

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	To agree to fund Herefordshire's new youth employment hub until March 2022 and provide additional support for those young people most at risk of becoming NEET
Date of decision:	20 th July 2021
Decision maker:	Andrew Lovegrove, Chief Finance Officer and S151 officer
Authority for delegated decision:	<p>Decision taken by Cabinet to approve the COVID 19 Recovery Plan on 24th June 2021: That authority be delegated to the Director of Economy and Place, Director Adults and Communities, Director Children and Families and Director of Public Health be authorised to take all operational decisions to implement recommendation including, but not limited to, the procurement and commissioning of the identified projects (as set out in the detailed action plan)</p> <p>http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?IId=50037702&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI58109</p>
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	<p>The COVID Recovery Plan was approved by Cabinet on 24th June which provides funding of £6.1m to support the economy, community wellbeing and organisation with recovery. The plan provided an overview of the schemes for delivery, which included 'Joined up for Jobs' and all appropriate consultation was undertaken at this time.</p> <p>The section 151 officer has been consulted and supportive of the project.</p>
Decision made:	<p>The decision consist of two elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To fund the Youth Employment Hub until March 2022 which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of council premises 57-59 Blue School St, Hereford, HR1 2AR formerly used by Hoople Recruitment and associated utility and ICT costs • Recruitment of the Youth Employment Hub Co-ordinator (HC8), 2 Careers and Employment Advisors (HC9) and an Apprentice - JE process to follow. • Honorarium for two supervisors to support with building matters of the Youth Employment Hub 2) To support 30 year 11 students who have been identified as those most at risk of becoming NEET <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support the positive transition of approximately 30 year 11 students from Herefordshire Pupil Referral Service and The Brookfield School into Post 16 education, employment or training. Students have been identified as those most vulnerable who are at a high risk of becoming NEET due to having social, emotional and mental health issues. • The project will be a targeted programme with post 16 providers to work with those at risk of NEET. Young people will be supported to learn, adapt and engage so they are able to choose and sustain a suitable education, employment or training pathway post 16.

Reasons for decision:

The global Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting measures taken to reduce the spread of the virus have had an unprecedented impact on the national and local economy and on people's wellbeing and mental (as well as physical) health. Nationally the magnitude of the recession caused by the pandemic is unprecedented, GDP declined by 9.8% in 2020 the steepest drop since records began in 1948.

The pandemic has also had a severe impact on people's mental health and wellbeing, due to long periods of anxiety, isolation, and uncertainty. The Herefordshire Community Wellbeing Survey 2021 found 28% of people reported high levels of anxiety, 32% experienced drop in household income, 33% doing less exercise, and 30% sleeping less well. Wellbeing is lowest in those living in the most deprived areas.

The council has worked across all directorates to support businesses, residents and communities throughout the pandemic to remain as safe as possible and to prevent and reduce spread of infection and protect those most vulnerable in our society.

Our focus now moves towards recovery. Over the coming months the true impact of the pandemic will become better known for the economy, community wellbeing and organisation.

To support the recovery cabinet approved a £6.1m COVID Recovery Plan which includes the economy, community wellbeing and organisation. The recovery plan now focuses on the immediate impactful actions we need to take in the short term. Our priorities are to:

- ***Establish Safe and Welcoming Places***
- ***Support Business Viability and Resilience,***
- ***Support Employment***
- ***Support Wellbeing.***

Youth Employment Hub background

Young people's prospects in the labour market is a cause for concern, they are amongst those most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a significant increase in youth unemployment in Herefordshire. The number of 16 to 24 year olds claiming universal credit in March 2021 was 895; 116% higher than in March 2020.

It will be harder for young people who may lack skills, confidence or experience. The risk that young people who were socially excluded before Covid-19 become even more socially isolated. Many young people are unsure about their future.

The government has announced through its Plan for Jobs strategy a range of supporting interventions, including the Kickstart Scheme and dedicated youth employability coaches aimed at young people aged 16-24 claiming Universal Credit.

The success of these interventions is dependent on the ability to engage with young people. Without access to appropriate physical space there is a risk of disengagement. Being Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) is linked to poorer health and employment outcomes for decades.

NEET Prevention work background

Year 11 pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs are highly

	<p>vulnerable and at greater risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) during the transition from school to Post 16 Education. The outbreak of the Covid-19 virus has disrupted two consecutive academic years, significantly increasing this risk and vulnerability. It has had an impact on delivering the intensity and individualised level of required support for these young people. Current year 11 SEMH students are therefore now at an even higher risk of becoming NEET.</p> <p>The latest national published statistics for the proportion of 16 and 17 year olds recorded as NEET is the average of December 2019, January 2020 and February 2020. For England this was 2.7% and Herefordshire was 2.9%, 0.2% above the national average. The average combined percentage of NEET and not known for Herefordshire was 9.2%. At the time of writing the 2021 national data has not been published.</p> <p>Current Herefordshire NEET recorded statistic for June 2021 is 4.1% 153 young people 0.4% higher than June 2020 (3.7%, 132 young people). Of this cohort, 49% (75 young people) have been identified as having an additional need.</p> <p>Monitoring of the NEET cohort suggests there is an over representation of young people who were considered to have SEMH needs .previously attending a pupil referral unit, special school for children with SEMH or other young people in mainstream schools with identified SEMH needs.</p> <p>The Learning and Work Institute’s NEET prevention what works report 2020, states that approaches that include flexible and tailored support are proven to be particularly effective in acting as a mechanism for positive outcomes across attainment and employment, progress and engagement for at risk young people.</p>
<p>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</p>	<p>The COVID recovery plan budget allocation must be committed within the 2021/22 financial year.</p> <p>Youth Employment Hub Legal considerations:</p> <p>The Council owns 57-59 Blue School St, Hereford HR1 2AR and therefore the arrangement for use of the building will be made internally through an exchange of Head of Terms.</p> <p>Equality considerations:</p> <p>The aim of the youth employment hub is to facilitate supportive interventions which avoid young people from becoming long term unemployed. By offering a physical and online presence, working with key stakeholders and joining up activity. The hub offers a greater level of accessibility and cohesion to those seeking support.</p> <p>The hub will monitor attendance and participation to ensure that all young people are able to access services. It is proposed that the Herefordshire SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service Herefordshire) young person’s adviser will be co-located in the Hub.</p> <p>A Covid-19 secure risk assessment is being carried out and will be signed off before the physical hub can be opened. Each organisation using the hub will be responsible for carrying out their own risk assessment.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>The option of not doing this was considered but rejected, on the basis that youth unemployment is high and is predicted to rise even further. There is likely to be strong on-going demand for the services provided by the Hub. The establishment of a Hub now will ensure that post pandemic when a kind of ‘normality’ returns,</p>

	<p>young people will be in a position to take up opportunities and Herefordshire is well served with the appropriate infrastructure to aid recovery.</p> <p>Those who have been identified at a high risk of becoming NEET require even more dedicated support due to the effects of the pandemic.</p>
Details of any declarations of interest made:	None

Signed:
Andrew Lovegrove, Chief Finance Officer

Date: 20 July 2021