

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Summary of visit to the Skills Show held at the NEC Birmingham on 14th November 2014

1.0 Background to the event

- 1.1 The Skills Show is the nation's largest skills and careers event that attracts over 75,000 people each year. The show provides hands-on experiences that inspire young people to explore further education, skills and Apprenticeships.
- 1.2 At the 2014 event there were a range of exhibitors present covering industries and sectors from television and radio, heavy industry, through to colleges, the military and IT.
- 1.3 The staff and elected members visiting the show on Friday 14th November 2014 were Councillor Bob Hicks (Chair of the Children and Young People OSC), Councillor Dave Parsons, Councillor John Whitehouse, Councillor Jenny St. John, Councillor Peter Fowler and Ben Patel-Sadler (Democratic Services Officer).

2.0 Outline of the visit

- 2.1 After being provided with a map of the event, the delegation planned to visit each of the four halls throughout the day. The exhibition space was divided into defined, separate areas named 'The Street', 'The Studio', 'The Business', 'The Works' and 'The Building'. Each area housed exhibitors from specific industries/sectors. For example, within The Studio, delegates could find exhibitors from the world of fashion and retail and creative media, etc. The Street housed exhibitors from the cooking, floristry and hairdressing sectors, etc, whereas The Works played host to exhibitors from the engineering, robotics and welding industries.
- 2.2 The delegation visited each hall in turn, observing some of the live demonstrations, competitions and current apprentices from across all sectors showcasing their work. As the day progressed, members engaged with a variety of exhibitors- in particular, lengthy discussions took place between members and colleagues from Birmingham City Council, representatives from HS2 Rail and with staff from the European Social Fund in England.

3.0 Visits to specific exhibitors

3.1 Due to the time constraints placed on members (because of only being able to visit for one day), it was difficult to devote the time to have extended conversations with a number of the exhibitors. However, where detailed discussions did take place, a summary can be found below.

3.2 **Birmingham City Council** were exhibiting at the show for the specific purpose of launching 'The B1 mobile phone app'. This was a joint partnership between the Council and Trinity Mirror Midlands which aimed to help Birmingham's young people connect with appropriate jobs, courses and Apprenticeship opportunities.

Users of the app could be notified when an appropriate opportunity became available, immediately after a training provider/employer had uploaded a vacancy. Individual profiles could also be created by the app users themselves so that they could showcase their skills directly to employers.

Members were particularly interested in the Council's 'Youth Promise' which aimed to provide specialist mentoring and one-to-one support if a young person was not in education, employment or training and access to Birmingham Careers Service who would provide information, advice and guidance to a young person aged 16-19 who was not in education, training or employment. The Council would also be working with transport providers to make opportunities more accessible through better connectivity.

The above information relating to the app launch was conveyed to members by Shilpi Akbar (Assistant Director for Employment Development Directorate, Birmingham City Council). The delegation were informed that Councillor Penny Holbrook was the lead member for this area of work and would be happy to speak about it with Warwickshire members if they so wished.

3.3 **HS2 Rail** were exhibiting at the show, showcasing the planned routes of the proposed high speed national rail network. Staff from HS2 were also there to offer opportunities to the young people in attendance. When the project begins, it will require a huge number of new engineers and staff to facilitate the building and expansion of the network. Members held discussions with the stand staff, particularly as the route of HS2 will cut through vast swathes of the Warwickshire county.

3.4 **The European Social Fund (ESF)** stand was also visited by the delegation. Members were particularly interested in how the ESF was distributing its funds. Staff from the ESF were not able to provide members with all the information required, but explained that it was the role of a variety of public agencies to distribute the funds. If members wished to find out who was responsible for distributing funds at a local level and which projects were prioritised, further enquiries would need to be made.

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 The general consensus from members was that the visit to the Skills Show had been a worthwhile exercise and a good use of their time.

Over the course of the day, a variety of discussions took place between colleagues which can be summarised as follows:

1. It would be useful to know how many schools/academies in Warwickshire had sent their children and young people to the show.
2. Members would like to be reassured that children in care/vulnerable children had an opportunity to attend the Show- collectively or individually.
3. The delegation wanted to find out if the Council had any involvement in the show.

Other comments made were that all of the children and young people in attendance seemed to be engaged and interested. If certain schools were having problems with the low aspirations of some pupils, then a visit to the show could provide students with a break from their routine, giving them numerous career/study options to contemplate.

Members believed it would be a useful exercise for councillors to attend a future Skills Show to see for themselves what is on offer for today's children and young people. In future years, Members would want to plan a visit in more detail. It transpired that a number of speakers/lectures that the delegation would have like to have attended, had taken place on the previous day. If a larger delegation was to attend in the future, then members could attend workshops/lectures/events which they had a specific interest in.