Date: 29th July 2016

Subject: Report of the GM Joint Scrutiny Pool’s Task and Finish Group on Education Employment and Skills

Report of: Cllr Sean Anstee (Portfolio Leader for Skills, Employment & Worklessness)
Theresa Grant (Lead Chief Executive for Skills, Employment & Worklessness)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report sets out the findings of the GM Scrutiny Pool’s task and finish group on education employment and skills convened by Cllr Colin McLaren (Oldham). These findings were taken to the 8th April meeting of the full Scrutiny Pool, who were supportive of the group’s work and recommendations (subject to minor revisions of the wording of the recommendations to make them ‘SMARTer’).

The report’s findings offer valuable insights into the way that GM’s skills system is experienced on the ground. Some of the report’s recommendations anticipate activity already being taken forward by the Skills and Employment Team, however the task and finish group’s findings will inform thinking about programme delivery (particularly around employer and community engagement). The recommendations will also be factored into future decision making in this area of work. The GM Skills and Employment Partnership will ensure that the recommendations are progressed and provide updates back to GM Scrutiny.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Joint GM Combined Authority and AGMA Executive Board are asked to agree and support the following recommendations:

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<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Report back by</th>
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<tr>
<td>a. The <strong>GM Skills Team</strong> to provide Scrutiny with a note which</td>
<td>September 2016</td>
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<td>• outlines GM’s work on improving information advice and guidance (IAG)</td>
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<td>provision and specifies how many of GM’s young people have access to gold</td>
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<td>standard ‘Inspiring IAG’; and,</td>
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<td>• reviews the effectiveness of the way GM currently communicates its skills</td>
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<td>offer, particularly about apprenticeships.</td>
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<td>(b) That the <strong>GM Skills and Employment Partnership</strong>, <strong>GM Skills Team</strong> and <strong>GM Community and Voluntary Organisation (GMCVO)</strong> ensure that support for schools, colleges, training providers and community and voluntary sector (CVS) organisations delivering employability skills is scaled up to match the challenge GM faces in delivering its employment aspirations.</td>
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<th>(c) <strong>GM Skills and Employment Partnership</strong> and <strong>district skills leads</strong> to identify projects from across the conurbation that have a proven track record of successfully delivering employability skills. These projects should be promoted and celebrated, and, if appropriate, rollout their approach more widely.</th>
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<th>(d) That GM’s skills commissioners (the <strong>Skills Funding Agency</strong> and <strong>New Economy</strong>) to explain, and if necessary improve how their commissioning processes to support and reward the flexibility and responsiveness of smaller providers.</th>
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<th>(e) That the <strong>GM Skills Team, Public Services Reform Team</strong> in partnership with <strong>district skills leads</strong> provide a report assessing the feasibility of providing a small GM-wide investment fund to support young people being assisted into education or training by small community and voluntary sector organisations. For example travel and training costs, and appropriate work clothing.</th>
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| (f) That the **Greater Manchester Combined Authority** monitors the work of the **North West Construction Hub** and the **AGMA Procurement Hub** through an annual report to
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- ensure that the social value of contracts let via these routes is maximised in line with the GMCA Social Value Policy adopted in November 2014;
- that **district skills leads** support those delivering contracts to help them fulfill their contract’s social value commitments. |

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<th>(g) Officers in the <strong>North West Construction Hub</strong> and the <strong>AGMA Procurement Hub</strong> build on the work already done with <strong>procurement officers in districts</strong> to develop common definitions of the way that postcodes are used to monitor social value outcomes in cases where GM districts can use their influence to determine the social value elements of contracts. This will help to ensure that the employment and other social value impacts deliver maximum benefit to GM residents.</th>
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<th>(h) <strong>GM Skills Team</strong> ensures that the <strong>NW Construction Hub</strong> and the <strong>AGMA Procurement Hub</strong> have at least one link person per district who can support companies to deliver of social value and corporate social responsibility targets through providing linkages to training, school engagement and the local communities within districts.</th>
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| (i) **Transport for Greater Manchester** continue to negotiate with **bus operators** to deliver an easy to understand fare offer, particularly for apprentices. This is an interim measure before GM acquires the | December 2016 |
potential, through legislative changes arising from the forthcoming Buses Bill, to secure greater influence over bus services.

| j. | Transport for Greater Manchester continues work with the GM Skills Team to ensure that accurate journey planning information is easily available, understandable, and meets the needs of students. This is particularly important for multimodal and multi operator journeys. | September 2016 |

| k. | That the GM Skills Team should consider supporting apprentices with travel costs to promote and sustain individuals’ learning, as participation in learning is something GM wants to encourage. | September 2016 |

| l. | The GM Skills Team ensure that the recommendations of GM’s Area Based Review of post-16 education consider travel to learn patterns, and how existing travel support for young people can be better optimised in the light of any proposals to reconfigure GM’s post-16 provision. | September 2016 |

**CONTACTS:**

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Officer - Susan Ford s.ford@agma.gov.uk

**BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. One recommendation of GM’s Scrutiny Review, commissioned by the GMCA in 2014, was that it should pilot a task and finish approach to scrutinising some policy areas. Following GM Scrutiny Pool’s away day in September 2015, a small group of Pool members agreed to support a pilot. This group collaboratively developed GM’s approach to task and finish working and identified topics to investigate using this methodology. The following members supported the development work:

- Cllr Colin McLaren (Oldham)
- Cllr Gillian Peet (Tameside)
- Cllr Wendy Wild (Stockport)
- Cllr Angeliki Stogia (Manchester)

1.2. In December 2015 Scrutiny Pool’s meeting endorsed the approach to task and finish working and also agreed to establish a task and finish group to investigate education, skills and employment. The task and finish group’s membership was as follows:

- Cllr Colin McLaren (Oldham) - Convenor
- Cllr Gillian Peet (Tameside)
- Cllr John O’Brien (Wigan)
- Cllr Sara Rowbotham (Rochdale)

2. REMIT OF THE EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

2.1. Scrutiny has routinely taken updates on GM’s work to improve the provision of employment support and skills training for GM residents and particularly young people. This investigation set out to understand and identify the key barriers that prevent GM’s skills system from working effectively. A case study approach was used to examine different parts of the ‘skills supply chain’ from a variety of stakeholders and end users. It was decided to focus investigations on the construction sector, a sector fundamental to GM being able to delivering its growth ambitions. New Economy’s Construction Sector Deep Dive (2013) notes that the sector comprises 6,500 businesses employing about 54,000.

2.2. The group interviewed:

- Two large construction companies who have struggled to recruit the apprentices needed to help them tender successfully for significant GM contracts
- Two training/learning providers who provide apprenticeship programmes in order to understand how they are commissioned to provide the training needed by employers
- A community and voluntary sector organisation to understand how they might support GM’s residents to access the training and skills they need
• Young people with recent experience of accessing the GM skills system

2.3. Two further themes were explored:
• Transport - as a potential barrier to participation in education and training. Is GM doing enough to support those in education and training (particularly apprentices) with effective transport options at an affordable price?
• How well does the current GM skills system serve GM’s most vulnerable and/or excluded groups (including looked-after children, NEETS -not in employment education and training and women)?

2.4. The group met six times, with each meeting structured as an informal discussion focused on the themes set out above. The group's finding and recommendations are set out below.

2.5. It should be noted that there was remarkable consistency in the interviewees’ analysis and comment on the challenges faced by different parts of the GM skills system. This gives the task and finish group, and Joint Scrutiny Pool confidence that their recommendations, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the issues identified, so helping GM deliver its employment and skills aspirations.

2.6. The issues being investigated here have a wider strategic repercussions for Greater Manchester. At the GMCA’s Planning and Housing Commission meeting held on 29 February 2016 a number of comments and questions were raised about skills issues within the construction sector. Given that the GM Scrutiny task and finish group’s investigation is focused around construction GMIST officers will work to ensure that Planning and Housing Commission members are made aware of the group’s findings.

3. HEADLINE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INFORMATION ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

3.1. The importance of Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) was a theme raised by a number of interviewees. Accurate user-friendly information was important for those who advise young people and adults about education and training. However the role of parents and members of the wider community who might provide informal guidance about training and/or employment opportunities was also important.

3.2. A number of interviewees identified the specific need for better information and communication about apprenticeships and vocational pathways. This was particularly the case for apprentices outside the traditional building trades, but key to delivering construction projects, for instance IT infrastructure, and facilities management.

3.3. Finally, it was felt that the opportunities for apprentices within construction to progress onto higher/degree level study needed to be communicated more
effectively to young people. Employment and training within a broadly defined construction sector had modernised, but wider perceptions hadn’t kept pace with these changes. Changing perceptions of the sector is crucial if more women are to be recruited. In 2012-13 96% of those on Skills Funding Agency funded courses in construction were male (New Economy Construction Skills Deep Dive).

a. The Group recommends that the GM Skills Team provides Scrutiny with a note which
   o outlines GM’s work on improving information advice and guidance (IAG) provision and specifies how many of GM’s young people have access to gold standard ‘Inspiring IAG’; and,
   o reviews the effectiveness of the way GM currently communicates its skills offer, particularly about apprenticeships.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

3.4. All interviewees mentioned the importance of employability skills, and the how best to support those furthest away from the labour market to acquire these skills. A number of interviewees reported that significant number of applicants for apprenticeships do not possess the basic skills necessary to make a success of a job or training. They often need additional support with skills such as basic numeracy and literacy, timekeeping, appropriate interpersonal/communication skills, and understanding workplace dress codes and personal appearance.

The Group recommends that:

b. The GM Skills and Employment Partnership, GM Skills Team and GM Community and Voluntary Organisation ensure that support for schools, colleges, training providers and community and voluntary sector (CVS) organisations delivering employability skills is scaled up to match the challenge GM faces in delivering its employment aspirations.

c. The GM Skills and Employment Partnership and district skills leads to identify projects from across the conurbation that have a proven track record of successfully delivering employability skills. These projects should be promoted and celebrated, and, if appropriate, rollout their approach more widely.

FLEXIBILITY OF PROVISION

3.5. Smaller learning providers provide a complementary offer to larger learning providers including colleges. Smaller learning providers can be more responsive to employer needs as their offer isn’t so tied to a conventional academic calendar.

The Group recommends that:

d. GM’s skills commissioners (the Skills Funding Agency and New Economy) to explain, and if necessary improve how their commissioning processes to support and reward the flexibility and responsiveness of smaller providers.
GM INVESTMENT FUND FOR YOUNG PEOPLE SUPPORTED BY COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

3.6. Small community and voluntary sector organisations who are rooted in their communities are often best-placed to help vulnerable and or ‘hard to reach’ individuals take their first steps leading into training or work. Organisations with limited means, but doing valuable work can be found across the conurbation. Individual clients often need small amounts of funding to pay for things such as travel, course fees, and health and safety cards.

3.7. GM should encourage organisations to focus on the things they do best, working with individuals, rather than endlessly applying for funding. It is acknowledged that this kind of funding might be already available through different channels, but is not always easy to discover.

The Group recommends that:

e. The GM Skills Team, Public Services Reform Team in partnership with district skills leads provide a report assessing the feasibility of providing a small GM-wide investment fund to support young people being assisted into education or training by small community and voluntary sector organisations. For example travel and training costs, and appropriate work clothing.

WORK TO SUPPORT NW CONSTRUCTION HUB TO ENSURE THE DELIVERY OF SOCIAL VALUE ELEMENTS OF CONTRACTS

3.8. The North West Construction Hub has successfully worked with contractors and project sponsors to ensure that work delivered under its auspices maximises the delivery of local employment opportunities and apprentices. Postcodes are used to identify where individuals employed or supported by a particular project comes from. However companies mentioned that the way that postcodes were categorised weren’t consistent across GM projects. For contracts where GM districts can influence the way that social value targets are described interviewees suggested that it would help if a common approach was developed.

The Group recommends that:

f. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority monitors the work of the North West Construction Hub and the AGMA Procurement Hub through an annual report to:

- ensure that the social value of contracts let via these routes is maximised in line with the GMCA Social Value Policy adopted in November 2014;
- that district skills leads support those delivering contracts to help them fulfill their contract’s social value commitments.

g. Officers in the North West Construction Hub and the AGMA Procurement Hub build on the work already done with procurement officers in districts to develop common definitions of the way that postcodes are used to monitor social value outcomes in cases where GM districts can use their
influence to determine the social value elements of contracts. This will help to ensure that the employment and other social value impacts deliver maximum benefit to GM residents.

h. The GM Skills Team ensures that the NW Construction Hub and the AGMA Procurement Hub have at least one link person per district who can support companies to deliver of social value and corporate social responsibility targets through providing linkages to training, school engagement and the local communities within districts.

**TRANSPORT OFFER TO YOUNG PEOPLE IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

3.9. The current system of supporting students with discounted travel excludes apprentices. This seems anomalous. In addition, the complex fare structure of GM’s transport offer means that it is difficult for users to easily identify the cheapest fare option available. This is particularly the case if the journey is cross-conurbation. Such a journey might involve a combination of bus and/or rail and/or tram, and might also involve more than one bus operator.

The Group recommend that:

i. Transport for Greater Manchester continue to negotiate with bus operators to deliver an easy to understand fare offer, particularly for apprentices. This is an interim measure before GM acquires the potential, through legislative changes arising from the forthcoming Buses Bill, to secure greater influence over bus services.

j. Transport for Greater Manchester continues work with the GM Skills Team to ensure that accurate journey planning information is easily available, understandable, and meets the needs of students. This is particularly important for multimodal and multi operator journeys.

k. The GM Skills Team should consider supporting apprentices with travel costs to promote and sustain individuals’ learning, as participation in learning is something GM wants to encourage.

l. The GM Skills Team ensure that the recommendations of GM’s Area Based Review of post-16 education consider travel to learn patterns, and how existing travel support for young people can be better optimised in the light of any proposals to reconfigure GM’s post-16 provision.

4. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

See the front of the report.