

East Sussex County Council

Corporate Employability and Skills Strategy

September 2016 - March 2018

Foreword

In May 2013, the County Council identified 'Driving economic growth' as one of its four primary objectives. This meant that investing in our infrastructure to make the County better connected was essential, as was enabling commercial development. Nine economic sectors with potential for innovation and growth were identified and the County Council recognised that in order to support their expansion, the industries within these sectors needed access to a workforce equipped with the right skills, delivered through appropriate curriculum and qualifications at Further and Higher Education levels, but also with an embedded understanding of the employability standards for modern employment. 'Driving economic growth' needed new initiatives to be undertaken by the County Council and its Strategic Partners.

East Sussex County Council has a good track record of working with public, private and voluntary sector partners to support local businesses and to improve the quality of its residents' lives. The Council has an essential role in working with local businesses to help them access the skills that they need in order to grow. The Council also needs to ensure that the young people and the most vulnerable groups that it supports have access to learning that will help them benefit from the opportunities afforded by the local economy.

'Employability and skills' is everybody's concern. It is an issue for all council departments and teams, for businesses, learning and skills providers, and for communities and families across the county. Possessing good technical, vocational and transferable skill sets builds people's resilience and helps create stronger businesses. These issues are at the heart of the Council Plan. The Council needs clear messages and a 'whole council' approach to raising skills levels and improving employability.

The County Council is the county's largest employer and is a major purchaser of goods and services. This puts the Council in a strong position to have a significant positive impact on employability and skills, both through its own actions and by influencing those of others. This new Corporate Employability and Skills Strategy 2016-2018 builds on the Council's existing relationships with local business and education providers and challenges the Council to adapt to new ways of improving the employability and skills of our residents.

Since 2014, the initial Employability and Skills Strategy (2014-2016) has set the framework within which staff from different departments have used their expertise to devise new projects and programmes that have had a positive impact on skills in East Sussex. These have included the East Sussex County Council Apprenticeship Programme and the effective implementation of our Social Value Strategy for Procurement. The County Council has consolidated its role as a leader, facilitator and influencer, working with partners to establish a local Employment and Skills Partnership Board, 'Skills East Sussex' (SES). This has directly led to the creation of an evidence base to help prioritise East Sussex's key high growth, skills and innovation sectors and led to the development of several collaborative skills and employability projects with key local stakeholders that support SES' objectives.

The Council now wishes to build upon this work, engaging even more effectively with business and partners to agree common priorities. The Council must share best practice from its own corporate initiatives, while looking at further ways to advance these and other partnership projects, where this can have the most impact. We will work with our local partners, businesses and education institutions to encourage all parties to actively contribute to improving the job prospects of our residents, especially in our priority sectors. We will continue to work together to raise aspirations and standards in our Secondary Schools.

This new strategy helps the Council to do that. It continues to be primarily an internal strategy for East Sussex County Council. It is a strategy for Elected Members and officers, so that they are clear about what the County Council can do to support the county's wider aims for improving skills and employability. However, it is also a strategy to which our

partners, contractors and funders can refer so that they are clear about what they can expect from us; how we will work with them; how they can participate; and the contribution that we will make towards achieving positive outcomes for our residents and businesses.

The County Council will consolidate its new models, and by March 2018, the Council's corporate employability and skills activities must be firmly embedded in the Portfolio Plans of each Directorate and any Service Plans developed within departments, while being fully integrated into the Council's culture and way of working.

Councillor Nick Bennett, Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness

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Executive Summary

This strategy provides the focus for our employability and skills actions between 2016 and 2018. It builds on the successes of our 2014-2016 strategy, which was the catalyst for significant improvements in our approach to employment and skills. Our successes include:

- Establishing and providing the secretariat for Skills East Sussex (SES) as the strategic board for employability and skills for the county;
- Convening business sector dialogues and producing economic sector specific intelligence briefings to enable providers to better understand current and emerging skills needs in our high growth, innovation and skills sectors;
- Developing a robust approach for integrating employment and skills plans into our commissioning and procurement activities;
- Creating corporate apprenticeship and graduate internship programmes;
- Stimulating the uptake of Apprenticeships in the county through Apprenticeships East Sussex (AES);
- Supporting our schools to obtain Investing in Careers standards and to become actively involved in other successful Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) activities; and
- Securing funding for and managing Careers & Enterprise Company (C&EC) programmes.

While the first strategy focused on creating infrastructure, this new strategy has a stronger focus on consolidating our new models of delivery and on working in partnership with business and key stakeholders to achieve our objectives. How the County Council is funded and how we work is being transformed, and other external factors may well influence how we deliver successful employability and skills interventions over the next two years. These include:

- The location of responsibility for skills, higher & further education and schools into a single UK government department;
- The UK's impending withdrawal from the European Union
- The devolution of responsibility for economic development to sub-national partnerships, like the Three Southern Counties (3SC) Partnership, through Devolution Deals and the role and influence of Local Enterprise Partnerships; and
- The introduction of new levy and grant system for delivering apprenticeships.

Within this context, we are clear about what we should do. We have developed actions under three clear workstreams, with the aim of integrating employability and skills activity into our corporate, portfolio and service plans by 2018:

Workstream One: Boosting local employment and skills through strategic procurement

We will use our considerable purchasing power and our responsibilities under the Public Service (Social Value) Act 2012 to ensure that our contractors and their supply chains contribute to local employability and skills activities.

Workstream Two: Supporting skills and employability through internal training and recruitment

We will use our role as the county's largest employer to provide high quality training opportunities, including traineeships, apprenticeships and internships, to help improve the life chances of our most vulnerable residents and to offer a first step to talented local young people. We will also explore opportunities for higher level learning for existing staff and those wishing to enter public sector professions where there are known skills gaps.

Workstream Three: Improving skills and employability through partner and business engagement

We recognise that our partners play the main role in developing skills and talent in the county. We wish to support and facilitate our training providers and employers as they develop local talent and address skills gaps. Through Skills East Sussex (SES), working alongside our strategic partners the Council will add value by being a convenor, facilitator, negotiator, lobbyist and leader, when each of these roles is required, to enhance the local training offer.

We are a County Council that welcomes external challenge, to help us improve what we do. We will, therefore, establish a robust monitoring and review framework to ensure that we achieve what we commit to achieving, whilst being sufficiently flexible to adapt to new circumstances as they arise

1. Background to the Employability and Skills Strategy

1.1 Employability and Skills Strategy 2014-16: Identifying opportunities and creating infrastructure

This corporate strategy is a continuation of the first East Sussex County Council Employability and Skills Strategy which ran from June 2014-June 2016 and was developed by an internal steering group with representatives from departments across the County Council. External stakeholders were also consulted on its content. It drew on other related strategies and plans, including regional plans such as the SE LEP Strategic Economic Plan, and focused specifically on the corporate work that the County Council would deliver to support the local employment and skills agenda.

The first Corporate Employability and Skills Strategy supported the four main aims of the Council Plan:

- Driving economic growth;
- Keeping vulnerable people safe;
- Helping people help themselves;
- Making best use of resources.

The Council Plan is explicit in its priority of driving economic growth:

“By creating the environment and infrastructure business needs, using the Council’s resources to support the local economy and ensuring local people have the skills they need to take advantage of the opportunities available”

and our East Sussex Growth Strategy also sets out clear aspirations to this effect:

- Better alignment of skills provision to meet local employer needs
- Increase the number of people in the workforce with high level skills
- Improve work readiness, including soft and basic skills
- Enabling business growth and supporting business start ups

Our Employability and Skills Strategy 2014-16 had four priorities directly linked to the aims set out in our Council Plan:

1. Raise prosperity and create job opportunities.
2. Ensure that children and adults have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed at work.
3. Increase the number of young people that are in education, employment or training until they are 25 years old.
4. Support vulnerable people, including looked-after children, troubled families, and those with learning disabilities to find and keep either voluntary or paid employment.

These priorities were also informed by a local economic skills and needs assessment and set within the prevailing national and regional policy context for skills.

Our 2014-16 Employability and Skills Strategy identified how, as the county’s largest employer and as a major commissioner and procurer of goods and services, we were able to support these priorities. It challenged us to use our strategic leadership to help set the direction, drive ambition and facilitate partnership working across the county.

It encouraged us to make best use of our tools of influence (such as procurement and commissioning) and to develop the best mechanisms to work effectively with businesses and other stakeholders to deliver against our priorities.

The strategy identified a need for a ‘whole council’ approach that challenged all our directorates and service areas, alongside our external partners to ‘*think employability and skills*’ in all their actions and decisions.

To support its priorities the Employability and Skills Strategy 2014–2016 set out three areas of work:

Workstream one: Boosting local employment and skills through strategic procurement

With a reduced budget, the Council needs to identify the most resource effective ways to boost skills. The original strategy identified an opportunity for the Council to require its contractors and their supply chains to include employment and skills measures within their contract delivery.

Workstream two: Supporting skills and employability through internal training & recruitment

As a major employer, the original strategy recognised that the Council had an opportunity to make changes to its own workforce development in order to support the skills agenda. It identified several ways in which the Council could do this, including developing an Apprenticeship Programme.

Workstream three: Improving skills and employability through partner and business engagement

The original strategy highlighted the importance of working closely with local businesses to help shape local learning provision. It recommended creating a new Employment and Skills Partnership Board to bring together businesses, training providers and other key stakeholders to identify local skills issues and find common solutions to them. It identified the strategic and influencing role of the Council within the wider regional and national skills infrastructure.

It also recognised a need to improve the quality of Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) by working closely with our schools, Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) providers and business.

The original strategy identified a range of opportunities for the Council to contribute to, and lead, a range of initiatives to support skills development in East Sussex. Most of the activities identified in the strategy demanded new ways of working and consequently needed new infrastructure, processes and policy to be created before implementation could begin.

1.2 Employability and Skills Strategy 2016-18: Consolidating and enhancing

This second strategy has been produced in order to consolidate the work started during 2014-16. It continues to support the Council Plan aims, and to support the East Sussex Growth Strategy 2014-2020, and will continue to deliver activity in line with the three workstreams.

Council departments have reviewed delivery against the activities set out in the 2014-16 action plan and have determined which of these have:

- been completed and do not need to be continued
- been fully integrated into standard council practice and consequently no longer need inclusion in this strategy
- moved from 'development' to 'delivery' and require new activities to consolidate or enhance them.

Simultaneously, we have undertaken a review of the changing policy and economic context for skills in order to ensure that new or continued activities remain relevant.

This approach has led to a new streamlined strategy which rationalises and consolidates internal corporate delivery under workstreams one and two, but shifts the emphasis for new or enhanced delivery towards external facing workstream three, which focuses on:

- actively engaging the business sector in local skills activities
- facilitating a greater depth of partnership working and
- using our economic priority on high growth, innovation and skills sectors as a driver for skills delivery and development in East Sussex

2. What did the Employability and Skills Strategy, 2014-16 achieve?

The first strategy had a strong focus on social inclusion, in line with its priorities and most activity achieved had strong social inclusion aspects to it. A detailed summary of achievements to date is provided (**Annex III**). Headline achievements from 2014-16 include:

2.1 Workstream One: Boosting local employment and skills through strategic procurement

- Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) requirements are embedded in the tendering process. Internal guidance document produced for Employment and Skills through Procurement Policy and a Suppliers Guide to Delivering Employment & Skills.
- Procurement Team trained about the Social Value Act (2012) and the delivery of employment and skills to ensure ESP policy is implemented at procurement stage.
- All contracts issued by the Council of a total value over £100,000 must include an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) unless valid reason is provided. In 2015-16, 11 ESPs were put in place (42% of the 26 contracts awarded). Quarterly KPI monitoring of contractual commitment versus ESP actual delivery was introduced.
- As a result of the 11 ESPs, activity that contractors have committed to includes:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| Work Placements (14-16 years) | 30 |
| Work Placements (16+ years) | 36 |
| Curriculum/Careers Support Activities | 28 |
| Graduates appointed | 4 |
| Apprentice Starts | 61 |

2.2 Workstream Two: Supporting skills and employability through internal training and recruitment

- Extensive core skills training programme available to all staff employed in the Council.
- Toolkit to support managers in identifying their workforce planning and development needs in development
- Peer review of Manchester City Council's Apprenticeship Programme led to creation of our own County Council Apprenticeship Programme in October 2015.
- **52 young people have participated in our work readiness programme** of whom **29 progressed into Level 2 Apprenticeships** with the Council in Business Administration, ICT, Health and Social Care and Youth Work. **30 additional Apprentices employed** by East Sussex schools.
- Internship programme created, working with the Universities of Brighton and Sussex. **Four interns recruited** since January 2016.

2.3 Workstream Three: Improving skills and employability through partner and business engagement

Skills East Sussex (SES)

- We have supported the development of, and facilitated, Skills East Sussex (SES), the local **Employment and Skills Partnership Board**. Created in 2014, SES has met eight times and has set five countywide strategic priorities.
- The County Council has produced **nine key priority sector specific skills research reports** to provide an evidence base for the skills needs of the county

- **Four sector task groups** established focusing on skills needs in four of our priority sectors (Engineering, Construction, Creative and digital, Land based and Visitor Economy).
- **£305,000 of funding secured** from the Careers and Enterprise Company (C&EC) and CXC to deliver two Employer-Provider partnership projects ('Enterprise Adviser Initiative' – pairing schools with a business adviser and 'Progress' a programme of careers and work readiness activities)
- Sector specific activities delivered including **STEMfest** (reaching over 700 young people), **'Construction Ambassador' training, curriculum planning** meetings between FE colleges and businesses (leading to the creation and delivery of new STEM and construction courses)

Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)

- 21 East Sussex secondary schools and 6 special schools hold Investors in Careers status.
- 20 schools involved in the Young Enterprise Company programme thus far, with the expectation that all 27 secondary schools will be engaged.
- Employability passport developed with schools to help young people record their work readiness and employability skills
- Our Work Experience Unit has undertaken Health and Safety checks for 1500 employers and has worked with 31 schools and colleges to **place 5000+ students** in work experience

Supporting the take up of apprenticeships

- We have facilitated Apprenticeships East Sussex (AES) (multi-agency partnership) to coordinate and grow apprenticeships in the county.
- The 'You're Hired' campaign, generated **700 employer pledges to recruit an Apprentice** of which 504 (72%) were converted to apprenticeships.
- Business Grants scheme offers funding to support businesses seeking to employ an Apprentice as part of their Grant request. **Five Apprenticeships** have already been created since promoting the offer from Autumn 2015 and many more are anticipated under the new strategy.

Reducing the numbers of NEET

In response to Ofsted feedback from 2014 we have halved the number of 18 years old recorded as Not in Education, Training or Employment (NEET) from 14.7% to 7.2% and have seen a 10% increase in the number entering education, training or employment.

Jobs Hub provision in libraries

- Eastbourne Jobs Hub (at Eastbourne Library) established in September 2014 in partnership with Eastbourne Borough Council. Partners based at the Hub have provided Careers and Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG), application and job seeking support.
- A peripatetic Hubs model is being rolled out to rural libraries, which will signpost users to support organisations and urban services. Four library staff members are working towards Level 3 CEIAG.
- Online tools (MyWorkSearch and Atomic Training) made available in all libraries. Learndirect qualifications are also offered.

External representation

ESCC sits on a range of external groups and has held an influencing and lobbying role within these:

- Post 16 Area Based Review (ABR) of FE provision in Sussex
- South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SE LEP) Skills Advisory Group
- Three Southern Counties (3SC) Devolution Skills Group
- East Sussex Better Together Workforce Development Group

3. Setting the context for the next stage of the strategy

3.1 Responding to and influencing national policy

The priorities within this strategy are what we know are important for East Sussex and the actions within our action plan have been determined by us. They strongly align with the East Sussex Growth Strategy 2014-2020 priorities, which focus on nine sectors of the economy:

- Construction (including planning and the Built Environment)
- Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing.
- Healthcare (including social care)
- Land Management (including Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing and the Visitor Economy)
- Digital and Media (including creative and cultural industries)
- Low Carbon and Environmental Goods and Services
- Professional and Business Services (including Financial Sector, Banking, Insurance & Accountancy)
- Wholesale, Retail and Motor

However, we must also respond to changing national and sub-national policy goals, and engage with new structures and funding mechanisms so that we can secure the best employability and skills outcomes for East Sussex. A summary of the political and economic context to which we must pay close attention is appended (**Annex II**).

The result of the recent (June 2016) referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union will have an impact on employability and skills activity at a national and regional level. At the current time we do not know what these impacts will be, so we must continue making positive strides at a local level in line with our known needs and priorities. It will be important to monitor developments as central government progresses its negotiations with the EU, so that we are agile and able to respond quickly to maximise benefits for East Sussex should changes emerge.

Much of the Government's education and economic development policy is driven by a

belief in devolution and choice, and an identified need to improve technical skills within the workforce. Again, we may need to adapt our work in light of devolution arrangements as they emerge.

The three Southern Counties of East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey (3SC) have been negotiating the devolution of powers and funding for certain aspects of delivery where there is common ground and potential for maximising impact through collective working and devolved control. One of the elements of the 3SC devolution asks is 'Skills'.

The 3SC area has significant skills gaps in elementary jobs and skills shortages that will become even more severe over the next five years unless the supply of appropriately skilled labour increases. These gaps will impede 3SC economic growth unless they are addressed.

Consequently, the 3SCs have put forward a range of requests which include:

- Greater influence over national skills and employment programmes through devolved funding, including the Adult Skills Budget
- Local co-ordination and commissioning of appropriate provision at FE level that meets economic growth needs.
- Influence over local CEIAG programmes
- The opportunity to oversee the implementation of the Apprenticeship Levy in the 3SC area.

The county's Employment and Skills Board, 'Skills East Sussex' (SES), has the right representation and authority to influence and interpret policy as it emerges, and to ensure that East Sussex has 'one voice' in securing the best employability and skills deals for the county over the coming years. The priorities and activities of Skills East Sussex are informed by a strong employment and skills evidence base and by sector skills reports to support its direction of travel and chosen focus. SES works closely with other LEPs (Coast2Capital) and Employment and Skills Boards (e.g. Brighton and Hove Skills Board).

3.2 Working with schools

The Government's ambition for all schools to become academies, independent from local

authorities, requires the further development of collaborative relationships to deliver school-based employability and skills activities.

There are clear levers and mechanisms for doing this. We will work with schools to ensure that the expansion of the National Citizenship Service (NCS) works for all our school pupils; and we will support the Careers and Enterprise Company (C&EC) to improve Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) and to ensure that engagement with businesses is properly co-ordinated.

Much has been achieved in improving young people's post-16 transitions since the first East Sussex Raising Participation Age (RPA) Strategy was published in 2012. We will continue to work towards all the county's secondary schools attaining the Investors in Careers (IIC) standard (or an equivalent alternative) to build on our successes.

We will continue to work closely with schools to provide the right support for vulnerable and 'at risk' young people; to promote vocational learning opportunities; and to pilot and roll-out employability initiatives, like the Employability Passport.

3.3 Improving skills

The Skills Plan (DfE, 2016) focuses on improving the quality of technical education and developing 'bridging' courses to enable people to transfer between academic and vocational learning pathways.

Through the Institute for Apprenticeships, employers will be at the centre of developing fifteen new vocational learning routes that group occupations together to reflect common training requirements. This will rationalise current provision, making it more accessible and understandable to learners and employers.

Each vocational pathway will begin with a two-year college-based learning programme, aligned to its relevant apprenticeship. There will be a flexible transition year for those who need additional support beforehand and additional support for people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

This sets the context for local provision to be better tailored towards 'Skills East Sussex

(SES)' sector priorities, whilst the Plan's ambitions to improve the take up of Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related learning by women aligns closely with SES ambitions.

The rationalisation of provision and better co-ordination of curriculum planning within our colleges, as recommended by the Post-16 Area Based Review (ABR), should also bring further clarity to the local skills system.

From April 2017, the County Council will be required to pay an Apprenticeship Levy of £1,225,000. It is likely that we will need to offer approximately 280 apprenticeships within our core business and schools to fully benefit from this. However, it also provides us with an opportunity to use our influence to encourage our county's employers to use their Apprenticeship Grant, so that East Sussex as a whole benefits fully from the new apprenticeship funding system.

Our universities have a vital role in supporting high value economic activity and in developing and accrediting higher level apprenticeships that complement the skills that learners have previously acquired.

Our role will be to support our local universities to do this effectively and to ensure the qualifications that they develop and deliver closely align with the Skills East Sussex priority sectors.

3.4 Improving and devolving delivery

The Government believes that local people and businesses are best placed to decide what is needed to develop their own economies. This was the rationale behind establishing the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), creating a stronger link between local revenue generation and service delivery, and localising economic development responsibilities through Devolution Deals. The South East LEP's Strategic Economic Plan aims to create 200,000 new jobs in the region by 2021, whilst the SE LEP Skills Strategy (2014-2017) clearly aligns skill development with economic growth priority sectors across the region.

Skills East Sussex (SES), a sub board to Team East Sussex (TES) the local federated board to the SE LEP, acts as the principal link

between East Sussex and the South East LEP Skills Advisory Group, ensuring that regional priorities have the right local interpretation.

Given this, the East Sussex Growth Strategy (2014-2020) identifies nine priority sectors that will be the main focus for growth, and it commits partners to increasing the level of STEM related learning (including apprenticeships). It also stresses the importance of improving transitions from education into work and the vital role that employers have in improving young people's work readiness.

The emerging Devolution Deals signal a further shift in how economic development interventions are delivered. East Sussex is involved in developing the devolution priorities for the Three Southern Counties (3SC) Partnership¹.

The 3SC Devolution Deal skills proposals include:

- Gaining greater control and funding of national skills and employment programmes;
- Co-ordinating and commissioning local further education provision, so that it reflects local economic growth priorities; and
- Having greater influence on CEIAG provision and how the Apprenticeship Levy is implemented within the 3SC region.

Long term budget pressures have been the catalyst for adopting new ways of working within the public sector, and resulted in a strong focus on activities that deliver the best outcomes.

This public service transformation also impacts on workforce development planning, as more services become co-located and local authorities become commissioners, facilitators and convenors, rather than direct service deliverers.

Initiatives are already integrating local health and social care services, (Better Together) for example. This includes developing a co-

ordinated approach to improving workforce skills and addressing skills gaps, across the public, private and independent social care sectors that will enable new models of care to be delivered effectively, efficiently and cost effectively.

With greater local control comes more local responsibility and accountability. The mechanisms for funding and delivering our employability and skills workstreams are likely to change. We must, therefore, be ready to use the greater influence we will have over how local interventions are designed and delivered, effectively.

¹ The Three Southern Counties Partnership covers the administrative boundaries of East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey.

4. Next steps for our workstreams

The first stage in our strategy involved developing new policy frameworks and establishing new mechanisms for the delivery of our employability and skills activity. Most of this set up stage is now complete, and this second phase of our strategy focuses on consolidating, expanding and sharing best practice, with a view to integrating it into our day to day practice.

Our initial strategy focused heavily on social inclusion. This is now firmly embedded in our skills practice. This new strategy places a greater emphasis on working with partners and business, to make sure that economic growth is a strong driver of our skills and employability work.

Our delivery continues to fall under the three main workstreams and will be delivered as follows:

4.1 Workstream one: Boosting local employment and skills through strategic procurement

Rationale

Our roles as the county's strategic leader and largest employer make us uniquely placed to use our procurement and commissioning processes to involve others in improving employability and skills in East Sussex.

We currently procure and commission £430m of goods and services every year, working with some of the UK's major businesses.

We encourage East Sussex businesses to be engaged in our procured supply chains in order to stimulate employment and we support the Build East Sussex network, where skills issues are addressed within the context of procurement.

We will use the Council spend to deliver greater social value in the county. We are increasing our spend with local suppliers to support local economic growth (target of at least 50% by 2017/18), and we are increasing the percentage of relevant new contracts that include an Employability and Skills Plan (70% by 2017/18 target).

This workstream will grow in importance as commissioning becomes a much more prominent feature of how our services are delivered.

The Public Service (Social Value) Act 2012 requires us to consider how the services that we procure can improve wider socio-economic and environmental well-being within the county.

The whole county approach requires all organisations and businesses that have the capacity to make a difference to be actively involved.

What we will do next

We need to improve how the guidance and infrastructure works, so that the commitments made in the Employment and Skills Plans are fully implemented.

We will:

- Improve understanding of the requirements of the Public Services (Social Value Act) 2012 amongst our own contract managers and commissioners.
- Improve the skills set and capability of our procurement decision-makers to objectively evaluate the employability and skills commitments in tender applications.
- Develop more robust monitoring mechanisms to ensure commitments are adhered to throughout contract life and that they achieve their intended impacts
- Actively engage in national government initiatives that promote procurement good practice, such as the Social Value Awards.
- Celebrate and promote examples of where our suppliers have delivered exceptional skills and employability outcomes and support.

We will publicise our approach and share our successes with other public sector partners, so that they can adopt a similar approach for their procurement and commissioning practices.

Our intended outcomes

- To be recognised regionally and nationally as a champion in how to incorporate social value into public sector procurement and commissioning;
- For our public sector partners to incorporate employability and skills requirements into their commissioning procurement and practice;
- For the private sector businesses across the county to improve their understanding of how they can deliver skills and employability interventions across the county.

4.2 Workstream two: Supporting skills and employability through internal training and recruitment

Rationale

We can only lead if we are able to demonstrate best practice ourselves. We are one of the county's major recruiters and the diversity of our responsibilities means that there are employment opportunities for people with all interests and abilities.

If we recruit and train effectively we should improve the quality of our services and could also make savings in the long-term on the cost of service provision.

We will have to make a significant contribution to the national Apprenticeship Levy. We must, therefore, ensure that the benefits of the Levy are maximised within the County Council by adapting our approach to recruitment and training accordingly.

What we will do next

We must consolidate, improve and embed the programmes that we have created, extending and adapting our internal training mechanisms to reflect the Apprenticeship Levy requirements; and share best practice, working collaboratively in aspects of workforce development with partners and stakeholders wherever this is possible.

We will:

- Introduce a new traineeship programme, aimed at supporting our most vulnerable young people.
- Continue to improve the content, quality and retention rates of our Apprenticeship Programme.
- Work with public and private sector partners to develop and trial a shared Apprenticeship Programme.
- Establish new mechanisms to manage and deliver an extended Apprenticeship Programme, to meet the requirements of the national Apprenticeship Levy.
- Introduce a job interview guarantee scheme for Looked After Children.

Our intended outcomes

- Maximise the benefits of the Apprenticeship Levy for all council departments, for our residents, partners and stakeholders.
- Improve employment and training opportunities within the County Council for our residents and staff.
- Support all the Council's teams and departments to further embed a culture of training and development within.

Our aim is to be, and to be seen as, an employer of choice by our local residents. We must be confident enough to promote what we do as an employer to improve the quality of our most vulnerable residents' lives, within the context of business efficiency.

If we can achieve this, we will encourage our partners to follow and engage in joint initiatives to broaden the range of opportunities across the county.

4.3 Workstream three: Improving skills and employability through partner and business engagement

Rationale

We cannot, and do not wish to, deliver employability and skills improvements on our own. It is the county's learning and skills

providers, businesses and employing organisations that nurture and deploy talent.

Our job is to convene, inform, interpret, facilitate, broker and support. We must work with all our partners to fully understand changing skills needs and to ensure that organisations that are best placed to address them are supported to do so.

Skills East Sussex (SES) provides the forum for local stakeholders in the skills agenda to determine local skills priorities and is the Board that acts as a conduit for skills between national and regional bodies and local organisations. It is the vehicle that should interpret and influence regional and national policy and delivery, in the best interests of the county.

Skills East Sussex has set common priorities that we will work to support. These are:

- Improving the quality and relevance of Careers Information Advice and Guidance for people of all ages
- Helping young people become ready for the world of employment
- Addressing gender imbalance in employment and study in key industries/sectors
- Making sure that the curriculum is shaped by employers wherever there is scope for this to be done
- Helping to stimulate the uptake of Apprenticeships and higher level learning

It has identified a range of activities to support these priorities and these will be developed further in 2017/18 into a framework that can be monitored as we work towards common goals.

We have improved the way that we work with our partners over the past two years and this is evident in the volume of collaborative activities and resulting outcomes. (See section 2.3)

What we will do next

There has not been a better time to strengthen partnerships. Financial pressures have made organisations look outwards to identify areas where high quality services can be delivered more cost effectively through

improved collaboration and reduced competition.

We will be open to new ideas from our partners and we will work together to eliminate duplication, share best practice and develop a stronger voice for East Sussex.

We will:

- Continue to participate in, and facilitate, effective local networks, including strengthening the strategic role of Skills East Sussex (SES)
- Continue to bring together business and learning providers to ensure that provision at FE and HE levels meets employer needs and supports local economic growth
- Work with partners through SES to develop co-ordinated responses to Government policies, so that their implementation works for the county as a whole.
- Work with partners through SES to develop an approach that can review the performance of contractors delivering programmes in East Sussex, asking providers to explain decisions, offering areas for improvement and improved collaboration to meet shared objectives
- Continue to negotiate devolved funding and responsibility for national employability and skills programmes, including Adult Education Budget (AEB), CEIAG, and the Apprenticeship Levy, through the Three Southern Counties partnership to ensure that these programmes align with economic growth needs.
- Strengthen initiatives that support our schools with preparing young people for the world of work
- Work with key partners to ensure that the skills and employment needs of our most vulnerable residents are met
- Ensure that both soft and hard intelligence about emerging skills needs is communicated effectively to all our stakeholders.

Our intended outcomes

- The county's schools will provide high quality CEIAG and will be actively involved in a wide range of employability and skills initiatives that are informed by local employers.
- Local skills training provision will better meet the needs of local businesses and will offer improved career prospects for our young people
- More of our employers will find that our young people are 'work ready'
- Working with partners we will help shape the delivery of national/regional employability programmes, so that they are tailored to the county's specific needs.
- Skills East Sussex will be widely recognised as the strategic lead for skills in the county by national, regional and local partners.
- The county's residents and skills providers will be well-informed about current and emerging skills needs.
- There will be an on-going, constructive dialogue between businesses and our skills providers that will inform curriculum design and delivery.

5. Management, monitoring and performance review

5.1 Leadership and management

The success of this strategy continues to depend upon our willingness to take the steps that are needed to deliver it and the commitment of our Elected Members and senior officer in ensuring that employability and skills considerations are central to all actions that we take.

The Strategy is overseen by an Internal Working Group (IWG), Chaired by the Chief Executive and comprised of senior officer representatives from each Directorate. The group meets quarterly to review progress against the Employability and Skills Action Plan and to discuss strategic issues that will have an impact on its development and delivery as they arise.

A Skills Operational Group (SOG) composed of representatives from all departments meets monthly to discuss the delivery of employability and skills activities to ensure that departments are working together to achieve the targets identified within the action plan that accompanies the strategy.

5.2 Resourcing & exit strategy

Many of the actions within this strategy commit us to doing things differently and to prioritising our actions, so that they are more keenly focused on the corporate priorities in our Council Plan. This means that much of the strategy is delivered through existing budgets.

However, the initial 2014-2016 Employability and Skills Strategy also benefited from an additional £360,000 of corporate reserves funding. This budget was managed effectively and was used to lever in an additional £305,000 of external funding to support new collaborative projects delivered by Skills East Sussex. With the securing of external funding, delivery has been extended beyond the lifetime of the original strategy, supporting all Employability and Skills activities until March 2017 and some until July 2018.

An additional £67,000 will be committed to extend delivery until March 2018 while activities are consolidated.

There is also a specific need to invest in developing an appropriate and, ideally, self-financing or cost neutral model for our Apprenticeship Programme, that is established by the time that the Apprenticeship Levy comes into force. This will be important if we are to minimise the financial impact of the Levy on us as an authority and maximise its benefits.

Because the aim of the 2016-18 strategy is to consolidate activity, the exit strategy for this plan is that any continued delivery of council employability and skills activity will be integrated into and funded through core service delivery, or delivered at a regional level through Orbis (procurement work) or Devolution arrangements, and that costs will, therefore, be absorbed within departmental budgets.

We will continue to work with our partners to secure additional resources by bidding for external funding via Skills East Sussex when opportunities arise and will also actively lobby Government to push for future funding to support the delivery of external providers as changes to European Funding become evident.

5.3 Monitoring, risk and performance review

The IWG will continue to meet quarterly to monitor the Employment and Skills Action plan and review progress against this. The SOG will discuss any risks to delivery and will report these to their Directorate representatives to enable them to alert the IWG of these.

We will also monitor KPI targets in the Council Plan that relate to the Employability and Skills Strategy and in 2017/18 will ensure that all Employment and Skills Targets are captured in the Council Plan KPIs, in Portfolio and any Departmental Service Plans.

A draft framework for measuring Social Value has been developed by Procurement, which is based on the themes and objectives identified in the Social Value Strategy for Procurement. Relevant financial measures from the New Economy Unit Cost Database have been incorporated into the framework, which has undergone scrutiny from Finance, Legal and Audit teams, who have given their approval to commence with the implementation of this

framework. A plan is now being developed to test and then phase the framework into our tendering processes.

Using the framework, we will be able to place a financial social value figure on the commitment and delivery of activity as a result of the Employment and Skills Action Plans past and present.

We will monitor risk at a strategic level. Risks to our ability to implement this strategy include:

- Changes in national government policy
- Financial pressures and budget

constraints as the county council has to address in the region of £70-90m over the next three years in reduced central government funding'and

- Reduced staffing levels as a consequence of central government financial requirements

In October 2017, the IWG will meet specifically to review the process for embedding ongoing skills activities within Directorate Portfolio plans and will meet in April 2018 to produce a final report on the delivery of this Corporate Employability and Skills Strategy 2016-18.