

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure

DATE 11<sup>th</sup> September 2012

DIRECTOR Gordon McIntosh

TITLE OF REPORT Aberdeen City Employability Forum

REPORT NUMBER: EP1/12/169

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report aims to inform members on the benefits of establishing and managing an Aberdeen City Employability forum.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That Committee approve the establishment of an Aberdeen City Employability Forum
2. That Committee approve that officers from within Employability, Skills and Community Enterprise manage and chair this Forum going forward.
3. That Committee approve that officers from within Employability, Skills and Community Enterprise submit applications on behalf of the Forum to appropriate external funding bodies.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Establishment and management of an Aberdeen City Employability Forum will have no additional financial resource implications on the service. If successful funding applications are made in the long term it may be possible to retain a management fee from this funding to cover any additional staffing resources that may be required.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Establishment and management of this forum will require officers to set aside time for this work and may impact on the delivery of other activities. However the potential long term gain for the city that this forum will provide should make it a key priority within the service's workplan.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

With employability high on both political and economic development agendas it is imperative that Aberdeen City Council take the lead in ensuring that we have robust employability support provision within the city that links with local employer and client needs and can address all aspects of disengagement.

### **Current Situation**

Currently there are a number of local specialist employability service providers that work in isolation across the city. These providers are dependant on external funding to ensure their continuance and renewal or funding announcements are frequently left till the eleventh hour before renewal or funding award announcement is made. This leads to staff insecurity and leakages.

Increasingly, employability contracts are awarded on a national basis, which requires high level financial robustness and a track record of large scale delivery, which eliminates many local providers from the tendering process and also eliminates appropriate provision based on local needs and knowledge.

This system also encourages competition amongst local providers and this produces a barrier to partnership working and co-operative engagement within the employability providers community. This can lead to duplication of and gaps in service provision, and a general lack of awareness of the service provision landscape.

It must also be noted that more and more contracts are awarded on an outcome related basis, with payment not being made till many months after outcomes are achieved, which puts severe financial strain on the organisations.

These administrative issues all have an impact on the breadth, depth and sustainability of services and this has an ultimate negative impact on the number of disengaged individuals within the city. This is a particularly significant issue, since the current economic recession means that the level of disengagement within the youth population is already rising on both a local and national level.

### **Going Forward**

Aberdeen City Council is well placed to establish and manage the proposed employability forum as we have no current desire or resource to participate in the provision of employability services. The council is therefore viewed as an "honest broker" whose key objective is to ensure that appropriate employability services are available within the city. Membership of the SLAED (Scottish Local Authority Economic Development) employability group also allows access to key information which could be shared amongst the Forum membership, and provides a lobbying vehicle to ensure the city has access to

sufficient resources to deliver an appropriate and effective employability service.

The formation of an employability forum will also ensure that a clear pipeline of employability support services is developed, which will engage with all sections of the population from schoolchildren through to those approaching retirement. This will ensure that local needs on an individual and business level are met, and that a diverse range of employability options are promoted.

If approval is given then a formal partnership working agreement will be drawn up and signed by all partners.

### **Benefits**

The benefits of establishing an Aberdeen City Employability Forum include:

- Sharing of information
- Gaps in provision can be identified and addressed
- Access to wider funding streams – explore funding opportunities and scope for collaborative bids
- Shared knowledge of local provision
- Improved pipeline progression
- Wider skills and knowledge base
- Facilitate increased partnership working
- Central communication point
- Development of cradle to grave provision
- Coordination of relationships
- Improved alignment to business needs
- Improved relationships with business community

Initial discussions have already taken place with a number of employability training providers to identify if there was a willingness to participate in the proposed forum (Aberdeen Foyer, Pathways, SHMU, Enterprise North East, Opito, Cornerstone, GREC) to identify if there is a willingness to participate in the proposed forum and positive responses were received from all organisations. If approval for the formation of this forum is granted then other employability training providers will also be invited to join. To ensure full engagement and the promotion and creation of high level opportunities, officers from Education Culture and Sport will also be invited to join this forum.

### **Reporting process**

All activities driven by this forum will be fed into Aberdeen Works, the community planning employability forum, and information from Aberdeen Works will also be cascaded back to the employability forum, ensuring open dialogue and communication channels. It is also proposed that the Aberdeen Employability Forum will report to EP&I committee on a regular basis.

6. IMPACT

The project contributes significantly and directly to the achievement of

**Single Outcome agreement (SOA) National Outcomes:**

1. We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people
2. We are better educated, more skilled and more successful

**Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking**

1. Adopt policies to tackle the skills shortage in our city
2. Ensure the sustainability of the successful economy of Aberdeen City and Shire
3. Implement masterplans, working with partners including those in the private sector

**Equality and Human Rights implications**

A full equality and human rights impact assessment was not required, as this project will have a positive impact for all the equality target groups.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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