



**Prosperous Communities
Committee**

Tuesday, 30 January 2024

Subject: Review of Further Education Taskforce

Report by:	Director of Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Contact Officer:	Grant White Enterprising Communities Manager grant.white@west-lindsey.gov.uk
Purpose / Summary:	The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Prosperous Communities Committee from the West Lindsey Further Education Taskforce.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1 Prosperous Communities Committee approve that the Further Education Taskforce be concluded; and**
- 2 Prosperous Communities Committee approve that West Lindsey Employment and Skills Partnership continue to take forward the actions from the initial Taskforce meeting.**
- 3 Prosperous Communities Committee approve that a member be nominated to attend future Employment and Skills Partnership meetings. The appointment to be effective until full council in May 2027.**

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

There are no legal implications related to this report and its recommendations.

(N.B.) Where there are legal implications the report MUST be seen by the MO

Financial : FIN/132/24/SL

There are no financial implications related to this report and its recommendations.

(N.B.) All committee reports MUST have a Fin Ref

Staffing :

There are no staffing implications related to this report. Work to enable and deliver the Employment and Skills Partnership forms part of business as usual activity resources by the Communities Team.

(N.B.) Where there are staffing implications the report MUST have a HR Ref

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

Not applicable to this report.

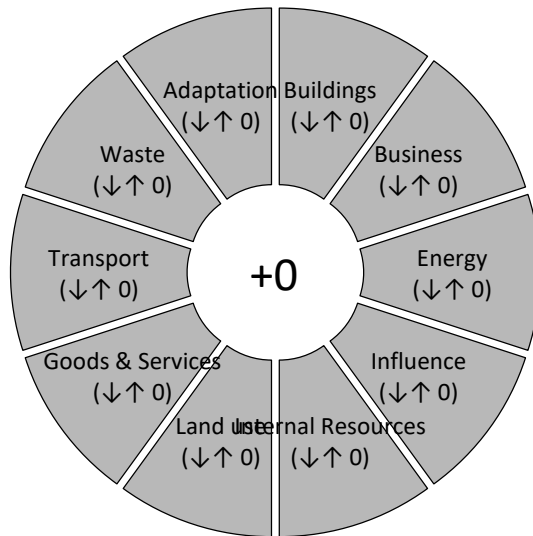
Data Protection Implications :

No data protection implications related to this report.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

There are no direct climate related risks or opportunities from this report and its recommendations.

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West Lindsey District Council will be net zero by 2050 (25 years and 11 months away).

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

No considerations related to this report.

Health Implications:

No direct implications related to this report.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

Prosperous Communities Committee – 19th July 2022

<https://democracy.sharedlincs.net/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=176&MId=3175>

Risk Assessment :

N/A

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

x

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

x

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Prosperous Communities Committee from the West Lindsey Further Education Taskforce.

2 Background

- 2.1 In July 2022, Prosperous Communities approved a paper to establish a Further Education Taskforce following the announcement by the Lincoln College Group that the Gainsborough Campus would close as a Further Education College and re-open as Alternative Provision (AP) for 11–16-year-olds from Scunthorpe, Lincoln and Gainsborough.
- 2.2 Nationally the number of pupils attending local authority alternative provision has increased by nearly 3,000 (10%) to 32,436 in 2020/21. Most pupils are boys (74.6%). 30% of pupils accessing the Alternative Provision at the Gainsborough campus are from within the West Lindsey district.
- 2.3 The purpose of the Taskforce, including details of the membership are set out in the terms of reference attached to this report. (Appendix 1)
- 2.4 The main aim of the Taskforce is to understand why the number of students entering further education has declined locally and what the impact will have on local employers, future students, and the wider community.
- 2.5 The Taskforce will also seek to understand why the need for Alternative Provision has increased and ways in which it can be nurtured to benefit residents and employers.
- 2.6 The Taskforce will be responsible for establishing a time limited delivery plan for officers, stakeholders, and members to take forward.

3 Taskforce Delivery 2022/2023

- 3.1 The Taskforce held its first meeting in February 2023 with Cllr. Owen Bierley as Chairperson. There were fourteen attendees from various stakeholder organisations. Meeting notes, and an initial action plan (Appendix 2 and 3) were shared with the Taskforce members and a further meeting date was scheduled for June 2023.
- 3.2 Following the election in May 2023, some Councillors were newly appointed to represent boards and committees. During this period, officers were asked to postpone the second Taskforce meeting scheduled for June 2023.
- 3.3 Officers have been unable to re-schedule further Taskforce meetings due to availability of attendees.

3.4 Officers have continued to support Employment and Skills objectives through the established West Lindsey Employment and Skills Partnership and delivery plan. This plan is monitored and updated monthly.

4 **Employment and Skills – Corporate Plan**

4.1 The Council Corporate Plan 2023-2027 sets out a clear opportunity in relation to Employment and Skills – to use grant allocations from the Levelling Up Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to enhance existing programmes of work targeted towards job creation, economic growth and improving the skills base.

4.2 The Corporate Plan sets out key objectives and outcomes towards achieving its aim to facilitate the creation of a highly skilled workforce that meets the current and future needs of the local economy. (see table below)

Objectives	Key Outcomes
Work with key stakeholders to ensure appropriate skills training and provision is in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of careers advice and skills and training programmes that meet recognised standards and are tailored towards key sectors. • Increase and sustain the number of young people in education or training. • Increased opportunities for young people in education to experience the workplace
Improve access to training and increase employment prospects for West Lindsey residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in the number of economically active people in the district. • Employment levels that are on a par with the national average or higher. • Low levels of youth unemployment.
Provide support in meeting the skills needs of local employers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reduction in the skills gap across key sectors • Barriers that prevent people gaining employment are removed. • Employers are actively engaged with employment and skills programmes.

4.3 As a key member of forums such as the West Lindsey Employment and Skills Partnership and the Greater Lincolnshire Local Skills Advisory Panel (LSAP), the Council has an opportunity to use its influence to ensure joint working across all agencies is being used effectively to improve employment, education, and skills.

5 Examples of other Employment and Skills Outcomes in 2023

- 5.1 Officers successfully secured £400k allocation of funds for People and Skills through the government UK Shared Prosperity Fund. During 2022/2023, the Council profiled to spend £150k to deliver programmes and projects to enable economically inactive residents to access help and support. To date £136k has been allocated/spent.
- 5.2 £107k of UKSPF has been utilised to continue the vital STEPS (Support towards Employment and Personal Success) Programme for unemployed 15–30-year-olds which is delivered through Community Learning in Partnership (CLiP). This district wide programme previously funded through the European Social Fund (ESF) was at risk of ending. The funding has enabled the project to continue for a further year and is on track to help over 70 people to gain employment skills, training, and access to job opportunities. Below is one example of how the programme is working:
- 5.3 STEPS Case Study - X

Challenge: X had come onto the STEPS program to help improve her functional skills and for help going into her first job. She was very shy and was lacking in confidence initially but started to open more and more during the appointments.

Action: Whilst waiting for enrolment onto function skills, staff were able to help X with her employability skills. X managed to successfully complete her own CV to a very good standard. She then started applying for jobs in both childcare and in retail. X was able to then start applying for roles on her own and she managed to secure an interview with Tesco's. Staff supported X with interview tips and preparation as this was her first ever interview. She successfully completed the interview and grabbed her first temporary job role. Since then, she has successfully interviewed for her dream role as an Early Years Educator.

Outcome: X secured her first job role ever and is working towards her dream career all with 2/3 months on the STEPS program. Seems to have gained confidence and CV skills because of the process too. We will be keeping in touch throughout to continue to offer support.

- 5.4 The Council has used UKSPF to commission a West Lindsey Employment and Skills Research report. (Appendix 4) The purpose of the report is to improve the local narrative around employment and skills, to enable key stakeholders to come together to find solutions to persistent issues and to provide an evidence base to help secure future provision.
- 5.5 The report centres around 10 key employment and skills insights that enable the Council to focus on opportunities to support residents. For example, Insight 7 highlights that that travel, transport, and connectivity is still a key local issue. A lack of local further education provision could cause financial challenges for more deprived students travelling further to access education and training provision resulting in a higher “drop out” rate for the district.

- 5.6 The report is also creating opportunities for local employers. A large manufacturing company has requested to use this report as the evidence base for a potential expansion proposal at its operation in Gainsborough.
- 5.7 Working in partnership the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP), Lincoln College and the Council supported a Sector Based Work Academy (SWAP) for the new Spar opening on Foxby Hill, Gainsborough in which 16 job seekers participated in a one-week retail course delivered by the College, with a guaranteed interview with the employer. In total there were 22 people recruited for positions and 19 of these were job centre customers and four previous Wilkos staff.
- 5.8 Along with skills partners, the Council hosted the annual Autumn Jobs Fair at the Riverside Room, Gainsborough. 230 job seekers attended along with 6th form pupils from the Aegir School and almost 30 organisations were on hand to offer job openings, advice on training and access to other support into employment. Spar also attended the Jobs Fair and were successful in arranging further interviews.

6 Communication:

- 6.1 Members are invited to nominate a representative to attend the quarterly Employment and Skills Partnership meetings and to subsequently share meeting notes and information.
- 6.2 The Skills Officer will provide a quarterly update on Employment and Skills delivery through the Member Bulletin. This will also include invites to participate in activities and events planned.
- 6.3 The Skills Officer will meet with a nominated Communications Officer monthly, to ensure employment and skills outcomes/successes and relevant information is being shared through a wide range of media forums and on a timely basis.

7 Conclusion:

- 7.1 The Council is making a significant commitment both strategically and operationally to support employment and skills development across the district. There is a well-established Employment and Skills Partnership in place which is currently managed by a Senior Project Officer.
- 7.2 The recently commissioned West Lindsey Employment and Skills Report has had input from over 100 local stakeholders and offers the Council a strong evidence base to take forward opportunities and actions.
- 7.3 The proposed devolution deal for Greater Lincolnshire includes new powers to shape local skills provision to better meet the needs of the local economy and local people, including devolution of the core Adult Education Budget, as well as input into the new Local Skills Improvement Plans.

- 7.4 The West Lindsey Employment & Skills Partnership along with the recently produced research report (referenced in Section 5.3) ensures the Council and local partners are well positioned to input into and respond to the proposed devolution deal.

8 Recommendations

- 8.1 Prosperous Communities Committee approve that the Further Education Taskforce be concluded.
- 8.2 Prosperous Communities Committee approve that West Lindsey Employment and Skills Partnership continue to take forward the actions from the initial Taskforce meeting.
- 8.3 Prosperous Communities Committee approve that a member be nominated to attend future Employment and Skills Partnership meetings. The appointment to be effective until full council in May 2027.