

Committee(s) Establishment Committee Education Board Policy and Resources Committee	Dated: 27 January 2021 28 January 2021 18 February 2021
Subject: Joint Annual Report for Social Mobility and Digital Skills Strategies, Social Mobility Employer Index rating and strategic focus for 2020-21	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	3, 5, 8, 9
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: David Farnsworth, Chief Grants Officer & Director of City Bridge Trust Damian Nussbaum, Director of Innovation and Growth Andrew Carter, Director of Community & Children's Services	For Information
Report authors: Kate Smith, Head of Corporate Strategy & Performance Chris Oldham, Corporate Strategy & Performance Officer	

Summary

This report presents three pieces of work in support of the Social Mobility and Digital Skills Strategies. These are:

- A combined Annual Report of the Social Mobility and Digital Skills Strategies for 2019-20;
- The City Corporation's Social Mobility Employer Index rating and accompanying comments;
- A proposal for the strategic direction for 2021/22.

These three pieces of work reflect the progress of both strategies to date and the future strategic direction which will be reflected in the 2020-21 Action Plans for the Social Mobility and Digital Skills Strategies.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the progress made in the delivery of both strategies in 2019-20;
- Note the City Corporation's rating on the Social Mobility Employer Index; and
- Note the proposed future direction of the strategies.

Main Report

Background

1. The [Social Mobility Strategy 2018-28](#) and the [Digital Skills Strategy 2018-23](#) were both approved by Policy and Resources Committee in September 2018.

Current Position

2. Last year, separate annual reports were presented for [Social Mobility](#) and [Digital Skills](#), as is the case for all corporate strategies. However, it has been noted that this process contributes towards 'silo-working' and leads to duplication of work as many of the same issues are covered in multiple corporate strategies. It was identified that this was the case for the Social Mobility and Digital Skills Strategies so the Annual Report for 2019-20 has been combined to cover both strategies. If Members are content with this approach, further agglomeration of reports is proposed in future.

Proposals

2019-20 Annual Report for the Social Mobility and Digital Skills Strategies

3. The combined Annual Report for the Social Mobility and Digital Skills Strategies shares the key highlights, case studies, performance data and partnerships that are involved for each of the Social Mobility Strategy's four outcomes and the Digital Skills Strategy's three priorities. It recognises the achievements for the year September 2019 to September 2020, the learnings from the COVID-19 crisis and reaffirms the City Corporation's commitment to the Social Mobility Strategy 2018-28 and the Digital Skills Strategy 2018-2028. It can be found at **Appendix 1**.

Social Mobility Employer Index 2020 rating

4. The Social Mobility Employer Index is run annually by the Social Mobility Foundation. It was seed funded by the City of London Corporation in 2017. It is an important bench-marking initiative that ranks Britain's employers on the actions they are being taken to ensure that they are open to accessing and progressing talent from all backgrounds. It showcases employers' progress towards improving social mobility, a key aim of the Social Mobility and Digital Skills Strategies. The Index now includes 172 employers across 18 different sectors, collectively representing 1.5 million employees in the UK. The City Corporation has been rated in 50th place for social mobility, an improvement on its previous rating of 56th in the 2019 Index. The full report can be found at **Appendix 2**.
5. The City Corporation was praised for targeting its outreach work at schools with above average levels of Free School Meals/low levels of attainment. However, it was noted that we did not provide any data on whether or not we are tracking students from our outreach work when they go on to apply for recruitment programmes (e.g. internships) or permanent roles.

6. We are one of a small number of Index organisations to offer higher apprenticeships, rather than only level 2 and 3 apprenticeships.
7. An area for improvement is to enhance the recruitment section of our website with a clear overview of our whole recruitment process, with examples of effective applications and practice tests.
8. Although the City Corporation has minimum academic requirements for advertised roles, our requirements are lower than for many Index organisations. This is positive, as there is a lack of evidence to suggest that there is a connection between prior attainment and performance in role, and those from higher socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to have higher prior attainment. To progress, we could begin measuring the numbers of successful applicants who met but did not exceed the stated minimum grade requirements, to establish whether or not successful applicants are always exceeding them.
9. Our use of standardised interview questions was praised but it was noted that we are not currently monitoring our recruitment process to identify whether there are particular stages at which those from lower socio-economic backgrounds fall down.
10. The City Corporation currently values 'work experience within your sector' as part of our application process, and it was suggested that we may want to reconsider this as work experience is particularly difficult for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds to access, and is often predominantly available in London.
11. We do not currently publish our data on the socio-economic background of our workforce. Changing this would increase transparency and encourage a more open dialogue about social mobility.
12. The Social Mobility Foundation was happy that we are encouraging employees to share their stories of having come from a different background. They were also pleased to note that we have recruitment targets in place which are reviewed at senior level, and that we are encouraging our supply chains to take action on social mobility.
13. The Social Mobility Foundation's recommendations will be reviewed in due course at the Social Cross Corporation Working Group and the Corporate Equality and Inclusion Board, which share responsibility for implementing the Social Mobility Strategy. The Corporate Equality and Inclusion Action Plan is currently being updated to include future Social Mobility initiatives. Members will be kept updated on which recommendations will be implemented, with an aim to improve on the City Corporation's Social Mobility Employer Index rating in future years.

Proposed strategic direction for 2021

14. Building upon the lessons learned in 2020, in 2021 we will continue to raise digital inclusion as a key focus area, with regards to the continuing impacts of COVID-19 upon everyday life and the need for digital skills to access services and career options, all of which affect social inclusion and mobility.
15. We will use a joined up strategic approach to drive social mobility through all of our work, collaborating across our other strategic workstreams such as City recovery, philanthropy, health and wellbeing, and climate action. Part of this collaboration will involve building social mobility considerations into our corporate strategies, alongside Equality Impact Assessments as standard practice to support stakeholders with protected characteristics. We will strengthen links with neighbouring London boroughs to enhance our strategic impact on targeting health inequalities, particularly with the London Borough of Hackney in our work on the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This joined up approach will recognise the interconnectivity of social and digital exclusion with education, financial and cultural poverty. Through this extended collaborative approach, we will ensure we keep digital inclusion in mind when reviewing the many services and cultural offerings which have changed so drastically during 2020.
16. Within our own workforce, we will pursue the recommendations of the Social Mobility Commission and The Bridge Group, based upon their recent research into socio-economic diversity, regarding how best to highlight and remove barriers to social mobility and use the opportunity provided by the new operating model to identify and develop the digital skillset the City Corporation needs.

Options

N/A

Key Data

See Appendix 1 for KPIs.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

17. Strategic implications - These workstreams will deliver on the Social Mobility and Digital Skills Strategies, as well as elements of the Responsible Business Strategy. The proposed strategic direction will deliver on the following Corporate Plan outcomes: 3: People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential; 5: Businesses are trusted and socially and environmentally responsible; 8: We have access to the skills and talent we need; 9: We are digitally and physically well-connected and responsive.
18. Financial implications – There are no financial implications relating to the proposals set out in this report.
19. Resource implications - Combining the officer level governance and reporting for the Social Mobility and Digital Skills strategies has reduced the resource requirement. This has meant that the joint report could be delivered despite reduced resources in the Corporate Strategy and Performance Team due to Covid-related secondments and savings requirements.

20. Legal implications - There are no legal implications relating to the proposals set out in this report.
21. Risk implications - There are no risk implications relating to the proposals set out in this report.
22. Equalities implications - The Social Mobility Strategy includes strategic aims to overcome barriers for people with protected characteristics and socioeconomic disadvantage, and will promote equality of opportunity.
23. Climate implications - The strategic focus on green jobs and investment reflects the commitments and aims of the Climate Action Strategy.
24. Security implications - There are no security implications relating to the proposals set out in this report.

Conclusion

25. This report presents three key pieces of work in support of the Social Mobility and Digital Skills Strategies. The Joint Annual Report and the Social Mobility Employer Index rating reflects the achievements and progress made in 2019-20 towards the delivery of the Social Mobility and Digital Skills Strategies, and the proposed future direction indicates the priorities for 2020-21.

Appendices

Appendix 1: 2019-20 Annual Report for the Social Mobility and Digital Skills Strategies

Appendix 2: Social Mobility Employer Index 2020 rating and feedback report

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