

17 October 2013

Agenda Item:4

REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE VISIT TO ASHFIELD SCHOOL AND VISION WEST NOTTS

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform Members of a recent Committee visit to see best practice initiatives in terms of young people and apprenticeships at Ashfield School and Vision West Notts.

Information and Advice

Background

2. At the July Committee meeting, Members expressed a desire to visit some examples of best practice in Nottinghamshire in terms of vocational training being delivered in schools and the transition to apprenticeships. The Ashfield School and Vision West Notts were suggested as potential examples and subsequently a visit was arranged for Tues 17th September 2013. This visit took place in lieu of the scheduled Committee meeting.
3. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee attended along with three other Members, the Corporate Director for Policy, Planning and Corporate Services and two officers from the Economic Development team.

Feedback from Ashfield School

4. Committee Members were welcomed to Ashfield School by the headteacher, Dick Vasey, and his Deputy. The focus of the visit was on the Ashfield Skills Centre, which is a discrete vocational skills centre at the heart of the school site. The centre was built in the mid 2000s, part-funded by the EU and emda and consists of large and small units, occupied by a mix of trading businesses and enterprises run through the school, all of which offer training opportunities for pupils.
5. Members were escorted around the Centre by its manager, Simon Shaw. Courses in car mechanics, construction trades, hospitality, childcare and hair and beauty are offered to young people aged 14 and upwards. For the pre-16s, these can be selected as part of the overall curriculum offer and pupils are released for one afternoon a week to undertake foundation courses. Post 16, pupils can opt to do full-time courses leading to qualifications at NVQ level 2 or 3. Work experience is built into the post-16 offer, with young people released for at least one day a week into local companies, delivered in partnership with Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Futures.

6. The Skills Centre has a high success rate and some of its courses are over-subscribed. with less than 100 places available annually. The school works closely with other local schools and when it does have spare capacity in the Skills Centre, this is offered out to their pupils. Transition to apprenticeships is a key part of the offer to pupils, and the school works closely with local FE colleges to enable young people to move on to the next step of their careers.

Feedback from Vision West Notts

7. Patricia Harman, the Deputy Principal for Teaching and Learning at Vision West Notts welcomed Members to the Station Park Campus at Kirkby in Ashfield. The campus is the college's main site for teaching all construction trades to NVQ level 4. Julian Walden, the Director of the Station Park Campus, and Louise Knott, Director of Communications, Marketing and Learner Engagement, introduced the work of the college at the campus. In addition, local employers who source apprentices from the college were present (Matthews Tannert and Gelders) to talk about their work with the college. Matthews Tannert currently have 17 apprentices from Vision West Notts, representing over 10% of their workforce.
8. Vision West Notts College is the largest provider of Apprenticeships in the East Midlands and the 6th largest in the UK. This is delivered through the Vision Apprentices programme, which offers apprenticeships in a wide range of Frameworks. In September 2014 a new Engineering Innovation Centre will open on the Station Park Campus, with a focus on transport engineering and the rail sector.
9. Julian Walden led the group round the campus, and Members were able to see each of the training areas for trades including building, plastering, electrics, plumbing and painting and decorating. Following the tour, Members were able to speak to some of the apprentices about their experiences and aspirations and to the two businesses about their work with Vision West Notts, skills shortages and the economy in general. The businesses' take on the economy was broadly positive, with increased signs of confidence and healthier order books in recent months than during the last three years.
10. The Chair of the Committee has written letters to both Ashfield School and Vision West Notts thanking them for their time and for the informative presentations and tours that they organised.

Statutory and Policy Implications

11. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

12. None.

RECOMMENDATION/S

13. That Committee note the report.

Report of the Chair, Economic Development Committee

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Matt Lockley extn 72446

Constitutional Comments (NAB 04.10.13)

The Economic Development Committee has authority to consider the recommendation in this report by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SEM 03/10/13)

There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

Kirkby in Ashfield North