 – Draft employability and skills framework –June 2016