

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Supporting Pathways into Work for Young People Review Panel held on 27 August 2015 at 7.00 pm**

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**Present:** Councillors James Halden, Steve Liddiard and Graham Snell

**In attendance:** Sonny Tipping, Representative of the Youth Cabinet  
Sophie Bourne, Representative of the Youth Cabinet  
Georgina Contreras, Representative of the Youth Cabinet  
Patrick Kielty, Participation Officer  
Michele Lucas, Learning & Skills Manager  
Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

### **1. Minutes**

The Minutes of the Supporting Pathways into Work for Young People Review, held on 24 February 2015, were approved as a correct record; subject to the correction of a typographical error.

### **2. Items of Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business

Councillor Halden informed the Panel that although they had received feedback from the Schools they had send correspondence too; the Panel had not received feedback from the businesses within the borough. He continued by asking the Panel if they felt it would be necessary to have comments from the business.

It was commented by Councillor Snell that he felt it was important to hear back from businesses and for them to contribute to the Panel as young people undertaking work experience were the future employees of local businesses.

The Panel agreed to contact the four businesses again to seek their feedback as to what skills they look for when taking on students for work placements. Members of the panel also agreed to contact different business personally to enquire how they support work placements and what they look for when employing students for work experience.

### **3. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **4. Feedback from Educators**

The Chair of the Review Panel opened the item for debate and comments from those present, by asking for clarification on what was meant by “We do not currently have students participating in work experience due to the rise in the age that students can take up paid employment and the pressure to ensure all students achieve the best GCSE grades possible” from the feedback received from Grays Convent.

The Learning & Skills Manager explained that the government had commissioned Professor Alison Wolfe to look in to work placements. A report was realised which stated that work experience was better suited for post 16year olds and did not truly benefit young people prior to 16 years old. However there were a range of schools within the borough who encouraged their students to embark on work experience.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the feedback from both Grays Convent and Palmers Sixth Form College be included within the report from the Review Panel.**

**5. Discussion with Youth Cabinet**

The Review Panel began discussions by enquiring as to whether it was felt that work experience or placements being offered were relevant for what young people wanted to do.

A representative of the Youth Cabinet started by informing the panel that she had not been offered to complete work experience as yet and she had recently finish year 10. She stated that having GCSEs even if they were all A\* were not necessarily going to assist young people when looking for employment as they were asked what if any, experience they had.

It was discussed that young people completing work experience were given the opportunity not only to put their skills they had learnt at school into practice but also to learn life skills such as professionalism, time keeping skills and working with adults; by learning these skills would assist with boosting confidence within young people.

The Learning & Skills Manager informed the panel that Thurrock Council worked hard with different employers and as an employer to get the most out of work experience for young people.

Councillor Halden suggested that it may be an idea to include the types of work experience schools offered as part of their admission criteria. This would give parents the option to take work experience into account when looking at secondary school places.

Representatives of the Youth Cabinet highlighted to those present that work experience also taught young people independence; as they didn't have their peers with them. It was explained that at school it was easy seek advice from

friends and to ask them for the answers, were as during a work placement you would have to use your own initiative when working on a project.

Councillor Liddiard enquired as to whether young people were inspired to work in the city, as London was only a half an hour train journey away from the borough. He continued by stating that the type of work experience on offer would be different from what was offered locally. Representatives of the Youth Cabinet notified Members that within schools young people were being asked why they would want to work away from Thurrock when there was so much going on to promote the borough.

The panel were advised that it would be helpful for students to be informed of other areas around the borough for example Southend-On-Sea; as this could help them to make an informed decision and assist when making the decision of where to complete any work placements.

The Chair of the review panel, sought as to whether it would be possible to include awards for those who completed work placements to an exceptional standard with the Educational Award or if Thurrock Council could hold awards for young people as well as local businesses should they secure apprenticeships or work from completing their work placement.

During discussions it was debated as to if schools set students a project at the beginning of year 10 to find their own work experience with steps to follow; whether it would encourage young people to take responsibility for their work placements. The Learning & Skills Manager contributed to the discussion by informing those present that some schools already encourage their young people to seek their own work placements; this was usually through parents or family friends.

The Youth Cabinet Representatives indicated that setting a project for students to find their own work experience had the potential to work as students were used to working to deadlines for coursework. It was further highlighted that it would be useful for young people if they had someone to talk to who could inspire them as they would have already completed work experience themselves.

The Review Panel were notified that the Learning & Skills, School Improvement team travelled all over the borough and London completing Health and Safety checks of all work experience placements and a lot of the schools were also involved in Thurrock next top boss.

Representatives of the Youth Cabinet agreed that however a package of work placements were organised, all schools should provide the same opportunities to young people; instead of there being a mix of schools that do or do not carry out work placements.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the suggestions following the Review Panels discussion be included within the report which is taken back to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

**6. Next Steps**

Councillor Halden suggested that following the Review Panels discussions the points highlighted should be considered as recommendations for the main report:

- That Schools work experience programmes be included as criteria at an Admission stage;
- That awards be given at the Education Awards for Schools and businesses who offer work experience and for supporting students throughout the process;
- That Thurrock Council seek to organise a scholarship to support young people undertaking work placements.

It was agreed by Members that the report of the Review Panel be scrutinised by the Youth Cabinet prior to it being presented at the October meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the report of the Review Panel be considered at by the Youth Cabinet at their meeting on Wednesday 7 October prior to it being presented to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

**The meeting finished at 8.13 pm**

Approved as a true and correct record

**CHAIR**

**DATE**

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