

SCRUTINY BOARD (SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY AND CULTURE)

EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS INQUIRY

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Scrutiny Board has conducted a series of inquiries over the past few years around the theme of jobs and skills, reflecting the importance of this issue within the council's priorities. At its first meeting of the new municipal year Board members agreed that they wished to conduct a further inquiry this year.
- 1.2 Two working group sessions were held during August, where members discussed potential areas of focus with senior officers from the Employment and Skills service in City Development.
- 1.3 In particular the working group was made aware of a significant change in the operation of DWP Jobcentres, to a digital by default service for jobseekers, due to be implemented in the autumn.
- 1.4 The working group was also made aware that Employment and Skills will work with Communities@Leeds Programme Board to engage services and partners to explore how existing customer and claimant data can be used intelligently to identify target customer groups to more effectively join up services and extend service reach and realign its resources to those furthest from the labour market. This information would be used to review and realign and commission new provision to make best use of limited partner resources.
- 1.5 Following these meetings, it was proposed that this year's inquiry should focus on these two areas: understanding the implications of current changes in the way that DWP Jobcentre services to jobseekers are provided, placing a greater emphasis on digital access; and pooling intelligence and resources to identify and support key target groups to access work.
- 1.6 It was agreed that this inquiry would focus particularly (although not exclusively) on adult employment, given the number of recent pieces of scrutiny work that have focused on young people's access to the job market. This includes a number of inquiries conducted by the Children and Families Scrutiny Board.

2.0 Scope of the inquiry

- 2.1 The purpose of the Inquiry is to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:
 - The implications of the DWP's shift to digital access for those seeking to find work;

- Ways in which other services, including the council, should respond to these changes;
- The effective organisation and application of the council's resources in support of jobseekers; and
- The potential for using an intelligence led approach to identifying target groups for job seeking support.

3.0 Desired Outcomes and Measures of Success

3.1 The decision to undertake this Inquiry has been based on the importance of this issue to the best council plan objectives of 'promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth', and 'supporting communities and tackling poverty'. It also contributes to the objective of 'becoming a more efficient and enterprising council'.

3.2 It is important to consider how the Scrutiny Board will deem if its inquiry has been successful in making a difference to local people. Some measures of success may be obvious at the initial stages of an inquiry and can be included in these terms of reference. Other measures of success may become apparent as the inquiry progresses and discussions take place.

3.3 Some potential initial measures of success are:

- A shared understanding of the implications and opportunities created by the shift to digital services to support jobseekers and actions required by the Council
- A shared understanding of the intelligence and data available locally in relation to people who need help to access work
- Better use of data and resources to identify target groups of people for employment support
- A partnership proposal offering the high challenge / high support required to move those furthest away closer to paid employment

4.0 Comments of the relevant Director and Executive Member

4.1 In line with Scrutiny Board Procedure Rule 12.1 where a Scrutiny Board undertakes an Inquiry the Scrutiny Board shall consult with any relevant Director and Executive Member on the terms of reference. Any comments will be reflected in the final terms of reference.

5.0 Timetable for the inquiry

5.1 The Inquiry will take place over two formal Scrutiny Board sessions, supplemented by site visits.

6.0 Submission of evidence

6.1 Session one – 21 October 2014

- To receive evidence from DWP about the change to a digital by default service to jobseekers and the implications for customers
- To receive evidence from Employment and Skills and other relevant council services about the implications of these changes for their services and customer groups

6.2 **Site Visits – November/December 2014**

- Visit to a Digital Jobcentre
- Visit to a Community Hub

6.3 **Session two – 13 January 2015**

- To receive evidence from partners contributing to the intelligence led approach to identify priority customer groups
- To comment on emerging proposals for the target priority group(s) and the development of a proposed programme of support

Following the inquiry a report will be produced setting out the Board's conclusions and recommendations.

7.0 **Witnesses**

7.1 The following witnesses have been identified as possible contributors to the Inquiry:

- Jobcentre Plus District Manager West Yorkshire
- Executive Member for Digital and Creative Technologies, Culture and Skills
- City Development - Employment and Skills and Libraries services
- Chair of the Communities@Leeds Programme Board - Assistant Chief Executive, Citizens and Communities
- Citizens and Communities – Community Hubs
- Resources – Welfare and Benefits
- Children's Services – Families First programme
- Housing Leeds

8.0 **Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

8.1 The Equality Improvement Priorities 2011 to 2015 have been developed to ensure our legal duties are met under the Equality Act 2010. The priorities will help the council to achieve its ambition to be the best City in the UK and ensure that as a city work takes place to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity.

8.2 Equality and diversity will be a consideration throughout the Scrutiny Inquiry and due regard will be given to equality through the use of evidence, written and verbal, outcomes from consultation and engagement activities.

8.3 The Scrutiny Board may engage and involve interested groups and individuals (both internal and external to the council) to inform recommendations.

8.4 Where an impact has been identified this will be reflected in the final inquiry report, post inquiry. Where a Scrutiny Board recommendation is agreed the individual, organisation or group responsible for implementation or delivery should give due regard to equality and diversity, conducting impact assessments where it is deemed appropriate.

9.0 Post inquiry report monitoring arrangements

9.1 Following the completion of the Scrutiny inquiry and the publication of any final inquiry report and recommendations, the implementation of the agreed recommendations will be monitored.

9.2 The monitoring will be undertaken by the Board. This will be done at regular intervals appropriate to the content of the recommendation.