

London Borough of Hackney
Skills, Economy and Growth Scrutiny Commission
Municipal Year 2022/23
Date of Meeting Tuesday 25 April 2023

Minutes of the proceedings of
the Skills, Economy and
Growth Scrutiny Commission
held at Hackney Town Hall,
Mare Street, London E8 1EA

Chair	Councillor Polly Billington
Councillors in Attendance	Cllr Gilbert Smyth, Cllr Jon Narcross, Cllr Fliiss Premru and Cllr Joe Walker
Apologies:	Cllr Clare Potter, Cllr Jessica Webb and Cllr Claudia Turbet-Delof
Officers In Attendance	Stephen Haynes (Strategic Director- Economy, Regeneration and New Homes) and Dujon Harvey (Head of Employment, Skills & Adult Learning)
Other People in Attendance	Councillor Carole Williams (Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities)
Members of the Public	
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Councillor Polly Billington in the Chair

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
 - 1.1 Apologies for absence from Cllr Potter, Cllr Webb and Cllr Turbet-Delof.
 - 1.2 No apologies for lateness.
 - 1.3 No officer apologies for absence.

- 2 Urgent Items / Order of Business**
 - 2.1 No urgent items.
 - 2.2 Order of business is as laid out in the agenda.

- 3 Declarations of Interest**

3.1 No declarations of interest.

4 Cabinet Question Time (7:05 - 8:30pm)

4.1 The Chair introduced the item and explained that a key element of the scrutiny function is to hold the Mayor and Cabinet to account in public as part of a cabinet question time session.

4.1.1 In the municipal year the Commission holds a question time session with the Cabinet and Senior Officers to ask questions about performance and decisions taken within the Council related to their portfolio area and the remit of the Skills, Economy and Growth Scrutiny Commission.

4.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities was asked to provide information to the scrutiny commission about the work the Council was doing in relation to the following topic areas.

- Employment and Skills for the green and circular economy
- Adult Learning - a look at the redevelopment and changes to adult learning courses and support to refugees and migrants entering the UK.

4.2 The discussion commenced with a verbal update from the Cabinet Member in response to the topic areas outlined above.

4.3 The Chair welcomed to the meeting Cllr Carole Williams Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities, Stephen Haynes, Strategic Director Economy, Regeneration and New Homes and Dujon Harvey, Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning.

4.4 The Cabinet Members commenced her presentation by outlining the points in relation to employment and skills and the green and circular economy.

4.4.1 The Cabinet Member informed that to shape the plan and deliver on the commitment to a) double the size of the green economy and b) help local businesses to transition to become a low carbon business. The council was mapping the green skills gaps and identifying the newer opportunities in Hackney's economy.

4.4.2 The Green Skills and Circular Economy Commission was being set up. There had been a hiatus following a change in officer for the employment, skills and adult learning the head of service. The new head of service was now in post and would be developing the Green Skills and Circular Economy Commission. A draft work plan and terms of reference for the Commission was being drafted.

4.4.3 The Cabinet Member highlighted that the work by the Diversity Tech Commission will be used to inform this work as well as drawing on the expertise from across the council. A timetable for this work is currently being drafted.

4.4.4 The Council would also be drawing on the learning from other boroughs and public sector bodies including Central London Forward (CLF) and ReLondon.

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- 4.4.5 The Cabinet Member pointed out this has been the largest number of crises that she has witnessed the council needing to respond too at one time throughout all her years in local government. The Cabinet Member commended the work of all the officers who have been provided a response to all the migrants and refugees moving into the borough for the previous Syrian and Afghanistan crisis to the most recent Homes for Ukraine Scheme.
- 4.4.6 The work was initial support work was carried out by the Policy and Partnerships Team and they worked with adult social services. Employment and skills have been working across the council to deliver ESOL and adult learning classes. Following this the Employment, Skills and Adult Learning Team have delivered several drop-in events, employment and job training workshops and job fairs in the borough and around Central London. Attending job fairs in partnership with CLF and Ingeus.
- 4.4.7 Due to the level of support required for the refugees and migrants work the support service is being centralised. The Council has set up a new refugee; migrant and asylum seeker support service. This service now sits under adult social care.
- 4.4.8 The service will bring together their responses to the various Government programmes such as Homes for Ukraine Scheme; Afghan Citizen Settlement Scheme; Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy and Asylum Seekers in the Home Office funded hotels under a single service.
- 4.4.9 The employment and skills service will continue to work with the service to deliver employment and skills support for migrants and refugees. This will build on the service that has been delivered over the last few months.
- 4.4.10 In relation to ESOL and employment a one-off funding amount was agreed to support refugees with ESOL and employment provision. It has been agreed that the usage of this fund will be flexible to respond to changing needs as they emerge. This will be carried over into additional financial years.
- 4.4.11 The Cabinet Member explained that she and the Mayor of Hackney had met with refugees (Ukraine scheme) on the first anniversary of the attacks in Ukraine. They met with the refugee, migrants and their hosts. It was a very challenging meeting listening to their experiences of fleeing their homes, and country and the impact this has had on them. Although there is support it is recognised that the provision of support by the council goes a little way to helping them overcome the trauma and hurt that they have all experienced.
- 4.4.12 The Cabinet Member informed the scrutiny commission that she was proud of the work by officers. Notwithstanding this work would never be enough because the support from the central Government did not cover half of the work that the council needs to do. This is the rationale for bringing all the services together. The Cabinet Member was of the view this was an important area of work, and she was pleased that scrutiny reviewing the work carried out.
- 4.4.13 In relations to green skills the Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning from LBH added that the research referenced had enable the council to link into the WPI report which outlined the green industries in London that are growing. The council is focusing on the key sectors for Hackney which are: home

building, power, reduce, recycle and reuse. These are critical to the local circular economy.

4.4.14 It was pointed out that the research reports published on this topic had quoted a high number of jobs (half a billion between now and 2050) however the net figure for growth in relation to these jobs is significantly lower and this is where the council would be focusing their work to make sure they are impactful.

4.4.15 The officer highlighted that several jobs will be lost to green jobs. Therefore, it will become about the work that they do across employment, skills and adult learning for skills training.

4.4.16 Although the knowledge about green jobs is still abstract, they are doing specific work around work and skills and welcome the scrutiny to help them develop the way forward.

4.4.17 The Strategic Director Economy, Regeneration and New Homes added in terms of further research the Economic Development Manager previously reported that they had commissioned Oxford Economics to do a study of their data. This had revealed some interesting information and projected that Hackney would have approximately 200 green jobs by 2030, raising to nearly 4000 in 2050.

4.4.18 It has been noted that currently there is a skills gap in those sectors and areas and the council is working with the services to fill them. This is relevant to the adult learning provision because they match the courses to the gaps and demand.

4.5 The Chair informed the Commission they would split the Q&A for each topic to ensure they were both covered.

4.6 **Questions, Answers and Discussion for Employment and Skills**

(i) **Members referred to the council's work to identify the skills required across all service areas within its own workforce to support the council's net zero work program plan. Members asked for more information about this. However if the information was not collected Members asked for more information about the Council's plan to develop the knowledge to support the council's net zero work program.**

(ii) **Members referred to the skills gap and ambitious target to double the size of the local green economy by 2030. Member asked how the council will ensure it is tackling that skills gap and who it will be partnering with locally to ensure the target was met.**

(iii) **Members referred to the South London Partnership doing a labour forecast around skills for retrofitting. Members asked how the council is using this information and if it fits within the Council's budget for training.**

(iv) **Member also asked if the training in colleges aligns with Hackney's direct labour.**

In response to the question about council's workforce the Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning explained they have a minimal baseline in terms of the

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council's need. It was highlighted that the council has a very small cohort of officers that are delivering net zero specific roles (less than 50) and many of those roles were quite senior management positions.

The position of these roles highlighted the area of challenge in relation to diversity and access. This will be an area of work for the Green Skills and Circular Economy Commission. The level of these roles is similar to the digital and tech and the creative industries in the past. The council is seeing an emergence of the research and work to establish the wider context of the jobs (including the council). The current research is showing a disproportionate diversity metric around building green skills. It is showing a representation of 74% for the white ethnicity group for green skills.

The other area in the green economy with a large volume of roles that are not senior roles is in recycling and this is in the circular economy. Through the Green Skills and Circular Economy Commission the council will be exploring how to approach the green skills and circular economy. This will consider whether they have one commission that will explore both together and if they need to develop semi separate work streams. They will be working through the ideas to decide the most effective way to address the need.

Currently they are developing the terms of reference and allocating resources (a dedicated officer within the council) to start working on the Green Skills and Circular Economy Commission, membership, identifying the council departments and the supply chain (procurement). Homes, building and power are the areas they expect the jobs to emerge in.

In relation to retrofitting the employment and skills service had support the council a retrofit bid which was successful. This will be used to identify the roles they can develop apprenticeships in, and the apprenticeship levy spend to upskill roles in the council to address the diversity disproportionality.

In developing the Green Skills and Circular Economy Commission the council recognises the need to establish the drivers in the baseline research before moving forward. The council is also aware that they have a lack of jobs and want to look at their apprenticeship program and levy to develop skills for people at entry level to be able to move into the senior roles. The Green Skills and Circular Economy Commission's initial piece of work once staffed will be to understand the future skills needs and how to address that with the apprenticeship levy.

(v) In relation to the above response Members asked if the Green Skills and Circular Economy Commission would be focused on the Council's workforce?

In response the Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning confirmed it would have a wider remit. Currently the council has access to data about roles in the economy and industries.

The officer explained that the reason for the initial focus for the Green Skills and Circular Economy Commission being on the council was due to the baseline research. The Council wanted to develop their understanding of their own

internal economy first before aligning with the wider borough to take the actions forward.

- (vi) **Members referred to the definition of green jobs and asked about the working definition the council was using or if it was using the definition known to the jobs and if it would facilitate meeting the net zero environmental goals.**

In response the Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning confirmed they are using the mission-based definition which is looking at roles that either directly contribute or support. These are linked to the 3 industries identified for Hackney (homes, building and power) that have a direct contribution to net zero. They have identified that in Hackney there is enough opportunity in terms economic growth for the businesses that will be moving to the borough within the green and circular economy. Therefore, they are working towards a mission-based definition. The report reference by the Strategic Director has made a recommendation to use the mission-based definition following the research into the wider economy.

In relation to the question about the skills gap in the green economy the Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning explained that the aim is to work with partners. The officer pointed out the council has connected with consultancies like Oxford Economics and ReLondon to understand the research and work with colleges. It was noted that New City College (NCC) is on their base level employment and skills board. They have started to review NCC's plans and the Mayor of London's Green Skills Academy to understand their skills base.

The officer pointed out that in relation to resource colleges have a larger budget to develop and deliver skills. Whereas this is more challenging for the council. The aim is for the council to understand the skills gaps and what is not being delivering to then use council resources to fill the gap.

The officer informed the scrutiny commission that NCC will be launching a green skills incubator hub and the council is involved in this work. The challenge area in relation to this is for existing employees. For example, for people currently in the plumbing trade they will need reskilling. This presents both an opportunity and a challenge because it does not address the entry level element.

The officer informed that the council is working with organisations like Generations (a charity) who are running a pilot and courses about retrofitting education at entry level. Essentially covering language so that the people entering can understand and access the courses. The council has started to roll out some of the training courses at the council for staff and it has been embedded into the adult learning curriculum. This is to help people to understand what green skills are and how it will impact them. The aim is to work with colleges to understand how to develop levels 2, 3,4 and 5 courses in green skills to bridge the entry level gap.

The officer explained the vagueness in the industry meant that jobs are filtering through quite slowly. But the Council is satisfied with the level of skills being delivered and that it is giving people access to entry level jobs and knowledge about where to access roles. However, the council recognises the need to work with NCC and the Mayor of London's Green Skills Academy to understand how

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they can work together over the next 6-7 years to develop level 2 and level 3 courses in green.

In response to the question about the forecast for trainees and skilled people needed to complete retrofitting. The Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning explained this would be incumbent on the research available by WPI and the GLA outlining the number of roles that will be available. For the council they were still developing the workstream across the wider division to identify the number of homes that will need retrofitting and the period. A key challenge for retrofitting related to costs which is not currently aligned to the available funding. This is causing a delay to the council being able to establish the specific number.

The officer informed the Commission that the employment and skills service has supported other areas of the council to submit bids related to decarbonisation. Within that bid they built in the potential opportunity to develop 20 apprenticeships for trade skills like electricians and built in the green element. Upon completion the individuals on the 20 apprenticeships will have a green qualification directly contributing to the retrofit pilots at the council. The funding was approved so its in development and the council could come back with more information when the metrics and outcomes were confirmed.

The Strategic Director Economy, Regeneration and New Homes added in relation the question about the council's internal work the employment, skills and adult learning service is doing a 12-month audit of skills within the directorate. This is not just about future roles but also carbon intensive roles that require transition. In essence they are looking ahead but also considering what they need to do now to shift.

In relation to the skills gap the Strategic Director Economy, Regeneration and New Homes added the future opportunities for Hackney focus in 3 specific areas. One is low carbon services – advisory IT stuff. Another area is low carbon heat which is heat pumps and the third area is energy efficiency. The challenge is when it comes to low carbon services this is NVQ 4 and over. Therefore, they need to be considering what the 2030 low carbon services world will look like to ensure that their provision and learning is able to meet that need.

The Director reiterated that the council is aware that there are barriers for certain groups which prevents them from accessing this qualification in the first place so there is a myriad of factors that they are trying to address.

In relation to the question about retrofit and the partners they can work with; the Strategic Director Economy, Regeneration and New Homes added there is a big role for registered providers too not just the council and their construction partners. Highlighting that it is not only important to think about the future but also transition because there will be a lot of roles that will require transition.

The Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities added the internal work is not just about the work of the employment, skills and adult learning service or housing. This will include services like HR. The new Director of HR has clear ideas about the support to staff, development and the skills they will need for the future work force. The Cabinet Member informed the

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HR Director is developing plans for organisational development and the apprenticeship levy; in addition to job fairs they have done with other partners.

In terms of partnerships, it is not just with colleges but also with the Mayor of London Skills board, Central London Forward (which the Cabinet Member Chairs) and the Skills for Leaders Board. Strategically the Council is also taking into consideration the London wide picture not just Hackney.

- (vii) **The Chair pointed out that it was important to recognise that Hackney was part of a large city economy in an advanced industrial country (Brexit notwithstanding) and therefore it needs to be attracting global talent whilst also ensuring our Hackney residents get the best opportunity to thrive in the borough.**
- (viii) **Members commented this is a London wide issue and some of the jobs listed in the GLA report will be for organisations that work across London. A lot of their figures in relation to green jobs puts other boroughs ahead of Hackney. In terms of partnership working Members asked if the Council was working with other London boroughs and if so they are learning and sharing between boroughs.**

In response the Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities referred to Central London Forward and their work with the 12 boroughs to collaborate and understand the challenges across all the boroughs. There are the sub regional partnerships called the Live Partnership looking at knowledge economies and the growth.

The Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning explained the final year of this study will be looking at the soft boundaries in accessing the jobs, so the program is developed together. This will provide opportunities to share funding for skills in areas. Where possible they are bidding for funding together to deliver opportunities across borders. Some of the challenges experienced in the past (particularly in the built environment and for section 106 funding) were for time limited interventions that operated within their borders only. This means they were unable to access jobs outside their borough. The council is working with CLF and their sub regional partners to look at building in soft boundaries so they can share opportunities.

- (ix) **The Chair asked if the council could use its procurement powers to add conditions to businesses procurement contracts the council commissions; to ensure that they are not only delivering to specific standards but also have a skills program for their staff. So the council can be confident that they deliver to the right standards for Hackney's businesses/residents. Members also asked if this was being considered strategically at a London level or just borough level?**

In response the Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities informed they can learn from their past work linked to the procurement strategy. Some ambitions have been implemented using the procurement strategy through their supply chains on the London Living Wage (LLW) and they have also had discussions on how to use procurement for employment and union relationships. This highlighted the council did have learning they could draw on from the past and that this can be added to the terms of

reference for the Green Skills and Circular Economy Commission if it was not added already.

It was confirmed that the draft terms of reference for the Green Skills and Circular Economy Commission was in the sign off process. However they were still having internal discussions about the areas to include in the Commission's work.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the involvement of the Chair and scrutiny in the process.

- (x) **Members referred to the discussion about the definition and commented that this was important because when considering jobs, they needed a clear definition. The Member also commented that there needed to be a shared understanding about the meaning of net zero in Hackney and in London. Pointing out the only clear definition was the UN's.**

The Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities confirmed they have been looking at a definition and that this could be shared after the meeting.

ACTION	The Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning to share the definition the council is using for net zero and jobs.
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- (xi) **Members referred to the construction industry and pointed out there is a need to develop skills within the council's own and retrofitting. Members asked if the intention with apprenticeships was to skill people for retrofitting for a green building so that their skills would feed into the direct labour organisation for the council to enable some control over the standards, jobs, security, unions etc.**
- (xii) **Members referenced the discussion about partnerships and training in Hackney and the waste recycle, reduce, and reuse circular economy. Noting the report made reference to a 2% growth per year in that area. Members asked about the Council's relationship with the North London Waste Authority because Hackney needs to be recycling more of their waste than burning it.**
- (xiii) **Members also referred to horticulture and the need to up skill in biodiversity etc. Members asked if there was training in Hackney's local colleges or if residents needed to go to Capel Manor College. Members wanted to know if there were opportunities inside as well as outside the borough.**

In response the Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning explained predominantly the training for horticulture was based at colleges like Capel Manor. However, some colleges locally did deliver some courses. They also have community learning and non-college learning around horticulture / gardening, physical space in the adult learning curriculum and will improve the offer.

In terms of work and skills for gardening the council has a good track record for developing and agreeing apprenticeships across council departments such as parks, libraries and garden services. They want to continue this and use their existing relationships with those departments to grow and diversify the types of apprenticeships that are delivered. Although they do not want to repeat the same apprenticeships but be cognisant of the fact that those roles are going to need to change.

In relation to the green definition, there is reference being made to different types of green. For example, if a person is working in a gardening job, the assumption is that this is a green job. But being a green job is more about how the job is delivered, the logistics and whether it is sustainable. They are also looking at the additional jobs and all the transport roles in logistics and the maintenance of vehicles and machinery.

In relation to procurement and their supply chain and how they use their powers and the existing relationships. They do have some leverage. The officer explained that the employment and skills service was involved in the procurement process for supply chains of the council. The officer informed for tenders that come in from suppliers they evaluate the quality of the job, type of jobs, the pay and they also try to influence who they employ.

Their aim is to make sure the roles are diverse and that the entry points are accessible and do not exclude individuals who are not generational exposed to jobs in horticulture and would have access to Capel Manor College.

- (xiv) **In relation to the skills gap and the discussion on re skilling, the green skills incubator hub and the process of decarbonising our economy. Members asked about the plans for engagement for businesses in the sectors that are carbon intensive to ensure their workers have access to training / education to enable the borough to meet the green economy targets.**

In response the Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning informed that they have always had good engagement (last 3-4 years) with businesses in relation to skills and the future needs of the workforce. The officer pointed out that the majority of their employment and skills delivery and particularly their skills curriculum is developed following consultation with businesses.

From the work CLF commissioned (Business London) all the CLF boroughs are working with Business London. Business London are consulting with businesses to comprehend how boroughs can deliver the skills interventions in line with what businesses need. They have done consultations and councils will be getting their draft findings from the initial consultation. The council has found that the initial research from Business London is in line with the approaches the council has been taking. For example, Businesses are telling them what they should be teaching their service users / residents to get into the job. In the Digital and Tech Commission they reviewed access points for jobs and considered the soft skills that were needed to complement the actual accredited skills.

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The officer pointed out that they challenge businesses to not just say there is not enough people with the skills but to work with them to change the entry point (where possible) for the job to align with people who essentially can do the job. Where the current skill or qualification is exclusive, they look at how this is communicated by reviewing the types of jobs or job title. Explaining that where diversity factor is a very key factor, they have found things like the wage communicated could be an excluding factor preventing people from accessing or applying for the job. This is an area of work by the council in collaboration with the CLF boroughs and Business London. The council will be incorporating the consultation response to their adult education budget and delivery of skills (including their employability programs) so that the learning and engagement they do with businesses is fed back into their delivery program.

It was noted that the employment and skills service in Hackney is not just for the unemployed but the under employed too.

- (xv) **The Chair asked for the council's view on the appetite amongst the private and public sector businesses to provide these skills because there was a confidence in demand.**

In response the Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning informed accessing global talent had changed demand and how they interact. Since the change it has become harder to recruit. So, businesses are more open to working with employment and skills. The officer confirmed there was appetite to provide the skills. Although there is a challenge in terms of identifying the skills need. Businesses were communicating their wider skills needs but did not necessarily know how to recruit beyond the tradition methods of recruitment e.g., from Russell Group Universities that they and their alumni attended. The officer cited as an example an organisation that they worked with that had a track record of only taking interns from the Russel Group Universities. The employment and skills service found the organisation was very open about this and worked with the service area to develop a program to give access to individuals from the borough. They worked with them to identify the skills need and reverse engineered that back into their program of delivery and work placements to give them the opportunity to recruit locally.

This demonstrates the appetite is improving because of their approach and working with businesses. The officer explained that the council did not expect businesses to do all the work to get residents into their jobs. The breath of the team has enabled them to work with businesses and to take away the burden of developing training and skills delivery; so, it's easier for Hackney residents to acquire the necessary skills without the businesses having to do all the work themselves.

The officer confirmed there is demand and a skills shortage and; although businesses thought it would improve, they have realised they cannot continue to advertise the jobs and that economic growth would reestablish itself. Businesses are work with employment and skills, colleges and local universities to access the right type of talent.

- (xvi) **In a follow up question in relation to green skills and colleges Members asked if the Council was confident in their assessment of colleges and**

their ability to provide the skills training required in order to meet the demand.

In response the Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning advised the college are well placed to deliver against the skills demand. However, there was less confidence in their ability to do this in a cost-effective way that would be applicable to Hackney residents. Particularly in the cost-of-living crisis for those who may not have access to finances to fund the course. At present there does not seem to be a lot of free provision available for any green skills. But there is the appetite particularly from the Mayor's Green Academy (funded to deliver these skills) but there is some development that the academy needs to go through. The Council is trying to work with the Academy and the council is waiting for information about their prospectus and a list of the skills and different levels. The council will review this to see if it is applicable to what local businesses have communicated as their needs now and in the future.

The officer informed that the report on circular economy by Oxford Economics identified that most businesses (although small in the borough) intent to grow and stay in the borough and want to recruit local staff. But that businesses are still unsure of the skills they need because they are small to medium businesses. The officer explained that what is likely to happen is that the skills required will be identified quickly but the finances required might not be in place. The council is trying to encourage the Mayor's Skills Academy to move quite quickly – at least to get people to level 3 skills – because as referenced earlier by the Director a lot of the jobs will be at level 4 and level 5. Notwithstanding there is still a deficit of skills at level 3 and this needs to be addressed first. Once identified they can use apprenticeships to upskill the level 3 workforce through the apprenticeship levy.

The Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities added on a London wide level she had more confidence that colleges are ready to deliver on the skills. Pointing out there are London wide discussions about this at CLF as well as the Mayor of London Skills board.

The Strategic Director for Climate, Homes and Economy highlighted this does not stop at further education. There are professional bodies linked to the green economy e.g., architecture, planning etc. The council is working with the London School of Architecture (this comes after FE provision) to look at how to support individuals into those professions; whilst reducing the barriers that already exist. Although they are discussing colleges it also involves Universities too. Therefore, they need to think about how to leverage that too. The council's partnership with the London School of Architecture will be another commission. This is not just ideas, but this demonstrates that there is work with the sector to move this forward. The Director said they would be happy to bring this back for an update.

ACTION	Overview and Scrutiny Officer to note for SEG Work programme.
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- (xvii) **Members referred to the climate action plan target of doubling the green economy by 2030. Members acknowledge there are plans for skills development with universities, colleges and business growth. Members**

asked if the council was confident about the business growth and Hackney's ability to attract new businesses into the borough to enable the council to reach the 2030 target.

In response the Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning advised the initial research has showed that they can be quite confident. The last survey with businesses in the borough and the wider revealed that 60-70% of those businesses want to come to Hackney because of Hackney's reputation around sustainability and it being a borough that is ecofriendly and having an impact. This report advises the council that as a borough they should brand themselves better. This is because they are one of few boroughs that has a very good outlook when it comes to green skills and the green economy. If the council does more in this sphere it could have a direct impact on economic growth and their ability to attract businesses into the borough.

The officer referred to Hackney Wick and pointed out it has a concentration of green businesses, green infrastructure, and community. The officer explained this is an area they will explore with the Green Skills and Circular Economy Commission as a potential piece of work looking at Hackney Wick and incorporate HereEast.

Initially the growth of SME business in the borough was viewed cautiously because they assumed if they grew, they would leave the borough. The indication is they are not looking at a green economy that requires a lot of land e.g., production and that type of work. The survey has revealed that businesses are staying in the borough and that they do not need to move out of the borough to grow to the scale they want. The council is encouraged because the latest survey findings put Hackney in a good place, and they are attracting and retaining businesses.

4.7 Questions, Answers and Discussion for Adult Learning

- (i) **Members reference to the Cabinet Members previous attendance at scrutiny in June 2022 and the event for the Ukraine refugees. Members asked if the council needed to put on additional English and ESOL classes because of the increased demand from the Ukraine crisis or if it was an expansion of the existing service provision? Members were querying if additional resources were needed to meet the demand or if there was an unmet need.**

In response the Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities confirmed they did put on additional ESOL classes for Ukraine Families Scheme and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. The additional classes were added last summer. The was funded from the Home Office funding for the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

- (ii) **Members asked if it this funding was time limited?**

In response the Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities confirmed the council was still in receipt of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme funding, but it has been reduced.

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The Cabinet Member explained that the language skill level for Ukraine refugees varied considerably. Pointing out some were very proficient in English and therefore independently travelling in London and applying for jobs. Then there are some who need a bit of specialist language support and others that need a lot of support. It is a mixed cohort of abilities.

It was pointed out that the ESOL classes did not meet everyone need or requirements. Considering the Government's announcement on funding for the Homes for Ukraine scheme the Cabinet Member was unable to confirm if the provision could continue in its current form.

- (iii) **Members asked if the Council has always provided ESOL classes regardless of their first language? Querying if it was open to all?**

In response the Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities confirmed they have always provided ESOL classes.

- (iv) **Members asked for more information about the additional pressures the council is facing (that is unprecedented in the Cabinet Member's 20 years of local government) in relation to the service provision for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.**

In response the Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities explained that she has not seen this number international situations and the volume of local delivery responses they are witnessing now.

The Cabinet Member pointed out that Afghanistan happened quite quickly last summer and quick on the heels of this was the Ukraine crisis followed by the earthquakes in Turkey. As several residents had family members in Turkey; in response to the population in the borough the Mayor of Hackney and the Cabinet Member also make a call to the Home Office to respond to the need in Turkey.

The Cabinet Member advised in relation to migrants and refugees they are developing a level of expertise in the borough and learning from their response to previous crises. The Cabinet Member highlighted the council has an exceptional team of officers coordinating the service specifically to respond to the growing demand.

The Cabinet Member highlighted they have consolidated the support. The service being delivered will be more cost effective to cater to the migrants and refugees needs. The provision for refugees and migrants is not taking resources away from services. If more support is required, they can draw on resources from across the Council similar to how they operated in the pandemic. Seconding officers to respond to the crisis.

In addition to the international crisis the council has responded to, it has also managed the pandemic, Brexit and the cyber-attack on the council.

The Cabinet Member commended the expertise and capabilities of officers to respond to the crisis and expressed admiration for their work. The Cabinet Member acknowledged the demand on officer time as well as the strain on their

mental wellbeing. Acknowledging that it is important for the Council to have strong policies in place to support officers.

- (v) **Members commented that local authorities are becoming front line providers to support refugees, asylum seekers and migrant communities in the absence of ongoing support from government and an increasing hostile environment. Members also referred to the council centralising the support for refugees and migrants in adult social care.**
- (vi) **Members asked for more information about how this will work in practice going forward and if there was cross sector collaboration for this work? Pointing out in addition to schools the third sector in Hackney actively supports refugees, migrants, and asylum seeker communities. Therefore, having a key front-line role is important. Members wanted to understand how all the different sectors were working together and the future plans.**

In response the Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities confirmed it will still be a small team. An officer had been appointed but had not started in the role. The Council was establishing a refugee, migrant and asylum seeker service. One post will be working with the people living in Home Office funded hotels. The Program Manager for Asylum Seekers was due to commence next week.

The Cabinet Member explained the council has been working across the voluntary sector and across the council. They have hosted events in person to support people to apply for jobs, sign up to libraries, get a doctor, access transport and to connect with one another. The council is hosting online events to move away from face to face and in person events. This is aimed at providing a drop in rather than everyone being in a room with all the services.

The Cabinet Member pointed out the officers' work closely with the voluntary and community sector to deliver the support. Residents in the borough have volunteered their time and sometimes their homes particularly the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. The Cabinet Member also highlighted that that if residents did not have the space to open their home some partnered together and rented a home for Ukraine families in the borough.

The Strategic Director for Climate, Homes and Economy informed the GLA opened applications for the London share of the local authority housing fund (pot of £126 million). This is aimed at providing councils with a range of different delivery models to respond to the local context. Hackney is currently considering putting in a bid, but this is related to housing.

- (vii) **Members asked how the impact of the effectiveness of English language support is measured when the needs are so acute?**
- (viii) **Members recognized that this cohort may have trauma and other acute human challenges but from a brutal economic perspective this was untapped talent. Members asked how the council is ensuring that this cohort not only has purpose to help manage their trauma but can contribute to the economy in addition to assessing the effectiveness of its investment.**

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In response the Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning explained the first way they started is to do this is by identifying the number of refugees and migrants in the borough compared to the number accessing their ESOL provision. The officer reiterated the different levels of need for the language provision is vast among the cohort.

The officer added that ESOL is linked to their employment provision, and they work with the third sector. In particular Ukraine migrants are accessing these programs and then looking to apply for jobs. Another metric identified is in relation to young Ukraine migrants accessing higher education. The Council has found that young Ukraine migrants want access to higher education as opposed to jobs.

At this stage the officer could not confirm if the metrics identified were right but that they do know/understand the impacts. Thus, the Council does have metrics and statistical data. The Council is looking at working with a third sector provider that will dovetail the provision between ESOL and employment support. This is aimed at addressing some of the learning from initial iterations and the CLF report findings around the diversity of need for those moving into work.

The officer reminded Members that there has been a lot of job fairs and partnership working to ensure there is activity and they had committed a lot of officer time to attending these job fairs. not only to give people information but to understand the need to identify the breath of the issues.

The Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities pointed out not everyone on a family Visa or the Homes for Ukraine Scheme were looking for jobs. Some were doing the job in Ukraine from the UK and working remotely.

The Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning added in relation to the metrics, a couple of specific metrics they will start to record was in relation to the number of people who are able to apply for jobs using their existing qualifications from abroad. The council was putting in place access to resources that allowed people to transfer their qualifications or a short course to make their qualification applicable to the UK. Building this in with the information about access to their services. A number of people were signing up to their services because of the qualification issue. The officer gave an example of an engineer that was working at a high level abroad but was unable to get a job in the UK because his qualifications were not recognised in the UK. As a result, the person was considering moving into the food and drink industry even though the person did not want to. The council is looking at how to get that person's qualification applicable in the UK.

Most of the delivery for ESOL and employment support was linked into the existing Hackney Works service which has enable them to record the information.

Moving forward there will be a specific focus working with a partner who will be able to deliver the ESOL and employment support. As part of this work, they will have an understanding of the targeted impact and record the metrics.

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The Strategic Director for Climate, Homes and Economy added this links to the point made by Members about the untapped skills and agreed it was about going beyond the output of measuring the number of people supported through the visa scheme and the impact to access untapped skills.

- (ix) **The Chair acknowledged the discussion had centred around Ukraine because this was the most acute but wanted it recognised that this was applicable to Afghanistan, the exodus from Kabul and the Syrian crisis. Commenting there are several people coming from other parts of the world to Hackney for good reasons and the council needs to not only support them but also ensure they can become contributors to the local economy.**
- (x) **Members referred to the ability of ESOL to increase its reach into the communities needing the services. Members commented as councillors out in the community speaking to residents, they find that often parents use their children to translate because they are in school. Members pointed out they are aware that some adults have not been able to access language skills through ESOL or other services. Members were of the view it needs a cross sector partnership to be developed to ensure that vital services like ESOL are getting to the right people and into communities to expand their reach.**

In response the Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning explained they are developing an ESOL forum specifically in response to this type of challenge. There are few organisations, and the Council has recognised the need to develop a forum.

To respond to the community, community learning is delivered in places where people are already located. The council can be flexible year on year and adapt throughout the year to change its delivery location. Adult learning work with partners who have caseloads to deliver the provision in collaboration through co-location.

The Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities added a previous scrutiny commission made reference to ESOL delivery identifying the need to go to residents. The Cabinet Member also pointed out in relation to accessing ESOL there was a difference between women and men. The Cabinet Member suggested the scrutiny commission could look at if access by men and women has changed.

The Strategic Director for Climate, Homes and Economy pointed out this was why the integration between adult learning and employment and skills was so vital.

- (xi) **Members referred to the example of the engineer and language skills and asked if colleges provide technical English language skill. Recognising that even if they have English as a first language it can still be a steep learning curve.**

In response the Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning explained it would be the development of functional skills of English and Maths that is embedded into skills delivery. The diversity of need for this group is quite niche.

The officer also pointed out that several highly skilled Ukrainian refugees have a high proficiency in English. Therefore, the issue is about the qualification. But where the issue is related to language that is being built into ESOL. This specifically looks at language in a vocational context and how it applies to work.

The council is also exploring if it is a viable option to develop the resource to potentially deliver it themselves or work with partners to deliver that type of qualification.

- (xii) **Members referred to adult learning and the new adult learning curriculum evidence base that underpins the new curriculum. Members asked for more information about this and the decision making when refreshing it.**

In response the Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning explained this is linked to the engagement with businesses, understanding the labour market and their analysis of the labour market.

The officer pointed out the changes to the curriculum were subtle and it is designed in a way so that year on year it will not change much. The officer pointed out it is focused on growth economies like construction, health, and social care. The other element of the portfolio is green skills at entry level and community led green skills. The other areas of focus are finance and business. The curriculum has been developed to dovetail with their employment and skills provision and offer courses on entrepreneurship and self-employment for sole traders. These changes have come from the sub regional work which identified this gap in provision.

Following the pandemic, the council has identified that for people who have a disability, virtual working has reduced the inequality gap in terms of access to jobs. However, it has also emerged that self-employment is a key desire of the younger generation and single parents in the borough. The council has therefore increased this provision in the curriculum so the council can support them to be sole traders and start their own business. The Council deliberately added these elements into the curriculum this year.

The officer pointed out that they have also looked at courses with a lower uptake and looked at gender uptake. Recognising that historically there has been a lower percentage of male uptake in their adult learning courses. The service has been looking at the jobs that are in London, the type of roles etc. More finance and business courses have been added to the curriculum because they have understood that those that identify as male would like to do those types of courses.

The Commission was informed that areas for improvement are picked up through the learner's survey which they are required to carry out.

For the employment and skills service, they do a lot of work to understand why people enter the employment and skills service and use this information to monitor the types of jobs people are apply for. If they are not successful for the job employment and skills will look at what skills were missing and reverse engineer that into their curriculum planning. This is done in collaboration with colleges and higher education to make sure they are building a pathway into

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higher education courses. The officer also informed they have a partnership with Metropolitan University (for a couple of years), and they contribute to the Council's knowledge base about skills and what is needed to access undergraduate courses. Also, the community learning is about how people access courses and post graduate courses.

The council is looking to do some work around digital and creative roles because of its growth in the economy and a lack of diversity. Coupled with the fact that some graduates are disproportionately not accessing roles in the creative sector. The council has identified that graduates want the skills but do not have the funds to pay for them. Historically the council did not run as many creative and digital skills courses as they do now. An example of this is the Council's boot camp swap delivery program to give people that short sharp access and qualification like Adobe to access jobs like a digital marketer. Research shows that this type of role is predominantly dominated by one demographic.

The Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities added in relation to entrepreneurship this was a recommendation from the Young Futures Commission. This is one of the reasons why it was included in the adult learning offer. The Cabinet Member informed there has been a lot of work to consider the opportunities that young people want in the borough and entrepreneurship was one.

The Chair agreed it was important to implement the recommendation from the Young Futures Commission and integrate it into the council's understanding.

The Chair pointing out that Hackney has always been an entrepreneurial borough and that the Hackney work experience is not like other parts of the UK; where people are used to working in one industry and part of big workforces in one workplace. The council needs to understand how to build on that Hackney tradition and meet the aspirations of the new generation in Hackney.

- (xiii) **Members referred to the cultural barriers in relation to adult learning. Members referred to the orthodox Jewish community where some of the barriers mentioned are very real for this community; in terms of accessing some of the services that are often very inclusive but for various reasons cannot be accessed. Members asked how the council will address this taking into consideration the complexities of cultural inclusion.**

In response the Head of Employment, Skills and Adult Learning explained they make a specific allowance in the curriculum for courses that are ring fenced. There are courses for women in the Charedi community and the women in the Islamic community too. This has always been provided and year on year. This is reviewed and adjust as required if performance levels show they are not reaching enough people in the community. The service meets regularly with providers from within these communities.

The officer pointed out that the Charedi community is an active community that develops their own skills provision. The council aims to liaise with them to understand where the council can be involved in their curriculum process.

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However, procurement constraints mean they have a limited time in which to engage. The Council's curriculum team meets with providers regularly to establish and understand the framework they need to meet the DfE and Ofsted framework so they can be a legitimate provider of education.

The officer explained that Council's education model is split where a large proportion of their adult learning is commissioned. Where experts are needed, they commission them to engage with their own communities instead of providing the council's teacher.

The Strategic Director for Climate, Homes and Economy added in relation to male learners and equality groups like the over 50s, people with disabilities and the minority ethnic groups they have always had targets. The Director pointed out they have also shifted the provision to ensure those gaps are being addressed.

The Director pointed out that the flexibility in the curriculum provides the council with the ability to look at the future skills gaps and match the provision. Further emphasising the importance of the integration of the adult learning and the employment and skills services.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for an extremely interesting, productive and thoughtful conversation which has given the Commission a good sense of the work being carried out and the range of areas.

The Chair suggested they return when the Green Skills Commission had reported its findings. The Chair also confirmed she would be happy to do some co-production on the membership of the commission as well as the terms of reference.

5 Minutes of Previous Meeting (8:30 - 8:35pm)

- 5.1 The Chair referred to the draft minutes from 9th January 2023 on pages 89-117 of the agenda and asked Members to agree the minutes.

Members agreed the minutes.

RESOLVED	The minutes for January 2023 were approved.
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6 Skills, Economy and Growth Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2022/23 (8:35 - 8:50pm)

- 6.1 The Chair proposed the items outlined below for the new municipal year.

- 6.1.1 SEG June 2023

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1. Sustainability and licensing – an update on the council's exploration in relation to finding an alternative to glass that is not single use plastic and is reusable. This would also look at the potential for boroughs to use licensing powers to drive behaviour of local businesses.
2. An item on about how the markets in Hackney are managing post pandemic and the interventions for support. A review of the council's work to support markets, check if they are sustainable or if they will need further support. Review the learning and best practice.

6.1.2 SEG July 2023

1. Climate action plan – A review of the Council's engagement and consultation with businesses during the climate action plan consultation period.
2. HCVS – work and role of HCVS discussion with them about their future strategy as the key institution that oversees the voluntary sector in the borough.

- 6.1.3 The Chair also informed the Commission that she was keen for them to probe further in relation to the effectiveness of the Planning department to meet its manifesto commitment on the Conservation Area Planning Policy. To ensure it is aligned with net zero and enabling conservation areas to contribute to net zero.

Members agreed.

7 Any Other Business

- 7.1 None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 - 8.40 pm