

South Derbyshire Local Strategic Partnership

Report to the Board

Date of meeting: 12 June 2007

Agenda Item: 7

SOUTH DERBYSHIRE SKILLS FORUM

Issue

On behalf of the Local Strategic Partnership, the District Council proposes to commission a piece of research into current skills issues and future workforce challenges, including the provision of education and training in South Derbyshire.

Background

This relates to Action VE 3.2 (Flagship Action) in the SDLSP Action Plan 2006-2008: Explore ways to improve workforce skills, raise staying-on rates, encourage participation in Further and Higher Education and promote uptake of training by those in work.

Skills has been highlighted as a key issue for South Derbyshire, particularly in relation to communities in and around Swadlincote. This reflects:

- the need to provide a high quality workforce in order to attract inward investment;
- a rapidly changing local economy with different, and greater, skills expectations amongst employers;
- an anticipated decline in unskilled employment;
- below average numbers of full-time students and residents with higher level qualifications;
- in some areas, below average staying-on rates at age sixteen, and above average residents with no or low qualifications; and,
- the limited provision of Further and Higher Education within the District.

Details

A skills forum was held on 27 March 2007, addressed by Derbyshire County Council, Derbyshire Learning & Skills Council, Derby College and Derby & Derbyshire Economic Partnership, and attended by interested parties. A range of issues were highlighted, including:

- a dramatic current and planned growth in the District's population;
- a need to work more closely with local employers;
- the important role of the voluntary/community sector in this agenda;

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- proposals to raise the Leaving Learning Age to 17;
- a major programme of school refurbishment and rebuilding;
- the expansion of vocational education provision;
- an emerging national skills shortfall identified in the Leitch Report; and,
- a need to provide greater choice and opportunities for young people.

It was concluded that there was a need for an appropriate study that would evidence skills needs and demands and propose an effective response. This would aim to build upon existing and planned research in the area. A number of the LSP's partner organisations have indicated that they may financially support such a study.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board: -

1. Support the proposal to secure funding and commission research and feasibility work.

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