



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

Thursday 13 February 2025

Telford & Wrekin Skills Strategy

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Shirley Reynolds - Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children, Young People and Education
Lead Director:	Simon Wellman - Director: Education & Skills
Service Area:	Education and Skills
Report Author:	Tara Foran / Richard Probert - Interim Strategic Leads Skills
Officer Contact Details:	Tel: 01952 382888 Email: Tara.foran@telford.gov.uk / Richard.Probert@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	No Key Decision
Forward Plan:	7 June 2024
Report considered by:	Business Briefing - 23 January 2025 Cabinet – 13 February 2025

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1.1 Approves the Telford and Wrekin Skills Strategy, A Learning Borough for All, (Appendix A) that sets out our strategic approach to further develop the borough's skills levels to support localised economic growth.
- 1.2 Agrees to delegate authority to the Director for Education & Skills, in consultation with the Cabinet member: Children, Young People, Education, Employment & skills, to amend future versions of the Skills Strategy in light of changes to national policy.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for the attached Skills Strategy which reaffirms the Council's commitment that every child, young person

and adult will live well in their community and everyone will benefit from a thriving economy.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Telford and Wrekin is a vibrant, successful borough and in recent years it has grown rapidly creating jobs and raising aspiration in the process. The Skills Strategy sets out our continued aspiration to further improve the borough's skills levels; supporting Telford's Vision 2032, which articulates an ambition for a robust economy with growth in new sectors, delivering well-paid jobs.
- 3.2 The strategy has been developed in collaboration with key partners including skills providers, education settings and employers; recognising our goals will only be achieved through a partnership endeavour.
- 3.3 Our challenge to sustained growth is ensuring we have a workforce with the skills that meet current and future employer needs. We must also use our economic growth to tackle inequalities across our communities and ensure all residents have access and opportunity to develop their skills that fulfils their potential.
- 3.4 Skills matter because it leads to better jobs, drives social mobility and will ensure everyone prospers. A focus on high quality localised skill provision is key to retaining our talent too, so that we keep hold of our young people and skilled workforce within the borough.
- 3.5 Our town already offers a rich diversity of skills provision, both academic and vocational, delivered by major institutions and specialist providers that supports employability skills through to technical specialisms. The development of Telford's station quarter sees a step change in the borough's skill offer. It will include a highly accessible Further Education campus alongside the Quad, a Digital Skills and Enterprise Hub, with pathways into Higher Education.
- 3.6 Although we have a wealth of provision, this strategy is about how we shape the landscape so it delivers for all, regardless of age, background or stage of life, and for employers who need tailored solutions.
- 3.7 The Skills Strategy aligns with '[Our Strategy for fair and inclusive economic growth, 2024-2034](#)', which sets out seven pillars to drive our economy. Pillar three 'to enhance Telford's Talent Pipeline' describes the importance of having the right people with the right skills and talents to attract inward investors and deliver residents' ambitions and aspirations.
- 3.8 This strategy, whilst focused on responding to the identified needs of Telford and Wrekin, complements the emerging national policy position. It reflects the key themes as set out by the newly established body, Skills England, in their 2024 publication 'Driving Growth and Widening Opportunities' that recognises skills shortages nationally are currently significantly inhibiting growth, improved pathways through learning to higher skilled jobs are necessary and there is a need to focus on core skills to help residents gain and sustain employment.

- 3.9 It is recognised that the national skills landscape will further evolve, given the recent publication of the white paper 'Get Britain Working' (November 2024). The white paper sets out several key changes namely the:
- Creation of a National Jobs and Careers Service through reform of Job Centre Plus
 - Introduction of a Youth Guarantee for those aged 18-21, to ensure all are learning or earning.
 - Creation of a 'Connect to Work' programme that will support people with disabilities and health conditions into work.

The council will adapt and flex its approach including a review of service provision as further detail is released from central government regarding these proposals.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

- 4.1 The strategy sets out our vision for Telford and Wrekin to become 'a learning borough for all', so that whatever an individual's aspiration, current skill base or age, they can access learning opportunities relevant to employers today and in the future. The strategy's vision will be realised through 6 objectives and aims:

- **Improve the overall skills levels of residents.** To raise working age skills at qualification levels 1, 2 and 3+ to higher than the national average.
- **Nurturing and supporting aspiration whatever an individual's background or existing skill level to fulfil their talent.** For aspiration to be built into our local skills system from a young age, right from primary school all the way through to lifelong learning.
- **Developing progression pathways to provide a clear route for people to progress through the skills system to employment.** For residents to easily re-engage with the skills system whatever their circumstances, and for them to recognise the benefit, whether accessing employment, increased earning potential or facilitating career development.
- **A skills system which is fully inclusive and representative of our borough.** Ensure all residents and communities, including the business community, are well-served by the skills system and that engagement practices reflect our communities needs. There should be appropriate provision and support available for everyone, to enable full participation and progression at all educational levels.
- **A skills system which provides the skills required by businesses, both current and future, and contributes to economic growth and the prosperity of the town.** Create a responsive skills eco-system, built on effective joint working between skills providers, education settings and employers. We will foster and promote better, more effective linkages between providers and employers, to share opportunities in sectors, and ensure provision is both meeting local employers' needs, and strengthening schools relationships with post 16 providers.

Telford & Wrekin Skills Strategy

- 4.2 The strategy will enhance the offer provided across the council, building on existing programmes that support our schools to further engage with employers and higher education partners, including Harper Adams, so that higher level qualifications and work based learning and apprenticeships are further developed.
- 4.3 A clear line of sight will be produced so learners are clear where course and skills based opportunities can lead. This will focus on a refresh of the 'job box' website, better use of the existing Careers Guide, that has been produced with businesses, and ensure 'lifelong learning' pathways are well known and marketed.
- 4.4 We will use adult skill provision as a driver to reduce inequality, build an inclusive system and focus on those with higher needs. The council already run a successful adult learning service, Learn Telford, alongside external providers and collectively we will continue to develop our provision in line with our changing communities. Given the increase diversity of our local population there will be focus on supporting the learning of English and build on our success in supporting learners with Special Educational Needs through our successful supportive internship programmes that have helped businesses understand how to support people into employment through supportive employment approaches.
- 4.5 The strategy also focuses on the importance of working with employers to promote in-work upskilling. Collaborations which encourage access to skills and workplace development at all levels including apprenticeships, work experience and internships are critical to creating the workforce we need.
- 4.6 Our aims include raising aspiration and qualification levels to support greater diversity in the local economy including professional occupations. We aspire further development within advanced manufacturing and engineering linked to green growth. It is also crucial that the borough continues to produce a supply of local labour with high-level technical skills and associated leadership and management training.
- 4.7 The same aspiration applies to the health and care sector, which requires targeted intervention in light of the borough's growing older population.
- 4.8 Ongoing responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of our strategy will take place at relevant education and employment boards including the Education Strategic Partnership and Invest Telford Partnership.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 An alternative option would be for the borough to react to nationally driven policy documents but this would not enable us to collectively understand our local needs and develop provision accordingly.

6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 Without a strategy the local area and our key partnerships will not be clear about how we intend to develop our ambitions around this agenda and to support areas

of development. This could result in limited progression of skills and consequential impact on economic growth.

7.0 Council Priorities

7.1 The proposals set out in this report support the following council priorities:

- Every child, young person and adult lives well in their communities.
- Everyone benefits from a thriving economy.
- All neighbourhoods are great places to live.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 Much of the funding for skills comes through government grants, some of which have delivery criteria attached. The financial position of the area will be kept under review as part of overall financial monitoring, to ensure that the skills strategy is delivered within the overall financial resources that are available.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 The Council has the power to undertake the activities outlined in the attached skills strategy, and the strategy is aligned to the Council's objectives. Legal advice will be provided on an ongoing basis as and when appropriate in relation to specific aspects of the strategy.

10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 A borough wide strategy will have a positive impact for residents across all wards.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 The strategy aims to close the gap in outcomes for residents that live within different wards of the borough, especially in relation to education, health and care and becoming economically independent.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 This strategy relates to all residents who live within Telford and Wrekin which includes an increasingly diverse range of backgrounds and needs.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 The strategy recognises that a key area of future development will be the green economy and so subsequently appropriate green skill based development is required.

14.0 Appendices

A Telford and Wrekin skills strategy: A Learning Borough for All

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	28/11/2024	28/11/2024	RP
Finance	28/11/2024	29/11/2024	TD
Director	28/11/2024	29/11/2024	SW