

REPORT OF THE CHAIR, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

FUTURES ADVICE, SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT COMPANY

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is:
 - a) For Committee to receive an introductory presentation from the Chief Executive of Futures Advice, Skills and Employment Company; and
 - b) To seek approval to undertake a review of the Council's strategic relationship with Futures, in order to maximise the Company's contribution towards the Council's core strategies.

Information and Advice

Background

2. Wholly and jointly owned by Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council, Futures is a social enterprise at the national forefront of providing jobs and skills advice, training and apprenticeships to support young people and adults into work or training. The Company delivers skills and employment related services and projects and administers funding within local communities and operates the National Careers Service across the East Midlands and Eastern England, for which the company was recently rated Outstanding by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). This is the first time that a National Careers Service prime contractor has achieved this rating (see **Annex A** for 1-page briefing about the Ofsted rated Grade 1).
3. Futures was formed in 2008/9 from the previous Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Connexions Company, which delivered information, advice and guidance (IAG) services to 13-19 year olds. The formation of Futures was a strategic response to changes in legislation and national priorities around IAG services and careers advice, coupled with changes in the statutory responsibilities of local authorities in these areas. Futures was therefore established to support the Company to develop a wider focus than services for young people, and in the years since its formation the Company has broadened both its business base and the range of services it offers, both locally, regionally and nationally, whilst retaining a core focus on Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.
4. Futures still contracts directly with the County Council to contribute young people's support services to the Council's multi agency Family Service. This contract is worth £1.8million in the

current financial year. Similarly, the County Council's successful internal apprenticeship programme is delivered in partnership with Futures. The Company has also been a key partner in delivering the Council's £500,000 Youth Employment Strategy, which has successfully aimed to increase young people's access to employment opportunities through the development of employability skills and more effective employer engagement.

5. In addition, Futures provides various services and support to local schools, individuals and employers, all on a commercial basis. These services range from careers advice and work experience for schools, through to acting as an Apprenticeship Training Agency for local employers.
6. The presentation accompanying this report provides further detail on the current activities of Futures.
7. The Council is represented on the Board of Futures by the Vice Chair of the Children and Young People's Committee, the Chair of the Economic Development Committee and the Service Director for Youth, Families and Culture.

The proposed review

8. Futures is a company that has grown significantly in recent years. It enjoys a very strong national reputation, and is now a leading national employment and skills services provider. In view of the fact that its direct provision for children and young people no longer forms the majority of its activities, the fact that the majority of its income is now derived from Government contracts and commercial sources, and with strong national evidence that the integration of employment, skills and economic development at local levels benefits the economy, society and fosters business development, the time is right for the Council to review the nature of its relationship with the Company, with a view to:-
 - Maximising the future role that Futures can play as a key strategic partner in supporting delivery of the Council's broad economic development and skills objectives;
 - Ensuring that the Council's Board representatives best reflect these objectives;
 - Ensuring that appropriate Council senior officers and Departments with responsibility for these objectives lead the Council's operational engagement with Futures; and
 - Ensuring that formal reporting on the progress of Futures be reported to the appropriate Council Committee (in this respect, whilst some areas of Futures work delivered since November 2013 have been reported to the Economic Development Committee, formal reporting on the Council's work with Futures has generally been through the Children and Young People's Committee).
9. The outcome of the review, and resultant recommendations, will be brought to a future meeting of the Policy Committee for consideration.

Other Options Considered

10. The option of doing nothing was discounted. It is incumbent upon the Council to (a) ensure that future governance and reporting arrangements reflect the increasing role of Futures in wider skills and economic development activity and (b) ensure clear linkages between Futures work and the Council's core strategies.

Reasons for Recommendations

11. To provide clarity on Futures governance and reporting arrangements with the County Council, and to ensure that Futures contribution towards the Council's strategic objectives for economic development and skills is maximised.

Statutory and Policy Implications

12. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

13. That Policy Committee:

- a) Receives an introductory presentation from the Chief Executive of Futures Advice, Skills and Employment Company; and
- b) Approves the undertaking of a review of the Council's strategic relationship with Futures, in order to maximise the Company's contribution towards the Council's core strategies.

Councillor Diana Meale
Chair, Economic Development Committee

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Constitutional Comments [SLB 15/02/2017]

Policy Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments [RWK 20/02/2017]

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

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Independent learning provider inspection report for Futures Advice, Skills and Employment, National Careers Services – Ofsted report, published online 21/02/ 2017 at:
<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/1236942>

- *Supporting Youth Employment Funding* – Report To Economic Development Committee, 05/07/2016
- *Supporting Youth Employment* (progress update) – Report to Economic Development Committee, 06/01/2015
- *Supporting Youth Employment* (proposal for allocation of remaining funds to E2E project) – Report to Economic Development Committee, 11/02/2014
- *Supporting Youth Employment* (proposal for allocation of remaining funds) – Report to Economic Development committee, 19/11/2013
- *Supporting Youth Employment (proposal for allocation of reserves) for County Apprenticeship Project* - Report to Economic Development Committee, 17/10/2013
- *Apprenticeships Update* – Report to Economic Development Committee, 09/07/2013
- *Supporting Youth Employment* - Report to Economic Development Committee, 17/10/2013
- [Outside Bodies Report: Futures](#) - Report to Children and Young People's Committee, 14/10/2013

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All

Annex A: East Midlands careers service rated Outstanding by Ofsted

Futures Advice, Skills and Employment - the organisation responsible for the National Careers Service across the East Midlands - has been rated Outstanding by Ofsted.

This is the first time that a National Careers Service prime contractor has achieved this rating.

Futures, jointly owned by Nottinghamshire County and Nottingham City councils, is a social enterprise that provides a range of jobs and skills advice, training and apprenticeships to support young people and adults into work or training.

As part of its assessment, Ofsted looked at the:

- effectiveness of leadership and management
- quality of information, advice and guidance
- personal development, behaviour and welfare
- outcomes for customers

Ofsted rated each of these 'Outstanding' (the highest grade available). Ofsted's summary of the key reasons why Futures is an Outstanding provider included:

- Customers make excellent progress towards successfully achieving their career aspirations as advisers are highly adept at removing barriers to achievement.
- Very knowledgeable and experienced advisers are excellent at empowering customers to develop greater independence.
- Customers greatly value the help that they receive from advisers.
- Both individual and group sessions are of a consistently high quality.
- Leaders and managers are highly ambitious for the service and deftly use a self-critical culture that is unremitting in its pursuit of a high-quality experience for customers.
- Partnership working is exceptionally effective.

The National Careers Service is a publicly-funded careers service in England for adults aged 19 plus and 18-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and/or registered with Jobcentre Plus. The support customers receive varies depending on their need includes:

- job hunting and understanding the local job market
- writing application forms
- CV preparation
- courses and training opportunities
- coping with redundancy
- career change
- planning and decision making.

The responsibility for the delivery of the service sits with seven organisations (prime contractors) all of which cover different regions of the country. In October 2014 Futures Advice won a three-year contract to deliver the service across the entire East Midlands. Over 40,000 customers benefit from the service each year and receive advice and support at one of 74 sites including Jobcentre Plus, library and community venues across the region and at Futures' own drop-in careers centres in Mansfield and Nottingham.