



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Cabinet

21st April 2008

A 'one Leicester' sign up to the national Skills Pledge

Report of the Heads of City Learning and Adult Skills & Learning

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To seek commitment to the National Skills Pledge, as a major employer in the city.

2. What is the Skills Pledge?

- 2.1. The Skills Pledge is a voluntary, public commitment by the leadership of a company or organisation to support all its employees to develop their basic skills, including literacy and numeracy, and work towards relevant, valuable qualifications to at least Level 2 (equivalent to 5 good G.C.S.E.s).
- 2.2. Level 2 is set as a national minimum standard for being able to meet the expected demands in up-skilling in the work-place.
- 2.3. Level 1 refers to any qualification or part qualification which falls short of the 5 GCSE standard. So for example the essential skills programme we deliver is a level 1 qualification.
- 2.4. Level 3 is a two A level equivalency and level 4 is diploma/degree level equivalency.
- 2.5. The skills pledge is not just to level 2. But it does recognise that this is a significant bar which is unmet. It therefore proposes that level two is the first significant milestone.
- 2.6. The purpose of the pledge is to ensure that all staff are skilled, competent and able to make a full contribution to the success of the organisation.
- 2.7. The Pledge can only be given by the Leader and the Chief Executive as it is a corporate commitment covering the whole organisation.

- 2.8. The Skills Pledge and the plan will form part of our Pay and Workforce Strategy and support the Council's Vision:

"We want to create a prosperous city where everyone meets their potential. Where people will be equipped with the skills they need to get the job they want".

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That the Cabinet agrees commitment to the Skills Pledge and asks that the Leader and Chief Executive sign on behalf of the Authority
- 3.2. That public sector partners are invited to join the City Council in a city-wide signing of the pledge
- 3.3. That an improvement plan be developed as part of the new Pay and Workforce Strategy, that progress is reported on each year and that the impact is evaluated for participants on the programmes.

4. Report

- 4.1. The national statistics for skills in the public sector are alarming:
- 7% of the work workforce in the public sector is 25 years or less.
 - 45% are aged 45 Years or more.
 - In 20 years 50% will be retired.
 - It is reckoned that 2 thirds of all jobs will require level three skills by 2014.
- 4.2. The conclusion from these statistics is that we need to address the fundamental skill levels of the organisation to ensure that we really can become an Employer of Choice. The strategic challenge is two fold:
- To attract young talent into the organisation.
 - Ensure that we maximise the talent that we have.
- 4.3. We cannot separate the importance of the Skills Pledge for the Council from its potentially huge contribution towards the prosperity of the City. The Skills Pledge has a massive impact with regard to our vision and is an out-standing example of where organisational and community aspirations can align.
- 4.4. The national statistics relating to the community implications of not having level 2 qualifications are stark:

- 70% of children whose parents do not have a level 2 will not achieve one either.
 - 50% Of those unemployed do not have a level 2.
 - There is a predicted increase in skilled jobs from 9 million to 14 million by 2015.
 - Low skilled jobs are set to reduce over the same period from 3 million to half a million.
 - 75% of prison inmates don't have a level 2.
 - If on incapacity benefit you are more likely to die or retire than find work.
- 4.5. The Council has already received a national GO award from the IDEA for the work we have already achieved on basic skills through joint working between City Learning and Adult Skills and Learning. Over 500 staff have completed the programme being trained in ESOL, numeracy, literacy, ICT and communication skills, making not only a difference to their contribution at work but also providing them with greater life skills in general.
- 4.6. The Head of Adult Skills and Learning and the Head of City Learning are already working upon an outline action plan to support staff across the whole City Council to achieve level 2 qualifications.
- 4.7. Key deliverables are:
- A public sign up to the pledge, made jointly between the City Council and Public Sector partners. Timing to be agreed.
 - A corporate programme of essential skills.
 - A corporate NVQ level II in Business Administration
 - A re-commitment to learner reps and a joint Skills steering group to build a collaborative approach between Trade Unions and Management.
 - An Authority wide audit of skills.
 - A rolling programme of vocational level 2 qualifications identified by the audit and supported by management and delivered by Adult Learning.
 - Implementation of a Corporate Apprenticeship scheme to be managed by City Learning and Adult learning and skills.

A timetable of deliverables is attached at appendix 1

4.8. The main risks are:

- 4.8.1. Simply doing nothing. The misalignment of skills and outcomes becomes wider to the point where the organisation ceases to be fit for purpose.
- 4.8.2. This is a critical action which aligns our capacity with our vision. Not to take this action would be a significant lost opportunity.
- 4.8.3. There are also significant risks if managers are not persuaded of the benefits of raising the educational profile of the workforce. Training must be geared towards improving the business and there must be clear organisational benefits from supporting staff in their development.
- 4.8.4. Training provision may be paid for by the LSC but there is a greater contribution to be made by the employer in terms of time away from the workplace and lost production, or diminished services.
- 4.8.5. It is hugely important that the 'What's in it for me' argument is addressed for managers in hard pressed service areas.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The Essential skills programme will be free in terms of tuition costs. This training is currently funded through the national Skills for life programme through the LSC. The City Council will stand the loss of staff time as per all training.
- 5.2. The Authority wide audit will be managed through existing resources of Adult Skills and learning and City Learning.
- 5.3. The programme of vocational training will be managed on a strict programme by programme basis. The LSC will fund full level two qualifications which have a Learning Aim reference. (i.e. that they are nationally accredited) These will be agreed and authorised by the relevant Corporate Director as a pre-requisite of commencing any programme. These programmes will be free for any employee without a level II qualification. Where this is not the case any cost would have to be met from existing departmental training budgets by agreement of the Corporate Director.
- 5.4. The Corporate apprenticeship proposal has significant financial and staffing implications. A separate report will be brought to Corporate Directors Board to address these issues.

5.5. Author : Jon King

6. Legal implications

The Authority has discretion to give the policy commitment as proposed in this report.

Author: Peter Nicholls

7. Equality Impact

7.1. The skills pledge will have a significant impact on many groups of employees who are experiencing employment and promotional barriers either as a result of English being their second language, inadequate numeracy and literacy, or lacking general educational levels to access relevant vocational training. The statistics show that many disadvantaged people also suffer from low educational attainment.

7.2. The skills pledge is a visible commitment to build capacity at every level in the organisation and to recognise the impact such a policy has within the City as a whole.

8. Report Authors

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Key Decision	No
Reason	N/A
Appeared in Forward Plan	N/A
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)

Appendix 1

Action	Date	Comment
❖ Public Sign Up To a city wide Pledge By Leicester City Council in conjunction with the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police • Leicester Primary Care Trust • Leicester University Hospital Trust 	May 2008	Other public sector organisations will be asked to sign up on and after the public signing.
❖ Corporate Programme Of Essential Skills in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy • Numeracy • I.C.T 	Programme 8 Sept 2008 Programme 9 January 2009	To be delivered by Adult Learning and skills and City learning
❖ A Corporate NVQ Level II Programme Business Administration	Sept 2008	To be delivered by Adult Learning and Skills
❖ An Authority Wide Audit Of Skills Level I, 2 & 3	To commence June 2008	Skill levels to be recorded on individual records on Resourcelink
❖ Creation of a Joint Trade Union And Officer Skills Council	May 2008	This will prioritise areas of skill development and work with service departments to develop specific programmes. TU Learner reps can support this process in the workforce
❖ Pilot Apprenticeship Scheme	October 2008	The pilot will provide clerical & administrative apprenticeships, which will feed jobs across the Council. This will be subject to a separate paper coming back to cabinet in May 2008.