

Present: Councillor Jane Loffhagen (*in the Chair*)

Councillors: Naomi Tweddle, Bill Bilton, Sue Burke, Liz Bushell, Jackie Kirk, Helena Mair, Hilton Spratt, Edmund Strengiel and Andy Kerry

Also in Attendance: Graham Metcalfe and Edgar

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Bill Mara

31. Confirmation of Minutes - 26 January 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2021 be confirmed.

32. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Jane Loffhagen declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Kate Edgar - Development Plus'.

Reason: She was on the board of Development Plus.

33. Scrutiny Review - Impact on Businesses and Employment during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Councillor Jane Loffhagen, Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee, opened the meeting and provided the Committee with a brief introduction of the topic for review which was the impact on businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic.

She explained that the purpose of the review was to understand the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and how it had affected businesses, whilst also identifying support already being provided and whether there were any gaps of which the City of Lincoln Council could provide further support. Not only would the review look at businesses, it would also look at how the pandemic had affected individuals from the perspective of jobs and employment.

34. Kate Ellis - Major Developments, City of Lincoln Council (Verbal Report)

The Chair advised that Kate Ellis had been unable to attend the meeting due to illness and advised that this item would be deferred. She suggested that an informal briefing be held with members and officers to discuss the evidence gathered and to draw out recommendations to put forward to Council.

35. Graham Metcalfe - Department for Work and Pensions

Councillor Loffhagen welcomed Graham Metcalfe, Department for Work and Pensions, who had been invited to provide information on the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on employment.

Mr Metcalfe provided an overview of the statistics in relation to the employment rate in Lincoln over the last year and the support that had been put in place to help those that had been affected. The following points were noted:

- People on Universal Credit - The data showed the total number of people claiming Universal Credit, irrespective of regime.
 - In December 2019 there were 8852 people on Universal Credit compared to December 2020 there were 17,973 people on Universal Credit. This showed a 103.04% uplift in the figures for the year. The main increase was at the start of the pandemic from mid to late March in 2020 and there had been a gradual increase from September onwards. The figures showed that the increase in Lincoln was lower than the national average.
- People on Universal Credit by age:
 - Age 16-24 – In December 2019 there were 1685 people on Universal Credit compared to 3491 on Universal Credit. This showed an uplift in figures of 107.18% for the year.
 - Age 25-49 - In December 2019 there were 5555 people on Universal Credit compared to 11136 on Universal Credit. This showed an uplift in figures of 100.47% for the year.
 - Age 50+ - In December 2019 there were 1605 people on Universal Credit compared to 3346 on Universal Credit. This showed an uplift in figures of 108.47% for the year.
- Youth Unemployment – The claimant count was for people aged 18-24 and combined the total of those claiming Jobseekers Allowance and those in receipt of Universal Credit who were required to seek work.
 - In December 2019 there were 760 claimants compared to 1430 claimants in December 2020. This showed an increase of 88.16% for the Claimant Count at the Lincoln Orchard Street Job Centre.
 - For the Local Authority area Lincoln showed an increase of 78.43%.
- Support mechanisms that had been put in place since the start of the pandemic:

Jobs and Careers Fair

- An online jobs and careers fair had been arranged in partnership with the Local Enterprise Partnership
- This was held via zoom and the fair held on the 25th January had 800 attendees from across Lincolnshire.
- A generic fair was held initially and it was followed up with a Care focussed fair as there were a lot of opportunities available in the care sector.
- The jobs fairs were held monthly and provided an opportunity for both employers and potential employees to connect. The fairs were for anyone that was considering a career change.

Redundancy Toolkit

- Jobcentre Plus provided a Rapid Response service to advise employers and employees in redundancy situations.

- The employer help websites offered a range of advice to help businesses overcome challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce HR Support Forum provided support to small businesses with HR guidance to help them through this period of uncertainty.
- Federation of Small Businesses offered members access to a number of employment protection services including an employment advice helpline where issues could be discussed with qualified lawyers.
- The DWP website offered dedicated support to job seekers.
- Free 'Find a Job' service
- Citizens Advice provided a help to claim universal credit service.

Support with Starting a New Business

- Start-up Business advice
- Business advice and mentorship services
- Funding schemes.

Mental Health Resources

- Lincolnshire Mental Health helpline which could be accessed 24/7
- Workforce matters had released several resources to keep mental health and wellbeing in check.

Mr Metcalfe welcomed any comments or questions from members of the Committee.

Question: Asked for clarification if youth unemployment referred to 16-24 year olds or 18-24 year olds?

Response: The 16-24 year old bracket related to people who were estranged from their parents or had caring responsibilities. The usual entitlement was for 18+.

Question: Were there any gaps in support for example how much telephone support was there available?

Response: The aspiration was to provide weekly contact via a mixture of channels including telephone, virtually and social media. We've also increased our opening hours to include longer days and Saturdays.

Question: Do you anticipate a big increase in claimants when furlough ends?

Response: Anecdotal there was concern. Quite a lot of people already on furlough may already be on Universal Credit. So these people would already be in the system and it wouldn't increase the numbers.

Question: Do you help young people to build up their CV's and provide opportunities for work experience?

Response: Work experience was a key element of the support programme that we run. The programme included pre-employment training, work experience and a guaranteed interview at the end. Currently the work experience was delivered virtually.

Question: Do you help people with being interviewed on zoom?

Response: Yes it was a key component of the support provided. Training included how to connect, hints and tips and things to avoid.

The Chair thanked Graham for attending the meeting and expressed her appreciation for the work that was being undertaken throughout the pandemic by himself, his staff as well the joint partnership working with the City of Lincoln Council.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted with thanks.

36. Kate Edgar - Development Plus (Verbal Report)

Members commented that they had not received a copy of the report that was circulated to them prior to the meeting and suggested that this item be deferred to provide an opportunity for them to read the detailed report.

Kate Edgar, Development Plus advised that the report that had been circulated provided detail from 2019 which would be useful to compare to the recent position. She confirmed that she would be happy to attend a future meeting to give her presentation.

The committee briefly discussed the funding position of the charity and noted the following:

- There was a massive funding issue for charities that were not running specifically for Covid-19 support.
- The support that was provided by Development plus was participant led which made it more difficult to apply for funding as the criteria did not meet the 'tick box funding'
- Furlough had not been an option for Development Plus as they provided support for people that fall through the gap with other support and we decided to carry on the best that we could.

RESOLVED that that Kate Edgar, Development Plus be invited to attend a future meeting of Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee to give her presentation.