



## Report of: The Leader of the Council

Meeting of:	Date	Ward(s)
Executive	21 May 2015	All

Delete as appropriate	Exempt	Non-exempt
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## Subject: Council Timewise Accreditation

### 1.0 Synopsis

This report provides an update on progress in respect of the Employers Creating Change strand of the Employment Commission report (due to be reported to Joint Board on 21 April 2015) and in particular provides details of the Timewise accreditation to be sought as part of the implementation of the Commission recommendations.

### 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the report and confirm that an application for Timewise Council status should be submitted to the Timewise Foundation

### 3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Islington Employment Commission was launched in November 2014 and held its final meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2015. The Employment Commission advocated an employer led approach to implementing its recommendations with the council supporting and encouraging other employers and leading by example.
- 3.2 To progress the "Employers Creating Change" strand of the commission recommendations an Employer Engagement Strategy to better define the council's role in encouraging employers to get involved has been developed. This role is to

promote the benefits and business case for involvement and an easy way for employers to get involved. The council has identified 5 ways in which employers can get involved locally and their business benefits for employers. These form the core of work to drive employer engagement:

1. Create a more flexible and diverse workforce
2. Develop your staff by getting involved locally
3. Recruit and retain staff by paying the living wage
4. Inspire the next generation
5. Develop the workforce of the future

3.3 A new campaign mini site, hosted and developed by the council, but independently branded and in partnership with other organisations will hold this offer and provide a focal point and single point of contact for employers wanting to get involved. The Employer Engagement team will use this resource (which will be live by August 2015) to engage with and influence employers to get involved.

3.4 A refocused Business Engagement Leadership Group (BELG) (comprised of Islington Council, BIG Alliance, KX Recruit, City and Islington College, JCP and Cripplegate Foundation) has defined three priority areas to make its employer engagement consistent and to generate greater momentum:

- Increasing recruitment of Islington residents to jobs in the King's Cross development
- Increasing the number of businesses offering support in the forms of mentoring, coaching, volunteering and work experience to Islington residents
- To improve our knowledge of what businesses need now and in the future in terms of employee skills requirements so that more Islington residents are supported to acquire the skills to become work ready

This group is now working to present a consistent offer and to increase both residents in jobs (in King's Cross) and a broader employability offer across the partnership.

3.5 The Council is also leading by example as an employer, it has recently recruited 33 new apprentices, has joined the BIG Alliance in order to expand its employee volunteering programme and to link it more closely to the employment agenda. It is also in the process (by July 2015) of becoming an accredited Timewise Council which will position it as a leader in flexible employment.

#### **4.0 Timewise Accreditation**

4.1 The Timewise Foundation is a Community Interest Company dedicated to the development of quality part time and flexible job opportunities to enable women with children to participate in the labour market. Development of a flexible labour market also supports others individuals who because of their caring responsibilities or other issues find it more difficult to access the labour market in the absence of flexible working arrangements. Flexible working arrangements do not just benefit individuals, they also offer business advantages by allowing the council to compete in the labour market and attract high quality staff for whom flexibility is as important

as pay.

4.2 Under the Timewise Council scheme, the council can apply for accreditation to Timewise Foundation. Achieving Timewise Council status will demonstrate that the council is driving change in flexible working practices for its own workforce and using this as a basis to influence local public and private sector employers to do the same.

4.3 There are five criteria to be met to achieve the accreditation:

- **Leadership:** The Council's commitment to flexible working is embedded in its strategy and policy and is understood, supported and championed by elected Members and senior officers of the Council. Strong leadership is a fundamental requirement of Timewise Council accreditation.
- **Workforce:** The Council's commitment to flexible working is reflected in its HR policies and procedures. A system to monitor flexible working across functions and job levels is developed and clear indicators to measure progress agreed. The Council is developing an understanding of how working cultures and behaviours can influence the use of flexible working. Areas for improvement have been identified and priorities and actions have been agreed to achieve these. As this is an area under the Council's direct control, accreditation presumes that a strong commitment to flexible working will be apparent from a detailed improvement plan with specific goals and objectives.
- **Residents:** The Council raises awareness of opportunities for flexible and part-time work and provides information and advice for people seeking to combine work with other commitments, especially those currently unemployed. Council will be expected to demonstrate a clear strategy for delivery of services to residents that improve opportunities for flexible working.
- **Employers:** The Council provides support and advice to local employers on how to overcome barriers to flexible working and provides opportunities to share learning and best practice. The accreditation framework recognises that the Council is primarily an influencer and enabler of change among employers and has little direct control.
- **Suppliers:** The Council is committed to a long-term approach to influencing its suppliers to adopt and embed flexible working practices, especially where this can improve their business performance and help secure best value. The accreditation framework recognises the constraints on what Councils can require of suppliers as part of its responsibilities to secure Best Value but expects to see efforts to disseminate learning on flexible working and to champion flexible working through its procurement.
- **Stakeholder Participation and Accountability:** A multi-stakeholder Timewise Advisory Board is established to monitor implementation of the Council's Timewise commitment, to challenge and stretch improvement plans and to support the wider dissemination of learning and best practice on flexible working and the impact of the Timewise Council initiative. Councils will be expected to have an Advisory Board in place by the time of accreditation.

4.4 Officers have begun work on the accreditation process and anticipate making the application in July 2015.

## 5.0 Implications

### *Financial implications*

The costs of seeking accreditation will be funded from the Chief Executive's Department budget.

### *Legal implications*

There are no legal implications arising directly from the report.

### *Resident Impact Assessment*

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding."

A Resident Impact Assessment has been completed and this does not identify any negative equality impacts for any protected characteristic or any human rights or safeguarding risks.

## 6.0 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

The steps required to obtain Timewise accreditation will help to tackle inequality in Islington by increasing the employment opportunities available to residents who need flexible arrangements to enable them to enter the labour market. The Executive is asked to agree that the application should be made.

Final report clearance:

**Signed by:**



7 May 2015

The Leader of the Council

Date

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