



Subject:	Motion re: Education Support
Date:	19 th January 2018
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
Contact Officer:	Lisa Toland, Head of Economic Initiatives & International Development

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	<p>In December 2017, the Committee considered and agreed to the Notice of Motion on Education Support which was proposed by former Councillor Bell and seconded by Councillor O'Hara:</p> <p>"This Council notes the continued Tory-led cuts to the Department of Education's budget and the resulting devastating impact on the Education Authorities, schools and youth providers. Schools, youth providers, children, parents and the wider community are now at breaking point with continuing threats to services. The Council strongly opposes these cuts.</p>

The Council also notes the work being carried out by the various Partnership Boards and schools across Belfast to improve standards of literacy and numeracy amongst our young people, particularly those living in areas of high social deprivation. The Council commends the Partnership Boards and schools for their successes to date in improving standards of literacy and numeracy, especially at GCSE level, through their various Easter schools, mid-term schools, community-based classes and efforts outside of the classroom. It should be noted that the Council itself also provides educational support through homework clubs (for 5-11 years old) and parent and toddler groups

For these reasons, this Council agrees to task Council Officers to investigate ways in which it can contribute to the continued improvement and academic achievement in literacy and numeracy within local communities and will look at how it can help to overcome various barriers to learning at post primary level."

1.2 The Belfast Agenda drives the city's ambitions for Inclusive Growth and improving life chances for all citizens. This includes boosting attainment levels at all stages of life and ensuring that people have the skills they need for the jobs of the future as well as building a labour market that provides sustainable employment, removing barriers to employment and addressing and mitigating poverty. One of the four core ambitions is that "by 2035 every young person in Belfast leaving school has a destination that fulfils their potential".

1.3 The Council has already been scaling up its level of investment in Employability and Skills activity which is overseen by the Council's City Growth & Regeneration Committee. At its meeting in January 2018, the Committee noted the following headline targets to be achieved in the current financial year:

- Up to 1,500 residents will be supported to find a job. To date, more than 1,000 residents have entered employment (735 through European Social Fund (ESF) and Employment Academies and 313 through our entrepreneurship (including Go for It programme) and business development support);
- 4,000 residents will be engaged through employability interventions (e.g. careers insight activities) and early engagement projects (with 2,928 people engaged to date);

1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 1,000 students and young people to be engaged through career events and digital skills programmes (715 young people engaged to date); • Over 290 work experience opportunities to be provided through the Council and key employers across the city (with 25 employers signed up to provide the 290 work experience opportunities to date). <p>This report provides an overview of the work currently being undertaken by Council to tackle educational inequalities and the Employability and Skills challenges in the city in the context of the Belfast Agenda and proposes how the Notice of Motion might be taken forward.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the variety of mechanisms and activities currently provided to support educational attainment and the Council's commitment to enhancing Employability and Skills development for all citizens; • Note the ongoing engagement with city stakeholders on this issue and agree to progress a scoping exercise to enhance the existing evidence base and support further collaboration and partnership working to ensure the Council continues to add value to help tackle the city's challenges associated with educational inequalities.

3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>With Inclusive Growth at the heart of the Belfast Agenda, a core ambition is that every young person in Belfast leaving school has a destination that fulfils their potential by 2035. It makes explicit commitments to ensuring that children and young people can get the best start in life and to proactively and collaboratively addressing educational inequalities for those who are socially disadvantaged.</p>
3.2	<p>The Council's Employability & Skills Framework 2015-2025 mirrors this commitment, recognising that this will require a more integrated approach to learning and skills, ensuring that young people are supported through the education system and by their peer networks to develop their aspirations; to make informed career choices, based on labour market intelligence and have access to opportunities to experience the world of work. The framework also recognises a need to promote alternative routes into employment through</p>

entrepreneurship.

3.3

Access to an effective education system aligned to current and future employment needs are vital components of an effective pathway to employment across all skill levels. The activities being undertaken by Council in this regard span across the Growing the Economy and Working and Learning priorities of the Belfast Agenda.

3.4

At the June meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, Members heard presentations from education experts working with young people across the city. These focused, in particular, on the innovative approaches that they are developing to focus on young people who risk leaving school without minimum education standards and also on new ways of improving work placements and careers guidance to help young people to navigate the world of work and explore new employment opportunities.

3.5

Council Officers have also engaged with a wider group of careers teachers from across the city to identify interventions that they might find useful in delivering their work and improving the work experience and skills development opportunities of the young people within their schools. This identified the need to simplify the current system, to provide access to meaningful work placements and to support the provision of high quality and timely information to give young people insights into the world of work. The Council is working directly with schools and support organisations across the city, with a focus on improving skills and enhancing employability. However, it is clear that there are also more fundamental challenges around achieving basic levels of literacy and numeracy and these risk impacting on the City's competitiveness, as well as reducing the ability of those individuals to access meaningful employment and, as a result, increasing the chances of falling into poverty.

3.6

The importance of engaging with children and young people outside the formal school setting has been noted and Council support is provided to encourage engagement with young people through sports and alternative mechanisms. The City & Neighbourhood Services Department also provides support through the Community Centre network, Play Services and Sports Development. Activities include homework clubs, after-schools clubs, and volunteering. There is also an opportunity to further consider how outreach and engagement work and employer engagement activity can align to the Local Area Working approach that is being developed. This would not only support the physical improvement of those areas but also help to improve skills and create sustainable employment opportunities. The third sector has a vital role in this creating avenues for engagement and working with communities

3.7	<p>to help overcome various barriers to learning at post-primary level.</p> <p>Given the complexity of the barriers to learning within communities and the need to work in partnership to tackle the educational and employability challenges in the city, it is proposed that Officers will undertake a scoping exercise to collate the existing range of supports and activity underway in the city. This work will enhance the existing evidence base and identify potential opportunities, gaps and areas for further collaboration with a view to developing and securing support for targeted interventions that can contribute to the continued improvement in literacy and numeracy within local communities and look at how it can help overcome various barriers to learning at post-primary level. A report will be brought back to a future meeting of this Committee for consideration and approval. The Committee is also asked to note the ongoing programme of engagement with Members that has been agreed through the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in order to progress the ambitions in the Belfast Agenda and for the Council to take on a more strategic and operational role on Employability and Skills development issues. A special meeting of the Committee is planned for 21 February 2018.</p>
3.8	<p>The Committee is also asked to note that Council Officers are continuing to engage with government departments and the Belfast City Region Councils to identify areas for collaboration and to add value to improve educational levels, Employability and Skills as part of the work on the Belfast Region City Deal. This engagement activity may help identify additional opportunities to lever resources and maximise the impact of any Council investment.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Financial implications associated with enhancing the evidence base will be met within existing departmental budgets. Members should also be aware that the expansion of the Employability and Skills workstreams will require an increase in the current budget allocated to this area which will be managed through the annual estimates process. There is also potential to leverage funding from central government and other income streams once this work is developed.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>There are no equality or good relations implications attached to this report; subsequent actions will be agreed and considered in discussion with the Equality and Good Relations Officers.</p>

4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None