



## CABINET

**Subject Heading:**

Adoption of new Education & Employment Skills Strategy

**Cabinet Member:**

Councillor Oscar Ford

**ELT Lead:**

Tara Geere, Director for Starting Well

**Report Author and contact details:**

Darren Purdie, Head of Education Provision & Inclusion, 01708 434940  
darren.purdie@havering.gov.uk

**Policy context:**

The proposed Education & Employment Skills Strategy outlines the context of line-of-sight challenge for young people and residents to opportunities to upskill, enter the workforce, and the proposed strategic approach to supporting the residents of the Borough

**Financial summary:**

Currently, all of the proposed activity is covered by the existing provision of secured external grants covering Adult Education, Connect to Work and Trailblazer programmes, for example, rather than core Council budgets. These funds have been secured for the duration of this iteration of the Strategy.

**Is this a Key Decision?**

Significant effect on two or more Wards

**When should this matter be reviewed?**

At the earliest opportunity.

**Reviewing OSC:**

People

### The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

- X People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well
- X Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy
- Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council

**SUMMARY**

This report presents to Cabinet for adoption the draft Education & Employment Skills Strategy.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cabinet is recommended to adopt the draft Education & Employment Skills Strategy

**REPORT DETAIL**

The previous Employment & Skills Strategy was designed to expire in 2022. In 2014, Havering commissioned "*A Research Study into Skills and Employment in Havering*" to provide a comprehensive understanding of Havering's workforce. This was to help inform the Council's future projects and strategy in the key areas of skills, training and employment, and to identify the skills and employment needs of local and regional employers, and to assist training providers to develop responsive, employer led courses in the future.

The appointed consultants produced a report providing a comprehensive local labour market assessment for Havering, which acted as a baseline for a Havering Employment and Skills Plan - the aim of which was to identify where, why and how the Council can support a more effective labour and skills market in the borough.

The study was required to support Havering Council in its development of practical approaches that:

- addressed weaknesses and enhanced strengths of the boroughs working age population,
- identified relevant funding opportunities,
- identified specific projects and strategies for Harold Hill that reflect its individual issues when compared to the rest of Havering; and
- aligned delivery of skills to the needs of local and regional employers.

However, the recommendations were not implemented at that time; this was due to a lack of resources being available to allocate to the Employment and Skills Team. Following a restructure in November 2024, the Employment & Skills Team (predominately funded through external grants and not by core Council funding) was repositioned within the Education Provision & Inclusion Team. This situated the team alongside a range of educational teams who work across several phases of education to create a continuum providing a line of sight to aspiration and opportunity. Teams include the Young People's Education & Skills team (who work pro-actively within schools and with school leavers to support them and increase

awareness of post-compulsory pathways into employment via further, higher or work-based education routes). Also in the service area is Havering Adult College, who hold the Adult Education budget that supports the provision and delivery of both vocational skills courses and employability support programmes. Additionally, the Virtual School sits within the service area, and this affords those most at risk and vulnerable of our young people greater opportunities to access longer term support into credible pathways.

This alignment was a strategic decision to allow for the development of clear lines of sight for young people and residents who may otherwise feel a lack of ambition or aspiration, and therefore not be motivated to fulfil their potential due to a range of factors (generational, socio-economic, etc). The Employment and Skills Team has secured £3.3m over the 5-year duration of this strategy for the Connect to Work initiative, which will cover the proposed staffing requirements and resources/materials to deliver on the prescribed outcomes. Similarly, the Trailblazers project has attracted £354k for 25/26, with a similar amount projected for 26/27, for ring-fenced use in the delivery of innovative employment and skills activity.

Given the refreshed work on the Inclusive Growth and Social Value Strategies at this time, it was logical to incorporate an Education & Employment Skills Strategy that laid out the intention of the combined education services to work within the available resource to provide a comprehensive range of engagement opportunities. These start with in-reach activities to inspire and engage school age pupils to ignite their ambition, and follow this through with the information, advice, guidance and practical developmental support available through the continuum of local education and employability services. This includes expanding opportunities for people with SEND and additional needs through employment forums and supported pathways, and the effective deployment of Havering Works and Havering Adult College, This can include Local London, Lower Thames Crossing, New City College, Ford Motor Company and so on. This allows for sufficient flex within the Strategy to respond as needed to evolving local skills needs as new employers are brought into the borough through the delivery of the Inclusive Growth and the Social Value strategies, which cover the regeneration aspects of this work.

All of this can then link into the deliverable objectives of both the Inclusive Growth and Social Value Strategies, to give residents within Havering – irrespective of their ages, socio-economic status or perceived disadvantage – opportunities to progress, grow and contribute as valued members of society and the community. This draft of the strategy for Education & Employment Skills, therefore, should be read in conjunction with those documents.

Once the Strategy is approved, a multi-agency and departmental action and implementation plan will be drawn up to cover the deliverables funded via the external grants. While presented as a 5 year strategy, the commitment to keep the Education & Employment Skills Strategy under continuous review is a given, to ensure it can flex to respond to changes in demographics, funding and emerging priorities.

## **REASONS AND OPTIONS**

There is no statutory requirement for any local authority to adopt an Education & Employment Skills strategy. It is evident, however, that should the Council wish to prioritise both the economic health of its borough as well as ensure sufficient and appropriate pathways via education and training to support a work-ready population, it should make tactical decisions in pursuit of such an objective in the context of a deliverable strategy. It should also be noted that there are practical wider health (both mental and physical) benefits widely associated with improved access to, and engagement with, high quality education and training, especially where this supports personal ambition to engage with sustainable employment.

### **Reasons for the decision:**

The adoption of a refreshed strategy would allow project investment decisions to be made in their proper strategic context, and allow for suitable flexibility to respond to intrinsic and extrinsic factors and demands.

### **Other options considered:**

There are four options for consideration:

1. To decide that an Education & Employment Skills Strategy is unnecessary
2. To adopt the refreshed strategy as drafted
3. To require minor changes to the refreshed strategy
4. To require a comprehensive reworking of the refreshed strategy

The first option is not recommended as it would lead to sub-optimal decision making without strategic context, and increase the risk of a negative impact on the local economy and resident workforce.

The second option is recommended as the most proportionate to the need and the opportunities available within the current funding window.

The third option can be recommended if members feel that amendment is required, when looked at in conjunction with the Inclusive Growth and Social Value Strategies.

The fourth option could bring with it an un-resourced cost, as any ground-up reworking may require externally commissioned input once again without a guaranteed return on the investment (or available resource to fund such a commissioned piece of work).

## **IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

### **Financial implications and risks:**

Currently, all of the proposed activity is covered by the existing provision of secured external grants covering Adult Education, Connect to Work and Trailblazer programmes, for example, rather than core Council budgets.

Connect to Work grant funding has been agreed as follows:

2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total
£433,978	£818,995	£889,422	£825,558	£329,000	£3,296,953

Trailblazer grant funding of £354,290 has been agreed for 25/26. No funding has been confirmed beyond 25/26, although it has been indicated that a similar sum will be available in 26/27.

Both of these grants are based on reimbursing eligible expenditure, so the actual grant claimed could be less than the agreed maximum.

Adult Education courses linked to employability are currently wholly funded by Government grant.

If the level of grant funding reduces in future years, expenditure on the Strategy would need to be revised accordingly.

### **Legal implications and risks:**

*There are no immediate legal implications arising out of the recommendations in this report.*

*Reviewed by Gavin Milnthorpe*

### **Human Resources implications and risks:**

*There are no HR implications and risks associated with this strategy*

*Reviewed by Jennifer Barnor*

### **Equalities implications and risks:**

***No response received by deadline.***

*As this related to the introduction of a new strategy, and the adoption of same is not likely to adversely impact on some residents or staff, no EqHIA is required according to the official corporate guidance.*

**[EqHIA Process Chart](#)**

**Health and Wellbeing implications and Risks**

*Havering Council is committed to protecting and promoting the health and wellbeing of residents. Increasing the aspirations, skills and employability throughout the life-course offers a significant opportunity to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents. These improvements can be realised both directly, through the mental, social and physical benefits that can be associated with engaging in good quality work and education/training, and indirectly, by increasing earning potential and employability and in doing so improving the financial circumstances of residents.*

*The adoption of the Havering Education, Employment and Skills strategy offers an important opportunity to drive forward improvements across these areas of work, and in turn maximise the associated health and wellbeing benefits.*

*The strategy acknowledges the importance of assessing and responding to the needs of residents who face additional barriers to accessing education and employment, many of whom will face multiple forms of disadvantage and inequality. On-going monitoring throughout strategy implementation should seek to identify any groups that continue to face undue disadvantage with respect to education, employment and skills, with a view to ensuring that appropriate support can be put in place to address this.*

*Reviewed by Emily Grundy*

**ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

*The Strategy poses no material impact on the environment directly, but positive engagement with training providers and employers (both anchor and SMEs) will see the development and promotion of Green industries and training to access Green Industries.*

*Aspects of post-compulsory education and training can also be delivered remotely without compromising guided learning hours, and as such can reduce direct impact on congestion, and fuel emissions, due to reduced need to travel. Where travel is unavoidable, public transport links are good to the vast majority of providers thus reducing the need for additional traffic.*

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are no background papers

The proposed revised Education, Employment & Skills Strategy is appended.