

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Overview and Scrutiny Committee DATE: 9th July 2014

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PART I CONSIDERATION & COMMENT

ASPIRE FOR YOU

1 Purpose of Report

This report gives an overview of progress made in the delivery of the “Aspire for You” component within the Aspire delivery model. The report will highlight the importance of connections with related services and partnership groups within the council who contribute directly to supporting people into employment as well as how business is becoming involved within the delivery models.

2 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

- (a) Note the range of activity to support the low skilled and those who are unemployed to gain new skills and secure employment and to support those who wish to start and sustain their own businesses..
- (b) Comment on how Aspire for You has progressed and suggest opportunities to develop this work further.
- (c) Suggest how further links with business can be made to support a community based approach in supporting local people into employment

3 Slough Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

- Health
- Economy and skills,
- Housing,
- Regeneration and environment
- Safer Slough
- Civic responsibility and improving the image of the town.

3.1 This report has direct links to the economy and skills priority, and in particular gives details of how the council is engaging and supporting low skilled unemployed residents. A growing number of people on Job Seekers Allowance are being referred from the job centre (c15% of JSA registered claimants in Slough).

3.2 An increasing number of clients have low self-esteem and self-confidence, often with a history of mental health problems or a learning disability. Through engaging in activity that supports their learning and achieving their personal goals, there is evidence over time that their sense of self-worth and social wellbeing increases.

3.3 **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)**

Theme C – “fair employment and good working for all” is the main link to skills development. The JSNA identified the need for adult learning programmes that develop skills and employability opportunities for the adult population.

4 **Other Implications**

4.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications relating to this report.

4.2 Risk Management

There are no specific risks associated with this report

4.3 Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no direct Human Rights or legal implications arising from this report.

4.4 Equalities Impact Assessment

An equality impact assessment is not required for his report.

5 **Aspire for You**

5.1 **Background**

Slough Aspire is an employer led public-private partnership supported by SEGRO, East Berkshire College, Slough Borough Council, Learning to Work, Mars and UCB. The purpose of the partnership is to engage business with schools and the wider community. Slough Aspire is set up as a Community Interest Company, with the organisations listed all having directorships and a place on the board. Arvato have recently become full board members of Slough Aspire.

5.2 The partnership helps residents, young people, business and employed learners to access effective training and learning solutions that lead to sustained employment. There are three main strands that support Aspire priorities: Aspire for Schools (led by Learning to Work); Aspire for Business (led by East Berkshire College); and Aspire for You (led by Slough Borough Council).

5.3 In October 2013 the Slough Aspire building, located on the trading estate, was opened. It acts as a coordinating hub, although much of the Aspire for You activity is delivered through Slough’s neighbourhood centres, giving initial access to local people. SEGRO have provided the Aspire building on the Slough Trading Estate rent free for ten years and paid for the fitting out of the building. A Slough Aspire Manager and an administrator are in post, employed by East Berkshire College.

5.4 The Aspire for You strand provides local residents with skills development so they can access local employment opportunities. There is a strong focus on supporting new business start-ups and bringing together opportunities for professionals to understand the local labour market and the skills local employers require from their workforce. One of the main areas for improvement for the service is develop ways to collect and monitor information on what people supported by programmes go on

to do (learner outcomes). Case studies throughout the report illustrate the impact of this work.

- 5.5 Aspire for You comprises community based activities that have close links with a range of partnership groups that come under the auspices of the Slough Wellbeing Board's "Skills, employment and enterprise priority delivery group" (SEE PDG). There are particular synergies with the Job Outcomes Group which brings together all statutory and contracted employment support providers across the public and private sector in the town. The group aims to streamline and collaborate in the delivery of employment support, with the view to avoiding duplication and unnecessary competition between providers.

Employees of Unilever who were at risk of redundancy after working with the company in some cases for more than 20 years were given advice and guidance sessions. Workshops and individual classes were provided with 26 attending ESOL Classes and 15 attending IT for Job Hunters.

5.6 **Job clubs**

In the last 11 months there have been 1,625 separate visits to Employment and Learning Job clubs. The average attendance at all job clubs is 147 visits per month. There is a high demand for help with IT and access to the internet as the majority of jobs are now advertised on line. The most attended job club is at Slough Library which helps 15 -20 clients a week.

- 5.7 The main referral agency is Job Centre Plus, with clients requiring support in registering with the universal job match, through which clients are supported in job search. Around 15% of Slough residents on Job Seekers Allowance engage with the service. Advisers offer a wide range of support including CV writing, interview skills, qualification equivalency and confidence building. All are offered a one to one interview for more in depth support.

Two preparation for work courses were delivered at MARS and SEGRO in 2014. 20 unemployed people learnt interview and job application skills. Learners attending the course said it helped them apply to work in businesses locally.

- 5.8 Over the last eighteen months, the demand for the unemployed to have access to support in gaining employment has steadily increased. This is in the main due to the changes in the benefits system, especially for those residents who have been moved from ESA (Employment Support Allowance) to JSA (Job Seekers allowance). This has contributed to the change in client profile with an increase in those with multiple barriers to employment including mental health problems, addiction or learning disabilities.

- 5.9 The council currently run five two hour job clubs each week at Slough Library (due to the increased demand a second is being planned), Britwell Centre, Thomas Gray Centre, and Longwood Towers (Foxborough, Langley). The latter is in partnership with Radian Housing Association with additional support from Destiny Support, a voluntary organisation who help clients with their IT skills.

5.10 **Information, advice and guidance**

The council has a contract to deliver activity as part of the National Careers Service. Staff are trained and deliver a one to one advice and guidance service within the matrix quality standards. Interviews are held at Langley library, Thomas Gray

Centre and Cippenham Library. Clients are welcome to as many sessions as they need in order to address their barriers to employment.

- 5.11 During the period 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014 a total of 1,196 interventions were delivered, engaging with 579 different clients. The two main groups were those aged 40-50 (131 clients of whom 41 had been unemployed for over 36 months) and aged 50-65 (73 clients, of whom 23 had been unemployed for more than 36 months).

J was referred by Richmond Fellowship who work with residents who have mental health problems. With support from the adviser in confidence building for interviews and advice on applications J was accepted onto the Heathrow Academies training course and has secured employment in a retail outlet at the airport.

- 5.12 145 clients had no qualifications at all, whilst 107 clients were at level 1. There is a clear correlation between poor qualifications and long term unemployment. 48 clients with no qualifications had been unemployed for over 36 months and a further 28 were at level 1. The majority of the clients were unemployed, with 18 self-employed and 27 economically inactive. 148 clients were employed, but some of these were at risk of redundancy or were employed on temporary or poorly paid zero hour contracts.
- 5.13 20% of clients described themselves as 'white other', including a number of EEU migrants looking for work and learning in Slough. 24% were Pakistani, 17% white British, 14% Indian, and 8% African. The remainder were either mixed ethnicity or preferred not to disclose information.

5.14 **Employability accredited programmes**

Referrals from the job clubs, one to one sessions or direct from Job Centre Plus are made to the council's Community Learning and Skills Service.

- 5.15 In addition to its language (ESOL), maths and English programmes, the service is now delivering a range of employability related programmes, including City and Guilds accredited Awards in, for example health and safety, food safety within the work place, book keeping , hospitality, and retail services . Programmes range from entry level to level 2. In the academic year 2013/14, 117 learners have undertaken full award qualifications with a 91% achievement rate.

Glen Fulthorpe, aged 24, the director of Rock Dove Media, lost both his parents and became homeless in his first year at university. Helped by Aspire for You he now runs a successful film making business.

- 5.16 In response to the needs of Job Centre Plus clients, a number of smaller units of qualification are also delivered. For example, within the current year 76 learners have undertaken a total of 241 units within the IT for job hunters programme. Learners requiring higher level programmes are sign posted to local colleges and other training providers.

5.17 **Business start ups**

A range of business start up events are provided, including a three day business start up course, business skills training courses, inspirational networking evenings and business mentoring and support.

- 5.18 There is a weekly drop in business advice session held at Slough Library. A total of 7 three day business start up courses have been delivered attracting 70 participants, Over 50 one to one support sessions have been held at Slough Library and Thomas Gray Centre. Several other business skills courses have been provided over the year at the Aspire centre. These include Social Media Training for Business, Blogging for Business, Business Law and Business Development. On average 10-12 people attend each session.
- 5.19 A total of 13 networking evenings have been held at the Aspire Centre and SEGRO's IQ marketing suite. The networking evenings attract an average of 30-40 start up businesses at each event and get good feedback. Themes covered include "Top tips on Networking" , "Social Media for small Business" and "Marketing on a shoestring budget", with 2 or 3 guest speakers at each event.
- 5.20 Since July 2012, over 300 individuals have been supported through the work undertaken by the service's Community Business Adviser. In the current academic year, 19 new businesses have been registered and an additional 16 struggling businesses have been given extra support.
- 5.21 The Slough Aspire Business Start Up Awards ceremony was held in June 2014. It was used to promote successful new businesses and the support available to business.

<p>The Slough Aspire Business Start Up Award winner in 2014 2014 was UK Leak Detection Ltd. Helped by attending several Business Skills courses in the last year, Andrew Davies now employs 2 staff and an apprentice and his business has a turnover of £250,000 a year.</p>

5.22 **Influencing the influencer**

These information sharing events are held each term at the Aspire centre with the purpose of offering employment advisors across Slough local market information on sector opportunities and understand the wide range of job roles and career pathways for employment today and in the future. Speakers have included representatives from O2 Telefonica, Hays recruitment, Lovells and Heathrow. The events are attended by Advisers from Job Centre Plus, A4E, Maximus, Slough Young Peoples Service, Sure Start, Youth Offending Team, Community Mental Health, East Berkshire Women's Aid, Adviza, Slough Refugee Support, East Berkshire College, Slough Employ – Ability , SEN and Disabilities Team and Employment Learning Advice Service.

5.23 **Construction Pathway**

This initiative provides training focused on a specific sector of business. A very successful Construction Pathway was delivered at the Aspire Centre during a week in May. Partners included Job Centre Plus, housing associations, and a number of different sections of Slough Borough Council, Hays Recruitment, A4e and Aspire. It provided five days of training that covered construction sector requirements, a level 2 accredited health and safety in the work place programme with a construction bias, job preparation training including interview techniques and practice in the completion of the Construction Skills Certificate Scheme card.

- 5.24 A total of 27 residents took part and 24 completed the programme. 5 were successful in getting jobs and 18 are waiting to receive notification of passing their CSCS test in order to be placed in Construction roles with Hays Recruitment

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 There is a range of community based activity through which those with low skill levels are supported by Aspire for You. The success of the activity is dependent on the range and quality of partnerships within and outside the council, and the ability of partners to refer and support clients through their employment pathways.
- 6.2 The need to understand the labour market and the skills required by local business is important to ensure that programmes such as the construction pathway can be delivered with resulting job outcomes.
- 6.3 The innovative work being undertaken to support business start ups is maximising the use of existing expertise within local business supporting budding entrepreneurs develop their own ideas

7 Appendices Attached

None.

8 Background Papers

Slough Borough Council's Economic development strategic plan for growth 2014-18