

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MIDSUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

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| From: Head of Economy | Report Number: P21 |
| To: Strategy Committee Executive Committee | Date of meeting: 12 June 2014 16 June 2014 |

CAREERS SOFTWARE PACKAGE, SHOWCASING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The effectiveness of Careers Information Advice and Guidance (Careers IAG) for young people has been identified as a key strand of Suffolk County Council’s (SCC) Raising the Bar programme (a joined-up approach to raising attainment and aspiration across the whole age range from early years to further education in Suffolk). Due to the transfer of responsibilities for Careers IAG to schools, a new market of online products is emerging that can support this provision.
- 1.2 Ensuring that our two districts are ideal locations for sustained and sustainable economic growth is a key priority within the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Strategic Plan.
- 1.3 The aim of this report is to secure match funding in order to enable the development of an online careers platform in collaboration with Suffolk County and other district authorities.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Council commits £25,000 over five years to support the development and maintenance of an online careers platform, subject to funding of £120,000 from Suffolk County Council and £25,000 each from other district and borough councils named in this report.
- The Committee is able to resolve this matter.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The Council would need to commit £25,000 over five years and this would be funded from the Transformation Fund.

4. Risk Management

- 4.1 Key risks are set out below:

| Risk Description | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigation Measures |
|--|-------------------|---|---|
| That other District Councils in Suffolk choose to support different careers support packages | low | Poorer and disjointed offer. Higher cost | Liaison with other districts. Alignment of procurement documents |

| Risk Description | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigation Measures |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|---|
| That the schools do not wish to take up the Licences | Low | Ineffective service | Close liaison with the schools prior to procuring the system |
| That businesses fail to engage with the opportunity | Medium | Ineffective service | Work with the Chambers and JCP to promote the opportunity to businesses |

5. Consultations

- 5.1 A lot of 'early market engagement' with businesses in this area has been carried out to make sure that the online platform can be developed in an informed way. Focus groups have been consulted on the concept and technical specification of the platform. In total over 130 employers, young people and educators were involved and overall the proposal has been received positively and enthusiastically. The report [Exploring student and employer perspectives on creating an online platform for 'Opportunities in Suffolk'](#), commissioned by Suffolk County Council is linked here.

6. Equality Analysis

- 6.1 The platform is being designed for ease of access in a variety of formats with advice from young people. It will be accessible free of charge from home, school, anywhere with internet access and mobile devices.

7. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

- 7.1 The Showcasing the Economy Platform is being developed by Suffolk County Council, Ipswich, Suffolk Coastal, Forest Heath, St Edmundsbury, Mid Suffolk and Babergh district and borough councils.
- 7.2 This project is an exemplar partnership project. It is at the core of the Raising the Bar programme and City Deal.
- 7.3 The platform creates the linkages between Schools, Businesses, Local Authorities and support providers in a simple understandable format.

8. Key Information

- 8.1 New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) in its Strategic Economic Plan to 2026 has set a target for 95,000 more jobs. Babergh and Mid Suffolk's share of this is 20,000.
- 8.2 The Plan's central focus is to drive growth in high impact sectors in order to create new high value jobs and to work with existing businesses to improve their production and competitiveness.
- 8.3 Growth is not just about enabling land and houses. Research on behalf of NALEP emphasised that 17% of employers report local skills deficit and hard to fill vacancies which are holding back growth. Suffolk's educational attainment levels are poor and 40% of graduates are taking non graduate jobs.

- 8.4 The loss of the Connexions service and transfer of careers advice to schools has compounded the issue resulting in a very mixed and confusing offer for young people.
- 8.5 This disconnect between the needs of business, the aspirations of young people and educational provision, is and will continue to be a significant barrier to economic growth unless the local authorities and their partners demonstrate clear leadership and address the issue.
- 8.6 Feedback received from local employers highlights the need to provide stronger links between businesses, education and young people. A jointly procured local authority platform will ensure that all young people and parents in Suffolk are able to access the same, free information about the local economy, links to local businesses and experience of work. This will help them make better informed decisions about their future, raise aspiration and support economic growth.
- 8.7 The Showcasing the Economy platform is integral to the City Deal, which the Councils signed on 30 October 2013. It includes a pledge to develop a locally responsive skills system that maximises the impact of public investment; drives economic growth across New Anglia LEP and offers effective careers support to enable young people to make informed choices about their future.
- 8.8 Since September 2012, schools have been legally responsible for securing access to independent and impartial careers guidance for all their students in years 9 to 11 yet, as the Shout Out Suffolk research found, there is a lack of good quality careers advice and guidance in Suffolk and many secondary school-aged young people are very critical of the advice they had been given.
- 8.9 Most schools in the county will already have made an investment in on-line careers education, information and guidance packages, however none of these currently provide sector specific information and substantial links with local businesses. Through this investment the councils will partner with a specialist provider to enhance and bespoke an existing platform so that it meets our needs and is integrated with the schools. The selection of a partner will be subject to a procurement process.
- 8.10 Once launched the platform will allow young people to access detailed information about Suffolk's key economic sectors, access company specific information by sector and geography including videos of local people in a range of jobs. Once a young person has shown an interest in a particular sector they will have the option to register and receive alerts, sign up for events/activities and navigate to specialist sites and resources. To ensure that information is current businesses will have the opportunity to regularly update their profiles, upload additional content and promote events, experience of work opportunities and further information about their particular sector.
- 8.11 A robust promotional and communications plan will be developed to ensure young people and parents are aware of and using the platform this will include: social media, radio, newspaper, leaflets, posters etc.

9. Appendices

9.1 None.

10. Background Documents

10.1 None.

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