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Stevenage Works Skills Framework

Unlocking Jobs, Skills & Opportunity for our Community

Skills Action Plan

February 2024

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Introduction

The Stevenage Skills Framework is supported by the following Action Plan. These actions are grouped across five categories, designed to break them down into more manageable themes. These themes build on the threads outlined throughout the Skills Framework and STEM Sector Overview and are designed to provide a tangible set of next steps.

The action plan is designed as a living document that will be updated regularly, iteratively building on the skills agenda as part of the council's wider focus on Enterprise and Skills.

Whilst this iteration of the action plan focuses on general skills and STEM elements, future versions will also include elements focused on other key sectors as outlined in the overarching Skills Framework.



Co-ordinate Activity



1. Build Stevenage as a Centre of Excellence in Career Development as an extension of the Stevenage Works programme.

Skills and the economy are not statutory functions for SBC; however, SBC plays a critical role as a vital convener with partners to create opportunities. As a result, 'Enterprise and Skills' are newly adopted key themes within the SBC Corporate Plan. This is backed up by the Stevenage Town Investment Plan, the UKSPF Delivery Plan and the Pioneering Young STEM Futures proposal.



Skills

Stevenage Works has served as the council's vehicle for the delivery of social value and skills development as part of its construction projects. These successes provide a model and branding that can be adapted to fit other key sectors in the town. Integral to this, would be continuing to build on the strong partnerships that have been developed with key education providers including the University of Hertfordshire and North Herts College to design and achieve outcomes that best match the needs of residents.

What does good look like?

The aim is that the Stevenage approach to increasing social mobility in career development across all key sectors of the town and becomes recognised as good practice across the county, and in time regionally and nationally.

How does this respond to stakeholder voices?

Primarily this action responds to the headline 'Space for Local Level Co-ordination of Activities' which highlights the opportunity for Stevenage Borough Council to have a role in tailoring local skills provision at a district level to complement the work being undertaken by Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership at a county level.

2. Build on STEM Sector Overview by moving into other key sectors.

There are several key sectors that have been identified as part of the Skills Framework. These include Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths (STEM) – with a specific focus on Life Sciences & Advanced Manufacturing, Construction, Public Sector Services, Creative & Cultural, Environment, Technology & Energy and Retail.



Skills

Of these, given the work already underway as part of the 'Stevenage Works' programme it makes the most sense to maintain a focus on construction next. This is also timely, given the significant ongoing regeneration activities as well as other significant construction projects that the council is involved in, such as housing developments and the Major Repairs Contract supporting council housing and new retrofit skills needed for a greener economy.

What does good look like?

These activities give us an opportunity to test out the template utilised in the creation of the STEM Sector Overview, to see how this translates to other key sectors.

A similar detailed analysis and the creation of a series of achievable and measurable goals against these activities will determine the success. As with the work on STEM skills, this will be undertaken alongside an active programme of work which should provide the scope and resources for success.

How does this respond to stakeholder voices?

All of the learning from engaging with stakeholders on an approach to STEM can be taken as lessons learned for other key sectors in the town. The approach to engagement with stakeholders will form a key part of the approach to this section.

3. Embed Skills Development in Regeneration Plans.

Improving skills is essential to building sustainable growth and stronger communities and helping provide opportunities and choice for people. Regeneration plans for Stevenage could see circa 8,000 new jobs delivered over the next decade and a significant number of these are expected to be within the STEM sector and across many different types of jobs, from creative roles to data and ICT, engineering, marketing and comms, science manufacture, research and more.



Skills development is a key priority of the Stevenage Town Investment Plan (STIP). In response to Challenge 2: Bridging the Skills Gap and Raising Aspirations, and Challenge 4: A Resident Population Being Left Behind, the STIP's vision includes "upskilling and providing opportunities for all our people to benefit from innovation & growth." The STIP, is focussed on physical regeneration and the provision of facilities and on the need to help provide learning and skills opportunities. It aims to do this through the delivery of the Stevenage Technology & Innovation Centre (SITEC) and the National New Town Heritage Centre.

What does good look like?

Providing these facilities alone will not realise the step-change the STIP requires, and so the Skills Framework and associated Sector Skills Plans must become an integral part of the delivery mechanism acting as the conduit between residents and facilities.

This increased focus on skills will allow for a co-ordinated approach to outcomes and opportunities for Stevenage residents with measurable increases to the number of people local to Stevenage who able to make the most of the opportunities on their doorstep.

How does this respond to stakeholder voices?

This action focuses on the 'Space for Local Level Co-ordination of Activities' headline. It ties into the council's current role as part of the Regeneration of Stevenage Town Centre, ensuring that this is leveraged to benefit local people



Connect Stakeholders

1. Establish a Programme of Skills Summits.

Following on from the success of the Stevenage STEM Skills Summit, hosted at the Airbus Campus in September 2023, a programme of similar events would act as an excellent building block for future engagement between key stakeholder groups.

Following the work on the Stevenage Skills Framework, it is clear that such a model could also be utilised for other key sectors or delivered around Skills more broadly.



What does good look like?

A programmed yearly schedule of event(s) designed to bring together key stakeholders to enable collaboration, engagement and networking. The frequency and specific makeup of these events would be decided through further consultation and discussion with key stakeholder groups.

How does this respond to stakeholder voices?

This action is the cornerstone of the 'Benefits of Establishing Strong Links Across Stakeholder Groups' headline, which alongside the partnership group.

2. Expand the Governance and Impact of Stevenage Works with deep engagement with the Stevenage Development Board partnership.

Develop a shared commitment to local STEM skills development, based on evidence, engagement, and an improved understanding of how to enhance outcomes locally. Collaborative efforts can help leverage diverse capabilities, knowledge, networks, and roles to bring about solutions. Engaging the right stakeholders also strengthens efforts to engage with, or ease the pressure on a specific group, bringing together employers / key stakeholders to support the growth of the Stevenage STEM sector.



Engage and consult widely with young people, businesses, professional bodies, and providers to collect their views about opportunities and constraints, and to listen to their experiences to support the delivery of the strategy, bringing them together on an annual basis to discuss progress and next steps.

What does good look like?

A strong active partnership that encompasses all key stakeholder groups, providing them with a voice and agency in shaping the ongoing approach in the vein of the overarching Stevenage Development Board, designed to provide strategy guidance and decision making that aligns with the broader priorities of the Stevenage Development Board.

How does this respond to stakeholder voices?

There is clear value in continuing to provide all stakeholders with a platform to have their voices heard and to contribute to the overarching skills approach going forward. This obviously primarily crosses over both the 'Benefits of Establishing Strong Links Across Stakeholder Groups' and 'Space for Local Level Co-ordination of Activities' headlines.

3. Ensure appropriate internal resources are in place to support relationships with key stakeholders.

As part of the council's re-alignment to meet its new Enterprise and Skills priority, included in the 'Making Stevenage Even Better' Corporate Plan, it is clear there is a gap in a specific role that looks to create links and connections between stakeholders and who is focused on establishing and nurturing these relationships.



As part of SBC's ongoing Transformation work programme, the Council is looking at internal functions, including enterprise and skills, to determine how these elements can be reconfigured to maximise the impact of the resources employed in this area.

What does good look like?

Dedicated officer support that links directly into employers' recruitment teams and apprenticeship leads, connecting them with Schools, the Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire LEP and Third Sector providers.

How does this respond to stakeholder voices?

Provides additional capacity at an operational level to focus on the delivery aspects of the 'Benefits of Establishing Strong Links Across Stakeholder Groups' priority.

Communicate Effectively



1. Work with HCC to establish the Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal as a single point of access for career guidance.

The Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal is positioned as the single point of access for career guidance and support in Hertfordshire. As part of the Community Renewal Fund, Stevenage Borough Council provided support to establish bespoke Stevenage focused elements to the site, as part of our ongoing focus on Community Wealth Building.



Skills

Building on this should be a key focus going forward in order to fully establish the Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal as the primary one stop shop for career information, advice and guidance; and to find ways to make sure there is a physical presence and relationship with local schools and the local college to help make options clear and accessible for local people.

What does good look like?

Further tailoring of the platform, based on ongoing engagement with key stakeholders in order to iteratively build on the site's functionality. Good would see a significant increase in the numbers of both users and organisations that are utilising the site.

How does this respond to stakeholder voices?

This is one of the responses to the 'Utilise Effective and Relevant Communications Pathways' headline and aims to answer the question of what the single one stop shop for careers guidance for Stevenage residents would be.

2. Utilise Stevenage Youth Engagement Vehicle to co-design engagement and communication with young people.

The Stevenage Youth Engagement Vehicle is a core delivery element of Phase One of the 'Pioneering Young STEM Futures' programme. It is designed to provide young people with a decision-making voice in future skills and career developments. Whilst it is currently focused on the work being undertaken around STEM, it is clear that many of these lessons are transferable.



One element that was very clear through engagement with stakeholders was the apparent disconnect between the channels that young people, industry and providers utilise. A clear focus of the Young Engagement Vehicle should be to work with young people on how they would go about bridging that gap. Young people are often early adopters of new technology and will be most aware of the best ways to reach their peers.

What does good look like?

Young people are provided with clear agency in decision making around how we communicate with their peers. This should vastly augment the reach of the programme and is directly positioned to positively impact a significant weakness.

How does this respond to stakeholder voices?

Stakeholders were clear that this was a key issue with 'Utilise Effective and Relevant Communications Pathways' being a headline priority.



Create Opportunity

1. Design and Deliver Phase Two of the 'Pioneering Young STEM Futures' Programme.

Building on Phase One of the 'Pioneering Young STEM Futures' programme, expanding on the breadth and depth of the interventions that are part of it and developing proposals for a further funding allocation to create superb local opportunities. The programme would be focused on delivering the following workstreams:



- **Opportunities Focus**
 - Building on the pilot projects from Phase One of the Programme designed to provide practical experience opportunities for young people.
- **Communications Focus**
 - To build on our ability to communicate information and hear feedback from young people.
- **Education Focus**
 - To ensure that key influencers are also provided with Information, advice, guidance and knowledge of STEM pathways and careers.
- **Feedback Focus**
 - To continue the iterative development of the Stevenage Youth Engagement Vehicle to provide further agency to young people to take an active role in decision making around skills.
- **Evaluation Focus**

- To build on the evaluation work undertaken in Phase One, building on the 'Theory of Change' methodology to continue to measure the successes of the programme.

Full development of the specifics of the programme will commence in the spring, ahead of the conclusion of Phase One at the end of the 2024 summer term.

What does good look like?

The programme meets or exceeds outcome and output measurements but more importantly, delivers fundamental change for the young people of the town. Such change is often a long term goal and isn't always visible over the short term, but encompasses many of the generational aspirations that underpin the Skills Framework.

How does this respond to stakeholder voices?

This element responds to a significant amount of the headline pieces of stakeholder feedback, including:

- Benefits of Practical, Experiential Opportunities
- Importance of Role Models & Mentor
- Developing an Interest as Early as Possible
- Better Links Between the Classroom and Careers
- Educating Key Influencers
- Utilise Effective and Relevant Communications Pathways
- Focus on Equity of Opportunity

Phase One of the Pioneering Young STEM Futures programme has been an essential capture mechanism for feedback from key partners including young people. As a result, this element is very directly related to many of the headlines.

2. Support North Herts College to develop Deliver Stevenage Innovation & Technology Centre (SITEC) Phase Two.

The development of the Stevenage Innovation & Technology Centre (SITEC) is a significant component of the £37.5m Stevenage Town Deal programme.

North Hertfordshire College, in partnership with key businesses and industries in Stevenage, is proposing the development of a new Stevenage Innovation and Technology Centre, located in the heart of the town centre or co-located on the existing North Hertfordshire College site.

The new site would address the skills challenges that underpin the gap in employment and earnings between Stevenage's residents and the high-tech businesses developing in the town.



What does good look like?

SITEC Phase Two is delivered as a new premier hub of STEM activities for Stevenage residents as a clear commitment to the importance of the sector to the town and the significant opportunities it provides for Stevenage residents.

How does this respond to stakeholder voices?

This SITEC Phase Two proposal provides a strong mandate across three priority headlines: Benefits of Practical, Experiential Opportunities, Developing an Interest as Early as Possible and Better Links Between the Classroom and Careers.

3. Leverage Opportunity by Engaging Further with the Government.

Utilising ongoing funding opportunities such as UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Town's Fund etc to further the development of the skills agenda.

This could also include conversations with the Department for Education and the Department for Works and Pensions around potential opportunities to augment the skills approach based on the work that is already ongoing.



What does good look like?

Further resources and capacity available to further build on the work that has been undertaken, increased visibility of work and best practice at a regional and national level and continued agency for involvement in skills provision at a district or borough level.

How does this respond to stakeholder voices?

This element cuts across all of the stakeholder areas as it looks to highlight further opportunity to release resources that would further enhance skills provision in Stevenage.

Capture Insight



1. Build on the STEM Youth Engagement Vehicle by evolving this model beyond a focus on STEM to Skills and Career development.

The Stevenage Youth Engagement vehicle has been a key component of Phase One of the 'Pioneering Young STEM Futures' Programme.

It is expected that this model will continue to be iterated on beyond Phase Two and beyond, building on both the breadth and depth of the model.



What does good look like?

The model will expand beyond its current focus on STEM careers and jobs to a broader focus on skills centered around what young people would like to see this become and how they would like their voices to be heard.

How does this respond to stakeholder voices?

This approach further augments our ability to continue to listen and react to what key stakeholders feel we should be prioritising. This will allow us to undertake a similar exercise as a follow up for other key sectors outlined in the Stevenage Skills Framework.

2. Build Evaluation Activities of 'Pioneering Young STEM Futures' Phase One.

Establishing a monitoring and evaluation methodology to establish a clear baseline, measure progress and make changes as necessary.

This will include fostering a sector leading partnership to include the University of Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire College, STEMPPOINT EAST and other partners as appropriate.



What does good look like?

Development of an evaluation methodology that supports the finding of Phase One of the Pioneering Young STEM Futures programme and builds into the development and delivery of Phase Two.

How does this respond to stakeholder voices?

Key stakeholder feedback is at the heart of the evaluation activities and will be a key theme and element going forwards.