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## DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 4TH FEBRUARY, 2021

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held by MICROSOFT TEAMS - VIRTUAL MEETING on THURSDAY, 4TH FEBRUARY, 2021 at 10.00 AM

#### PRESENT:

Chair - Jane Kidd

Councillors Andrea Robinson, Neil Gethin, Richard Jones, Majid Khan

Co-optee: Bernadette Nesbitt

Other Councillors: Linda Curran, Frank Tyas, Nigel Cannings, David Nevett,

#### ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

DMBC:

Riana Nelson - Director of Learning, Opportunities and Skills

Leanne Hornsby - Assistant Director, Education, Skills, Culture and Heritage

Peter Lowe - Senior Policy & Insight Manager

Danielle Adams - Policy & Insight Manager

		<u>ACTION</u>
1	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.</u>	
	Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Susan Durrant, Mark Houlbrook, John Healy and the Co-optee John Hoare.	
2	<u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>	
	None	
3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	There were no declarations of interest made.	
4	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u>	
	There were no public statements made.	
5	<u>EDUCATION AND SKILLS 2030 STRATEGY</u>	

The Panel received a presentation on the 2030 Education and Skills Strategy.

The presentation reminded Members of;

- The vision for the strategy
- Priorities
- Principles
- The approach
- Alignment with the Borough Strategy
- Format and Audience

Following the presentation, Members asked a number of questions as addressed under the following headings;

**Covid-19** – It was recognised that as a result of the pandemic, there would need to be flexibility and a level of adjustment built into the implementation plan, concern was raised over how much the strategy would need to alter.

It was explained to Members that the pandemic resulted in an opportunity for the strategy to be means-tested and reassurance was provided that its contents were still relevant. It was noted that the pandemic had highlighted inequalities within our society and that additional investment was needed for the provisions currently in place.

Concern was raised about Early Years and the impact Covid had on young children and their education (as well as young people taking exams during the lockdown period).

Assurances were provided and it was explained that underneath the overarching priorities, were more comprehensive plans including Early Year's provision and how it would be moved forward. It was noted that in some areas, Covid had improved family engagement, with Family Hubs seeing increased registrations and being able to provide a virtual offer to families. It was commented on that Early Years settings remained open throughout the crisis and continued to offer high quality services.

It was highlighted that Covid may have been a catalyst for an accelerated change, and that opportunities had been presented that may remain for the future.

**Linkages to Economy** – Members stressed the importance of engaging businesses both locally and nationally to support skills development and training. It was confirmed that there was a net deficit of people moving out of Doncaster for work and acknowledged that there was a need to provide the right economic and industry mix to retain skilled individuals within the borough. The Panel was assured that under the Inclusive Growth Strategy, the economic mix was changing. It was continued that monitoring would take place as part of

the strategy's implementation stage and that organisations would be encouraged to offer quality jobs.

**Education and Training** – It was recognised that the strategy presented opportunities in improving outcomes within the existing system as well as through a transformation of Doncaster's broader education and skills system. Members commented on the benefits of being able to educate and access higher skilled jobs within the Borough.

Members were advised that the strategy aimed to ensure that children and adult learners were prepared for the opportunities around them in the community. It was explained that embedded within the strategy were development plans for four Centres of Excellence, with openings already in engineering and adult social care, and these centres should harness those too. It was continued that support staff currently working in post were to be included and consideration would be given of how they could be supported to upskill whilst continuing in employment. Members were advised that the strategy looked to support everyone to identify pathways of opportunities, which would be further shared within communities.

**Academies** – The importance of academies in driving the strategy forward was noted, with clarification being provided about their role and how we can influence them.

Assurance was provided, that all system leaders of academies and their wider partners were involved in the development of the strategy. In addition, engagement and consultation were undertaken with the Department for Education and RSC. Members were advised that the curriculum was set nationally and where there were areas of concern, then academies could be challenged in partnership with RSC through standards and effectiveness. Members were reassured that termly meetings with Chief Executive Officers and leadership teams were in place to challenge and help support development.

**Careers Advice and Support** - Members stressed the importance of good careers advice and support that meets the needs of Doncaster's residents and employers.

Members were referred to Priority 4 of the strategy that extensively detailed how careers advice and support would be provided. It was advised that it would be incorporated into the education system at an earlier stage, using Gatsby benchmarks that included experience with employers and workplace institutions.

It was added that schools had a responsibility to deliver a certain amount of careers advice and it was acknowledged that the level and standard of that can be variable. Members were informed that there was also a Careers Hub that actively delivered advice in schools whilst working alongside the Chamber, connecting young people with

employers to create a valuable careers experience.

**Learners for Life** – It was felt that adult learners may require a wider range of support (in particular, financial support), in order for them to achieve their educational or qualification goals (in light of their own commitments).

Members were reminded that there was support available for adult learners, and that a basic provision of education was free. It was considered that these pathways might not be as visible and accessible as they could be. It was noted that the Government recognised that adult learners may still need to borrow money to achieve their own further education. It was explained that new mechanisms and non-financial support would be made available for individuals looking to complete their learning or training, for example, by giving them the time to do so whilst they are working. It was commented that it would be helpful if individuals were made more aware of available financial support and by introducing additional funding.

**Linkages to Health** – A Member expressed their beliefs around the significance of links between the strategy and other health related issues such as mental health and child obesity.

It was explained that there was a Recover and Resilience Partnership and Programme in place and that health partners were more engaged than ever. It was continued that close partnership working between education and health were focusing on improving outcomes.

**Vulnerable Children and Young People** – Concern was raised around the most vulnerable children at risk of exclusion and the need for better provision within Doncaster to help reduce need.

Reassurance was provided that contact was currently made with academies on a weekly basis, to help ensure that educational settings and its young people were supported. It was explained that figures reported around exclusions were from previous years, and that permanent exclusions through the pandemic had since significantly reduced. It was explained that instances of fixed term exclusions were given, only when necessary and for a short as possible time. It was continued that a group was in place that looked at behaviour and wellbeing as part of the curriculum. Members were assured that the authority was acutely sensitive to the emotional needs of children and young people. In addition, the group looked at how those needs impacted on their behaviours, such as mental health and provisions in schools were enhanced and were ran in conjunction with a national programme for helping children back into school. It was felt that these projects had also provided an opportunity for professional development, with some staff trained in trauma informed practice.

**Implementation** – Concerns were raised around the reality of being able to resource the implementation of the priorities set out in the

strategy.

The Panel were informed that the more explicit delivery reports contained the detail on resources and implementation that sit beneath the strategy. It was explained as the system leader and being accountable for the outcomes for children, the Council would convene the partnerships to work together on implementation and should both offer support and challenge to each other. It was added that partners would work collectively to effect change, which was already demonstrating success in Doncaster. Members were told how the strategy had been co-produced with key partners and which should be reflected through the strategy. It was recognised that the systemic change approach, with the backing of partners, would be a challenge over the next 10 years but was the only way to develop a joined up system where all the partners have a role to resource and deliver.

In terms of funding, it was noted that whilst we were not able to influence the funding required for the NHS, we were looking to fill the careers and skills gaps with local residents and would not require additional funding.

**Life Skills** – It was recognised that children and young people needed to develop broader life skills alongside academic skills such as numeracy and literacy.

Members heard that when developing the strategy in consultation with employers within the borough, they had expressed a requirement for employees to have good literacy or numeracy skills (although not necessarily to a degree standard) and that they look for people with other broader vocational qualifications.

Members were advised that whilst there was existing work ongoing to develop essential life skills in Doncaster, part of the new strategy would look at how to recognise and accredit broader life skills and learning that were applicable to the workplace. It was noted that part of the pathways and Centres of Excellence work would consider ways of evidencing those competencies.

The suggestion was made that taking young people through apprenticeships sooner to learn broader skills maybe advantageous.

It was also noted that there were different ways to access different types of qualifications (alongside other support pathways residents could take), which would be communicated in a variety of ways to communities.

**Links to Other Strategies** – It was reiterated throughout the discussion that this was a high-level overarching, 10-year strategy. Through the debate, it was recognised that there were a number of other important plans and strategies that underpin and supports the delivery of the strategy, for example, the Inclusive Growth Strategy and Borough Strategy that were all vital in its delivery. It was explained that

	<p>those strategies would triangulate through the current economic climate.</p> <p>Members welcomed the five priority areas for transformation, actions and set of shared principles that will help deliver the strategy. Members recognised that there were a number of potential barriers such as lack of funding, restrictions on how academies can be influenced, the long-term effects of COVID on the economy and education, difficulties with people being able to afford lifelong learning and the lack of the particular types of industries in the Borough such as manufacturing.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the Committee and the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel supported the Strategy.</p>	
6	<p><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS</u></p>	
	<p>The Senior Governance Officer presented the 2020/21 Scrutiny Work Plan for consideration and reminded Members of the current Forward Plan of key decisions. There was a brief discussion around future items for the Overview and Scrutiny future workplan following the meeting's discussions.</p> <p>RESOLVED the Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan 2020/21 and Forward Plan of key decisions be noted.</p>	