

Committee(s): Education Board	Dated: 20/05/2021
Subject: Mid-term Strategy Review	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	Not at this stage.
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: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Discussion
Report author: Daniel McGrady, Lead Policy Officer (Education, Culture and Skills)	

Summary

The Education, Cultural and Creative Learning and Skills Strategies launched in September 2018. To review progress at 2.5 years into delivery, the Education Strategy Unit commissioned an external research agency to conduct a mid-term strategy review focused on how the vision of the strategies is being collectively realised by its partners, highlighting areas of effective practice and identifying areas for increased effort and improvement. This report updates Members on the key findings from the mid-term strategy review. A presentation containing visual outputs from the review and a summary of the recommendations is included in **Appendix 1**.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the main findings of the mid-term strategy review and the summary presentation in **Appendix 1**.

Main Report

Background

1. The City Corporation's vision for learners across a continuum of lifelong learning is set out in three interconnected strategies which are overseen by the Education Board: Education, Cultural and Creative Learning and Skills.
2. In January 2021, the Education Strategy Unit commissioned The Centre for Education and Youth (CfEY) to carry out a mid-term strategy review, drawing on the perspectives of the City's main strategic delivery partners. The overall purpose of the review was not to replicate the annual reports which focus on progress and outcome measurement against the action plan, but to identify the status of the vision, partner relationships, case studies and any areas which could be improved in the next 2.5 years of delivery.

3. The review engaged 70-80 partners through a mixture of: engagement sessions in existing forum meetings with the Family of Schools and Culture Mile Learning partners; specifically convened engagement sessions with City Corporation colleagues and tutors in the Adult Skills and Education Service (ASES); two hour-long focus groups with a mix of partners in each; and 11 confidential interviews with key strategy partners from City of London Members to Strategic Cultural leads to Leadership within the City of London Family of Schools.
4. The outputs of the review are a report for the Education Strategy Unit to inform future action planning and a summary presentation which is included in **Appendix 1**.

Current Position

5. In summary, the review identified the following key findings, effective practices and areas of improvement.

6. Findings

- The City Corporation's core vision statements refer to 'flourishing' and 'social mobility'. Partners have a shared and collective view of flourishing in its broadest sense focused on the notions of 'opportunity', 'growth' and 'development'. Partners' definitions of social mobility coalesced around 'opportunity' and 'aspiration' although this notion was more debated than flourishing, particularly when social mobility referred specifically to movement through social classes.
- Partners considered that the Education Unit was at its best when acting as a 'catalyst': maintaining momentum on key collaborative priorities and programmes that could be at risk of inertia or slower progress if left to individual organisations.
- The following are extrapolated as 'conditions of success' where partners shared views on what worked well in projects:
 - Projects based on a clearly articulated need
 - Projects based on reciprocity and mutual gain between partners
 - Co-designed between participating partners
 - Planned in advance with sufficient lead-in time
 - Even if starting with a universal or 'open access' approach to student selection, they focus on particular groups of students or design approaches and interventions that enable inclusivity
 - Roles of partners are clearly understood
- Some common challenges across partners emerged as potential areas of future focus: mental health and wellbeing; anti-racism; climate action; consolidating and building remote learning infrastructure; and collaborative professional development across schools, cultural organisations, and adult learning services.

7. Effective practices

- Partners involved in the delivery of the strategies expressed considerable enthusiasm towards achieving the aims of the strategies.
- Partners felt that connections to the City may have improved during the pandemic, catalysed partly by a sense of common mission and values, and partly by the ease of access to online meetings.
- Partners felt that the Education Strategy Unit benefits from strong leadership and direction, with staff who are approachable and receptive and there is a culture that encourages healthy dialogue and feedback.
- Partners agreed that the apprenticeships offer had improved significantly over time. Partners agreed that apprentices and other adult learners were benefitting from a broader City offer, for instance through visits to cultural places and lectures which broadened their horizons.
- There were high levels of appreciation from schools and cultural partners for the collaborative cultural and creative learning offer. A collective view emerged that under the strategies, an already strong suite of opportunities had progressed significantly and is now of even higher quality.
- Partners across all three strategies mentioned the London Careers Festival as a model of a successful City-led programme.

8. Areas for improvement

- Some partners perceive themselves as consumers of the City's offer, or possibly co-creators of small elements of the offer, rather than agents co-constructing a wider mission.
- Some partners felt that there are governance structures and processes which currently work against partnership working particularly where there are overlaps in accountabilities between entities.
- Some partners in schools expressed confusion around the term 'fusion skills' and how this connected to their priorities and values.
- Some schools would welcome longer lead-in times for projects and more precise guidance on the learners who might benefit from each opportunity.
- Some partners felt that provision tended to focus on secondary pupils and had broad open access, where there could be increase effort for younger years and for targeted pupil groups.
- Adult learning partners suggested that information, advice and opportunities for progression routes from apprenticeships into employment could be improved and learners found it difficult to understand and navigate the range of opportunities available.
- Adult learning partners expressed the need for increased support to adult courses which could not be transitioned online during the pandemic (e.g. arts, dance) and targeting resources towards the most vulnerable adult learners.

9. Visual outputs of the engagement workshops, as well the main recommendations for the next 2.5 years of delivery, are included in a presentation in **Appendix 1**.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

10. Strategic implications – The review responds to Goal Six of each of the three strategies overseen by the Education Board which focuses on ensuring implementation of the strategies is based on evidence and delivery is focused on impact.
11. Financial implications – The review was delivered within budget and there are no additional funding requests at this stage.
12. Resource implications – The Education Strategy Unit will use existing staff resources to address the areas for improvement and respond to the recommendations in the next two action plans.
13. Legal implications – None
14. Risk implications – None
15. Equalities implications – The Education Unit believe that this report complies with the City Corporation's Public Sector Equality Duty 2010.
16. Climate implications – None.
17. Security implications – None.

Conclusion

18. This report provides a summary of the key findings from an externally delivered mid-term strategy review of the Education, Cultural and Creative Learning and Skills Strategies.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Mid-term Strategy Review Presentation

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