

Economic Development Committee

Date: 18 October 2000
Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly Building
Title: Report of the Skills Taskforce

Purpose

1. To present the report of the Wales Skills Task Force for the Committee's comments.

Recommendation

2. That the Committee notes the Task Force report and comments on its recommendations.

Timing

3. The Skills Task Force Report is being published and distributed for consultation on 18 October. The consultation period will run till 20 December and the Committee will need to give its views by the end of the consultation period.

Background

4. The Wales Skills Task Force was set up by the Cabinet in November 1999 to take a crosscutting view of the strategic implication of the findings of the Future Skills Wales study and to make recommendations to the Assembly on a strategy for skills. Future Skills Wales provides information on the skills available within the workforce and how they relate to those skills demanded by employers currently and over the next 5 years. The Task Force's remit was to analyse the results of the study, alongside other key data, and suggest how our education and training provision could more effectively respond to the skill needs which had been identified.
5. The Task Force report is attached at Annex A. The report outlines a range of proposals for addressing skill gaps and shortages and ensuring that systems in Wales are geared up to deliver the skill needs which will improve economic performance. The report recommends action to:
 - more effectively match the supply of skills with those which are needed to develop a more prosperous economy;

- improve education and training to equip individuals with the skills they need for the world of work and throughout life;
- encourage firms to train to meet their skill needs and educate individuals to take more responsibility for their own skills development;
- remove barriers and improve access to training and education for *all*; and
- raise awareness of skill issues.

Amongst the report's key recommendations are:

- a well-focused economic strategy which identifies the sectors which will produce the required levels of GDP in 5 / 10 years, informed by and informing, the skills development agenda;
- a sector based approach to assess and address skill needs with centres of excellence providing specialised training to meet these;
- the development of a strategy for ITC skills, informed by an expert panel;
- an entitlement to free education and training provision at level 3 for young people **and** adults;
- the development of a progressive high quality vocational skills programme available throughout working life with priority given to expanding and developing modern apprenticeships;
- an enlargement of opportunities for adults to acquire basic skills ;
- a more structured approach to work experience to improve quality and relevance of placements;
- the creation of a centre of excellence for management skills in small and medium sized enterprises;
- the introduction of a learning maintenance allowance for young people; and
- a major and sustained marketing campaign highlighting the benefits of improving skills and the risks of not doing so.

6. The English Skills Task Force published its final report in June this year. That recommended free education and training provision for young people to achieve level 3 qualifications and for adults to achieve level 2 qualifications. The Wales Task Force considered that we should aim higher and aspire to level 3 qualifications for both young people and adults and have suggested an entitlement for free education and training towards a level 3 qualifications for all, regardless of age.

7. The Chair of the Task Force, Brian Connolly will be attending the meeting to present the report and to answer questions from Committee members

Consideration

8. Betterwales.com contains an undertaking to produce a Skills Action Plan building on the findings of Future Skills Wales. The recommendations in the Task Force report, along with the views of the Committee and the responses received through consultation, will help to frame this Skills Action Plan.

The Committee's views on the aspects of the report that they would wish to see taken forward in the Action Plan will be helpful in taking this forward.

Compliance

9. The Assembly has powers transferred to it under the Employment and Training Act of 1973, which cover many of the proposals in the Report. There are no compliance issues arising directly from this paper and compliance aspects of individual proposals within the Task Force Report will be considered as proposals come forward for decision. There are no issues of regularity or propriety associated with this paper

10. The Task Force has not costed its proposals and the financial implications will be assessed as part of the process of responding to the report and drawing up the Skills Action Plan.

Action for Subject Committee

11. The Committee is asked to give its views on the recommendations of the Wales Skills Task Force.

