



Report of the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement Learning and Skills

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 9 December 2021

Progress Update on Swansea Skills Partnership

Purpose:	To update the Scrutiny Panel on the work of <i>Partneriaeth Sgiliau Abertawe (PSA)</i> Swansea Skills Partnership (SSP).
Content:	An update on key priorities for the Swansea Skills Partnership.
Councillors are being asked to:	Consider the information provided and give views.
Lead Councillor:	Cabinet Member for Education Improvement Learning and Skills.
Lead Officer & Report Author:	Strategic Skills Co-ordinator: david.bawden@swansea.gov.uk Education Director: helen.morgan-rees@swansea.gov.uk

1. Background

- 1.1 At the start of the municipal year in May 2018, the Education and Skills Policy Development Committee considered draft recommendations to Cabinet to establish a Swansea Skills Partnership (SSP) with the prime intention of meeting opportunities afforded by the Swansea Bay City Deal. In June 2018, Cabinet approved the committee's recommendations and a local partnership was established. In addition, a strategic skills co-ordinator was appointed to drive the work in this area forward.
- 1.2 In December 2020, the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel received verbal updates on the purpose, priorities and outcomes of the SSP.

2. Briefing and progress update

- 2.1 From the inception of a local strategic partnership Board for skills in Swansea, there are clear signs of progression. By now, an established Board with clear terms of reference, clear actions for improvement and effective partnership working meets once every academic term. The Board has ensured that operational sub-groups take priority actions forward and report back to the Board. The SSP Board has succeeded in maintaining Swansea's status as an UNESCO Learning City by sharing good practice. A relentless focus on building digital capacity to support future occupations afforded by the Swansea Bay City Deal and the creation, maintenance and improvement of a unique to Wales platform to support learners with courses, training, apprenticeships and career

advice is testimony to the success of partnership working. The creation of this partnership has had tangible benefits on learners, educators and citizens of Swansea.

- 2.2 The original agreed membership of the Board has been preserved and has been expanded to include a wider range of partners focussed on the key priorities for building digital capacity and providing good quality support advice and guidance to learners about their future occupations. **Appendix A** shows the current membership of the Board within agreed terms of reference.
- 2.3 In September 2021, the RLSP's skills and talent initiative business case bid was approved by governments as one of the last City Deal projects to be approved. The SSP will ensure that projects, when known, will benefit Swansea learners. Since SSP began in 2018 there have been stronger links with the RLSP.
- 2.4 Since the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel met with Board members in December 2020, a further two priorities have matured and include the establishment of Swansea's NEET Prevention Partnership (SNPP) that reports to the Board. **Appendix B** provides terms of reference for the partnership. In addition, the collation and dissemination between partners of blended learning methods has been undertaken during the last few months.
- 2.5 Through the NEETs Prevention Partnership, a strategic approach was adopted to support schools with vulnerable learners due to a number of factors, including the impact of Covid. This resulted in early identification and targeted strategies of intervention to allow the smooth transition of school leavers. This included bespoke college tours, meeting student support officers and a transitional summer programme.
- 2.6 The appointment of a strategic co-ordinator for education skills was undertaken and the post has now become permanent within the Education Directorate structure remains to be co-funded by Gower College Swansea. The SSP Board receives regular and useful updates. The joint appointment has been mutually beneficial.
- 2.7 The strategic co-ordinator for education skills role is responsible for:
 - co-ordinating the development of an action plan for SSP
 - monitoring and evaluating actions of the SSP sub-groups
 - working in partnership to align 14-19 provision in the Swansea area
 - raising the profile in schools and colleges the skills children and young people will need to meet the opportunities provided by the City Deal
 - working in partnership to raise aspirations of children and young people with regard to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and construction
 - working with partners to ensure all young people have access to good careers' advice and work experience opportunities
 - overseeing the effective alignment of school curriculum options and skills needs ensuring pathways to employment are outlined for every age group

- overseeing the alignment of new apprenticeships to future skills needs
- overseeing the work of learning coaches in schools as part of the Cynnydd project
- strengthening relationships between schools and the business sector and schools and the universities
- working with the RLSP to promote with the citizens of Swansea the skills children and young people will need to meet the opportunities provided by the City Deal
- working in partnership locally and regionally to provide opportunities to upskill school based staff and trainee teachers in the subjects that children and young people will need to meet the opportunities provided by the City Deal
- working with the RLSP and SSP to undertake regular needs analysis and predictive modelling to respond effectively to the changing demands of employers in the local economy
- creating and ensuring alignment with City of Learning initiatives
- identifying additional funding to support these aspirations

2.8 The role of SSP, its progress and the added value of having such a partnership in Swansea were all acknowledged by the education scrutiny performance panel in December 2020. The positive outcomes from this partnership and its particular emphasis on building digital learning and capacity is evident. During the last year further work has developed in this area. The emphasis on digital competence of both educators and learners as well as pupils being able to find out about digital careers is particularly relevant to projects within the City Deal including media, entertainment and technological innovation.

2.9 Funding has been provided to all secondary schools to promote “digital” transition from primary to secondary. The funding, provided by the education regional consortium, can be used to design a digital transition project in collaboration with their feeder primary schools.

2.10 One cluster of schools is trialling a climate sensor device from a local company. TASK, part of Vindico offers a learner friendly device, that has inbuilt sensors including, temperature, particle, sound and light. The device should lend itself well to the science and technology area of learning and experience including:

- design and technology element – the kit is designed with Lego and will need to design the casing
- science element - discussion of readings and their meanings. Schools can investigate the particles from each school involved and why some are higher than others e.g. more built up areas or farmed areas
- computer element - analyse the data from the dashBoard in a spreadsheet and create algorithms.

2.11 Partnership work with Ospreys is ongoing, with further partnerships with their main sponsor, Philtronic, with them planning to create global positioning system (GPS) bands for use in schools.

2.12 Further training sessions have been delivered across all schools to try to improve the digital skills of teachers. Training sessions included blended

learning approaches and now hybrid approaches to ensure learners isolating/ recovering from illness can be educated effectively. These have been well attended by school staff. A few courses have also been delivered to school governors and headteachers, ensuring the approach is consistent within the school.

- 2.13 The Big Learning Company and Gower College Swansea have continued to deliver the Digital Learning Design Apprenticeship (DLDA) throughout the school closures. Five members of staff have completed the qualification from the first cohort with others due to complete. The second cohort, approximately 60, staff have now started the course, which is being delivered virtually.
- 2.14 Technocamps, as part of Swansea University, continue to train teachers for the new digital technology curriculum and looks at science, technology, engineering and mathematic (STEM) work for primary schools.
- 2.15 The focus on careers advice and guidance for learners through the development of the digital platform www.mychoiceswansea.co.uk to support vocational pathways has also been further developed during the last year. During the December 2020 – April 2021 disruption to education vocational learning opportunities were limited by restrictions and the type of tools required in vocational learning. However, the SSP committed to a joint press statement telling Swansea citizens that opportunities were still available and not to lose faith in the next steps of learning as a consequence of the pandemic.
- 2.16 The My Choice website has been used more than anticipated during the last academic year. This is an ongoing project, and schools and colleges have provided updated material with a greater emphasis on training and apprenticeship opportunities alongside course choices. Swansea has maintained strong partnership with Careers Wales and as a result advice has been afforded in every school despite the disruption of the pandemic during the last academic year.
- 2.17 The RLSP and Careers Wales have provided up to date labour market intelligence for a number of priority sectors for the My Choice website. This is closely being monitored in light of changes to the job market due to Covid.
- 2.18 Links for learners and construction companies have been facilitated by learning coaches working with pupils at risk of disaffection during the last year. A seven week programme to introduce learners to the opportunities of the construction industry has been successful.
- 2.19 A successful bid to the community renewal fund has funded workplace toolkit boxes that can be used to promote the world of work to learners across Swansea.
- 2.20 The switch to blended and remote ways of learning has provided the building digital capacity theme with an opportunity to explore how educators across Swansea and the surrounding areas use different techniques to maintain and innovate learning. As a result, a compilation of methods has been disseminated systematically across partners within SSP.

- 2.21 The partnership is beginning to focus on a strategic oversight of tasting sessions and transition activities offered by partners to engage learners to participate with learning and earning opportunities.
- 2.22 The chair of the Education and Skills Policy Development Committee (PDC) in 2018 now sits on SSP Board and recognises the importance of curriculum implementation (also a theme for PDC) and qualifications reform to support the agenda of SSP.
- 2.23 The Regional Learning and Skills Partnership (RLSP) published their most recent skills plan in 2019. The report highlights the need for employability skills that transcend across sectors as well as specific skills needs in the following areas that will be supported by the City Deal:
- **Construction** – new skills for SMART house building and retrofitting (Homes as Power Stations), construction is fundamental for all 8 programmes
 - **Digital** – skills to meet the changing needs of businesses, including Cyber, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Robotics, the development of digital skills will be imperative for all of the City Deal programmes. (Waterfront and Digital District; Yr Egin and the Digital programme)
 - **Energy/Smart Manufacturing** – specific engineering skills for offshore wind, tidal and marine energy. (Pembroke Dock Marine; Supporting Innovation and Low Carbon Growth and Homes as Power Stations)
 - **Health and Wellbeing** – technology within health care and digital assimilation (Pentre Awel and Life Science and Wellbeing and Sport)
 - **Smart manufacturing**. New ways of manufacturing using robotics and new technologies based on Industry 4.0. (Pembroke Dock Marine and Supporting Innovation and Low Carbon Growth)

At a national level these skills shortages are being addressed through the work of Qualifications Wales to design new frameworks within these specific areas. Sector reviews have taken place in Health and Social Care (2016), Construction and the Built Environment (2018), Information and Communication Technology (2018) and Engineering, Advanced Manufacturing and Energy (2020).

Following recommendations from the sector reviews and to align with the new Curriculum for Wales there will be a new GCSE offer in 2025 in Construction and the Built Environment, Digital Technology, Engineering and Manufacturing and Health and Social Care. These specific 'made for Wales' qualifications will be vocational in nature and further aligned to post-16 frameworks, which are yet to be confirmed.

Careers and the world of work experiences form an integral part of the new curriculum for Wales. This embedded approach addresses the needs for employability skills and softer skills to be developed with each area of learning and experience.

At a local level, Swansea schools currently offer a range of courses with good uptake from learners at ages 14 -16. This will be further strengthened through

the work of the skills and talent initiative as part of the City Deal and the introduction of new GCSE frameworks from 2025.

Within Swansea's post-16 settings some sixth forms offer vocational programmes at subsidiary diploma level three (equivalent to one A level). Gower College Swansea offers a vast range of vocational programmes at levels 1, 2 and 3. These are mainly extended diplomas, equivalent to three A levels.

- 2.24 Although the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel felt it was vital to include the business community in SSP's membership, the view was not supported at the time as all partners have their own links with employers and that it would be difficult to identify one individual who could represent the views of a range of local employers in this context. Also, there needs to be a broader perception of what employment in the future is about, for example employers need applicants to be flexible, with good transferable skills and who are able to market themselves. SSP has a representative from the regional learning and skills partnership where business employers' views are represented and PSA group members also sit on the RLSP Board. Officers recognise a common thread in what all employers, across a wide range of businesses, are looking for, in terms of employability, whatever their qualifications. An increasing number of businesses are working with our schools for example a primary school's year 6 class is working with the manager of their local supermarket on how to improve their business planning for their own pop up business. Indeed, employability skills and exposure to the world of work is an expectation of the new curriculum. All Swansea schools are currently planning in readiness for the requirements of a purpose led curriculum including ambitious capable learners. Currently, SSP has three strategic priorities that are relevant to employment, namely, building digital capacity where we have links with Admiral and other businesses through the sub-group; advice and guidance for careers and future occupations where Careers Wales provides links through their business directory and the NEETS partnership where there is linkage with training and employment.
- 2.25 The Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) partnership, see **Appendix B** for terms of reference, is now established and reports to the SSP. The partnership is focussing its work on data to support prevention, a revised vulnerability assessment profile, the impact of the pandemic on well-being and mental health and seeking continuity to provision, such as Cynnydd learning coaches in schools, to prevent NEET.
- 2.26 The commitment of partners working together during difficult times has been remarkable. There is an acknowledgement that progression and continuity for learners remains to be challenging and that fresh thinking on the purpose and priorities of SSP is still required.
- 2.27 The work of the SSP has supported and enabled Swansea to maintain its status as a UNESCO Learning City
<https://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities/promoting-entrepreneurship-unesco-learning-city-swanea>

3. Summary

3.1 Partneriaeth Sgiliau Abertawe/ Swansea Skills Partnership has made suitable progress during the last year on building on its early foundations. The success of SSP can be summarised as follows:

3.1.1 Promoting, maintaining and developing Swansea as a Learning City

3.1.2 Developing a local action plan focussing on digital capacity and guidance for learners in order to inspire learners to consider the types of jobs and opportunities within the Swansea Bay City Deal

3.1.3 Developed a sustainable digital platform in My Choice to support the learning and earning pathways of pupils in Swansea schools

3.1.4 Reinforced the collaborative advantage of educators, careers advisers and officers working in partnership

3.1.5 Identified transition and taster opportunities for Swansea learners to discover opportunities linked to their subjects, interests and ambitions

3.1.6 Monitored and evaluated progress against strategic priorities and ensured appropriate linkage to the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership skills plan

3.1.7 Identified and developed strong careers advice including apprenticeships and work-based learning and expanded the focus to include younger

3.1.8 In partnership with higher and further education providers explored professional learning opportunities and dissemination of good practice

3.1.9 Ensured apprenticeships and work-based learning align to future skills needs.

4. Legal implications

4.1 There are no legal implications

5. Finance Implications

5.1 There are no finance implications.

6. Equality & Engagement Implications

6.1 None arising from this information report.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Terms of reference for Swansea Skills Partnership.

Appendix B – Terms of reference for Swansea NEETS Prevention Partnership.

Appendix A

Partneriaeth Sgiliau Abertawe (PSA) / Swansea Skills Partnership

Terms of Reference November 2020

Purpose of PSA

Provide an effective strategic education partnership comprising senior representatives from a range of organisations across the area, with the aim to make Swansea one of the best places to be educated in the UK.

The main focus will be to support the well-being objective:

- **Improving Education & Skills – so that every child and young person in Swansea gains the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in life.**

The partnership will consider the following priorities:

- Promoting Swansea as a 'Learning City' and as a vibrant city
- To improve outcomes (qualifications and employment) for post 16 education through partnership working
- To minimise duplication of learning provision across Swansea
- To strengthen progression opportunities between partners with a specific focus on employability
- To provide the best advice and guidance for individuals to select a learning pathway
- To build digital capacity aligned to the City Deal

Membership

Local Authority (LA)

Director of Education - Chair
Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Life Long Learning
Head of Achievement and Partnerships
Head of Poverty and Prevention
Head of Economic Development

Further Education (FE) / Higher Education (HE)

Senior representative from Gower College Swansea
Senior representative from Neath Port Talbot Colleges Group
Senior representative from University of Wales Trinity St David's (UWTSD)
Senior representative from Swansea University
Senior representative from Coleg Sir Gâr
Senior representative from consortium (Regional Improvement Service)
Senior representative from Careers Wales

Secondary Schools representative
Senior representative from Regional Leadership and Skills Partnership

Date of last revision: February 2019
Date of next revision: November 2021

Appendix B

SWANSEA Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) PREVENTION PARTNERSHIP (SNPP)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose/Role:

To ensure a coherence, coordination and clarity to the education, employment and training offer to young people that is understood by all stakeholders.

The partnership will commit to providing excellent quality advice, information and guidance to young people at risk of becoming NEET.

The partnership will focus on the strategic themes of performance, provision, access and well-being to mitigate against the risk of NEET.

Membership will comprise representatives from the following:

- Swansea Council; education officer, youth service officer, external funding officer
- Gower College Swansea; NEET coordinator, senior leader
- Chair from secondary school's wellbeing network
- Representative from Swansea Secondary Association of Headteachers
- Careers Wales; Swansea team manager
- Training Providers - agreement between the providers as to who would sit on this group (Inspire/Llamau/Military Prep/NPTC group)
- Third sector; Swansea Council for Voluntary Service
- Swansea Working
- Young person representative
- DWP
- EOTAS

Accountability:

To the Joint Directors of Education and Social Services bi-monthly meeting (TOR and minutes to be shared with the Director of Education's PA)

To the Swansea Skills Partnership (PSA) termly meeting (TOR and minutes to be shared with the Director of Education's PA)

To Welsh Government in relation to how any allocation of funding to support the NEET agenda locally is used

To Welsh Government to illustrate how the partners interact to support the NEET agenda and demonstrate how key processes within YEPF have been embedded into partner organisations

To ESTYN in terms of overall NEET agenda.

To Heads of partner organisations

There will be an annual review and evaluation of the work of the group.

Ways of Working:

- Initial meetings to take place bi-monthly
- Chair to be rotated in future meetings – Senior Managers of partner organisations (Director of Education, Principal, Gower College Swansea)
- Future NPP meetings will probably split into 14-19 and post 19 agenda items with some overlap in personnel:
 - 14-19 group** – representation from City & County of Swansea, Gower College Swansea, Training providers, Careers Wales, Schools
 - Employability/19+ group** – representation from City & County of Swansea, Gower College Swansea, Careers Wales, Training providers, DWP
- Members will be expected to share information and good practice in line with the needs of the agenda items
- Agenda items will be shared with members 1 week prior to meeting dates
- Partner organisations will send the most appropriate staff to each meeting.
- Members of the partnership will be invited to contribute items to the draft agenda

Sharing of information and resources

Any data shared with partners remains within the partnership.

Teams area to facilitate agendas, research and partnership strategic themes.

Chair has responsibility for secretariat support using a common template.

Review date: November 2021