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Title of meeting:	Cabinet
Subject:	Skills Strategy review 2021
Date of meeting:	8 March 2022
Report by:	Tristan Samuels Director Regeneration
Wards affected:	All

1. Requested by

Deputy leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education for information only

2. Purpose

2.1 To review the progress since the cabinet approved the council's Skill's Strategy in November 2020.

3. Context

3.1 In 2018 launched a skills survey in partnership with Shaping Portsmouth to provide a local baseline of need to be considered alongside generic business LMI (labour market information)

3.2 Economic growth strategy 2019-2036 was published and called for a focused skills strategy to meet the city's needs.

3.3 March 2020 delayed the publication of the Skills Strategy with the changing priorities of Covid.

3.3 In November 2020 the Skills Strategy was agreed by full council and published following an updated theme of respond to acknowledge the challenges for businesses under Covid.

3.4 This report summarises progress today and updates against the original strategy document published in November 2020.

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4. Information Summaries

This section summarises the achievements against year 1 of the strategy implementation action plan.

Theme 1 Inspire

Objective 1.1

Encourage a skills-progression mentality across the city.

In 2021 the skills partnerships across the city delivered:

Future Portsmouth 2021 - delivered online with slightly reduced attendance on previous year reflecting the changing economic environment. This will continue online for 2022 to reflect the uncertainty around face to face events and plans to return face to face in 2023.

National Apprenticeship Week 2021 - due to Covid some activities were reduced (Shaping Portsmouth Apprenticeship Bus delayed) but diverse activities online and using social media were promoted in partnership with Solent Apprenticeship and Skills Hub, led by Portsmouth City Council Children, Families, and Education services.

Portsmouth City Council supported the Solent Apprenticeship and Skills Hub in its extended ESF tender to secure independent IAG (information, advice and guidance) for businesses and individuals to 2023.

Objective 1.2

Increase workforce retention and support the development of resident skills to allow city opportunities to be obtained

Employer consultation recommended the delay of the Portsmouth Pledge to ensure successful outcomes - now prioritised for 2022 under Shaping Portsmouth's Skills and Employability programme.

Work experience was expanded online to engage young people whilst maintaining Covid rules for businesses, seeing some positive successes from key employer partners.

The Shaping Portsmouth Living Wage pledge remains a priority but has been delayed supporting employers' changing business priorities under Covid.

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Objective 1.3

Strengthen and improve the Career Information and Guidance (CIAG) available to all residents

Portsmouth City Council's education teams supported young people, parents/carers and professionals with innovative online resources using SUN (southern university network) Flying Start Portsmouth. The Careers and Apprenticeship show was delivered as an online event to cover Hampshire in a wider partnership.

National Careers service delivery was extended in the city to March 2022 and the Council is actively seeking partnership for the next delivery round to ensure IAG (information advice and guidance) is available to residents.

Objective 1.4 Promote inclusion and employability for all to ensure a career and skills development pathway for everyone.

In 2021 Portsmouth City Council secured and commenced delivery of the DWP Restart programme to support unemployed adults into work. This is a 4-year delivery programme.

The joint delivery programme from our Regeneration and Children's, Families and Education directorates, in partnership with DWP commenced the 2-year funded youth hub to support young people aged 16-24 years old and in receipt of universal credit into work. The project has already supported over 144 young people (134 UC claimants) into sustained employment.

Portsmouth City Council acted as a Gateway to support businesses engage with the governments funded Kickstart placement programme. This helps young people aged 16-24 on universal credit by providing a funded work placements (25 hours a week for up to 6 months). We have supported businesses in offering over 282 starts, including hosting 52 placements within the council. This programme is now closed for new applications, but approved placements continue to recruit until 31/03/22.

Disability Confident remains a key priority for DWP and its partners, with Shaping Portsmouth delivering its 2022 conference focused on "Our People" and delivering a strong inclusion element promoting the abilities of young people with SEND (special educational needs).

Theme 2 integrate

Objective 2.1

Ensure employers are at the heart of technical and vocational training

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During 2021 the Shaping Portsmouth Skills group was re-established to support business engagement and curriculum development. This group includes the 3 travel to learn

colleges and independent training providers and is supported by Solent Apprenticeship and Skills Hub.

In July 2021, the partnership of 10 local colleges, led by Fareham College and supported by Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council and Hampshire County Council secured a Strategic Development fund project working with Hampshire Chamber of Commerce to develop curriculum delivery around the priorities of Marine, Digital and Net Zero.

In December 2021 the Solent Marine, Engineering and Digital Institute of Technology was approved, led by Solent University, and covering across the region, the council has supported the partnership which includes college partners led by Fareham College and a range of key employers including The Royal Navy. The institute will focus on higher technical skills.

Objective 2.2

Provide fully comprehensive business support to assist businesses with their current and future workforce needs.

In 2021, working with the Economic Growth team, Shaping Portsmouth have re-imagined their business support groups and continued to deliver the innovative business support and crowd funder opportunities to support businesses.

The next Employer Survey is now planned for late 2022 to reflect the needs for businesses to move into recovery under covid.

The Portsmouth City Council Business bulletin continues to grow, currently reaching over 4550 individuals and businesses with a range of support, including grants, skills development, and business support.

Objective 2.3

Work to increase the amount of Portsmouth residents that have higher qualifications, specifically apprenticeships

Portsmouth City Council levy transfer spend was more than £260,000 to support Portsmouth non levy paying employers to engage in a wide range of apprenticeships. This work has been delivered in partnership with Solent Apprenticeship and Skills hub.

Current data sees a significant increase in level 4 attainment in residents since 2019 but national tracking still shows achievement tracking 6% below the national averages and remains a key focus for the strategy work.

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Objective 2.4

Decrease the amount of Portsmouth residents who have no or low-level qualifications

The Employment and Skills officer is working with planning colleagues to implement best practice within our Employment and Skills Plans for section 106 permissions to ensure that the council ensures best value from this work as part of our Social Value commitments in 2022.

The Shaping Portsmouth Skills group have agreed an Adult Skills priority for 2022, which includes targeted unemployment, care leaver and homelessness pathways to support our most vulnerable adults progress towards (and within) employment.

Theme 3 - Partner

Objective 3.1 Create a clear communication network for skills partnership within the city to use in relation to skills and the workforce.

The Shaping Portsmouth Skills group supports focused FE engagement with businesses and supports wider projects including the Strategic Development Fund and Institute of Technology.

The wider economic growth team continue to encourage business and education partnership to facilitate funding and business opportunities. In 2021 this included supporting CRF funding bids for local colleges for industry targeted curriculum development.

Children, Families and Education have agreed to joint fund a post to support schools to develop their careers strategy, meet the Gatsby benchmarks and increase meaningful employer engagement.

3.2 Continue existing and develop new programmes and projects designed to support organisation and employers employ and train vulnerable adults

In 2021, Employment Learning and Skills secured an additional 2 years of funding from Public Health, to support the additional post of a Health and Wellbeing Coordinator to support the unemployment support programmes. This role supports employers and individuals to overcome barriers to work. This is in addition to employer support from DWP around access to work and other funding opportunities.

Portsmouth Children, Families and Education continue to work with Shaping Portsmouth and other partners to drive the SEND (special educational needs) work and this included focused delivery at the 2022 Shaping Portsmouth annual conference promoting ability.

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Objective 3.3 Work to create a skills and learning provision that is focused on economic growth and prosperity for the city of Portsmouth

The continued work of the economic development team, working with businesses and skills providers, including the SDF (strategic development fund) and IOT (institute of technology) partnerships ensures that the work of the council focuses on the delivery of the City Vision 2040.

Objective 3.4 Encourage and support clean growth education, skills and training

The council's Children, Family and Education, and Regeneration directorates continue to work together to encourage and secure local funding around clean growth and the wider net zero initiatives, including supporting the development of the SDF bid (led by Fareham College) into future funding opportunities.

Theme 4 - Respond

Objective 4.1 Workforce reskilling

In 2021 Shaping Portsmouth raised £20,000 through Crowdfunder and CIL (community infrastructure levy) to support their digital enablement project to upskills residents and support businesses to develop. A further Shaping Portsmouth project supports businesses develop their digital capability against the increased needs (including cyber security)

The Shaping Portsmouth Skills and Employability programme ran the 100in100 campaign in 2021. Delivered in partnership between our 3 travel to learn colleges, Solent Apprenticeship and Skills Hub, independent providers and the Portsmouth News, the project sought to secure 100 employment opportunities in 100 days as a response to rising youth unemployment. The partnership secured 413 vacancies over the project period and 269 young people moved into employment during the 100 days.

To date, Portsmouth City Council has supported 282 young people move from claiming universal credit to employment by acting as a Kickstart Gateway for Portsmouth businesses.

The Shaping Portsmouth partnership, including Portsmouth City Council continues to actively support businesses and promote the use of funding to support training and business development working in partnership with all skills providers and the independent information advice and guidance delivered by Solent Apprenticeship and Skills hub.

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Objective 4.2 Redundancy Support

Portsmouth City Council commenced delivery of the covid response DWP programme, JETS (job entry targeted support) in Sept 2020 with a target of 22% of participants moving into employment. The programme has now been extended to September 2022 and is delivering positive outcomes for over 40% of starts. In July 21 the council secured a new partnership and commenced delivery of the 4-year unemployment programme Restart.

This skills development work collaborates closely with the wider economic growth team to promote opportunities to employers and ensure the promotion and encouragement of apprenticeship and other funded support for businesses. This includes support for the Children's, families and Education SEND work supporting young people with special educational needs, and the delivery of the Work and Health unemployment programme which continues to support adults with multiple barriers (including health conditions) move into work which commenced in 2018 and ends in 2023.

In December 2021 Serco have been awarding the shortened round of ESF unemployment support which is now being promoted through all channels to support individuals at risk or experiencing redundancy.

Objective 4.3 Alignment for recovery funding

The wider economic growth team continue to work with other business support partners and funders to promote and secure funding for Portsmouth businesses. This work includes crowd-funder which is now an exemplar for other local authorities.

Objective 4.4 Young people

Under the government's Plan for Jobs, the Council applied to be a Gateway to support local businesses to secure Kickstart placements. The programme has now closed for new applications but to date we have support 282 young people off universal credit and into a 6-month funded placement. Further approved placements continue to recruit up to 31/03/22

The "My Future in Portsmouth Youth Hub" secured 2 years funding in March 2021 as a unique partnership between Employment Learning and Skills (Regeneration), Children's Families and Education, and DWP. This partnership has so far supported 144 young people (134 UC claimants) into employment through targeted individualised support.

The joint LEP post with Children's, Families, and education to support the development of the careers strategy further supports this work.

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5. Conclusion

The launch of the Skills Strategy in 2020 was intended to mark the recovery phase of Covid. Unfortunately, the economic and social impact of the pandemic continued to heavily impact on the business community. There were still significant achievements against the challenging targets set under the Economic and Regeneration Strategy 2019 and this work continues as a priority.

Following the planned 2022 Skills Survey, a review will be completed with the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education, and the Cabinet Member for Culture and Economic Growth to decide on the formal review point for this work, recognising the complex environment it has delivered across. A review is currently anticipated in 2023/4.

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Signed by Tristan Samuels, Director of Regeneration

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Skills Strategy	https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Skills-and-labour-market-strategy-accessible.pdf
Economic development and regeneration strategy	https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/council-and-democracy/policies-and-strategies/economic-development-and-regeneration-strategy/
Portsmouth's City Vision 2040	https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/2021/01/29/a-new-vision-for-portsmouths-future/ www.imagineportsmouth.co.uk
Portsmouth City Council Priorities	https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/council-and-democracy/policies-and-strategies/our-council-priorities/

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Portsmouth's Strategic approach	Our council aims and priorities - Portsmouth City Council
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