

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY

To: The Metro Mayor and Members of the Combined Authority

Meeting: 26 November 2021

Authority/Authorities Affected: All

EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL ITEM: No

KEY DECISION Yes

REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING AND DELIVERY AND PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR EDUCATION, SKILLS , EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

LCR BE MORE PORTAL REDEVELOPMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. To advise the Combined Authority of a current procurement process to secure a supplier to redevelop the Be More Portal

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority:
 - (a) note the progress made with the LCR Be More Portal Redevelopment in Section 3 of the report; and
 - (b) approve a delegation to the Interim Executive Director Of Strategic Commissioning and Delivery and the Portfolio Holder for Education, Skills, Equality and Diversity to appoint the successful Tenderer at the conclusion of the procurement process.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The Skills and Apprenticeship Hub (**SAH**), together with its delivery partners, provides a one-stop shop for skills advice and support across the Liverpool City Region (LCR) in line with the Combined Authority's One Front Door approach to business support. The SAH offers an opportunity to simplify how employers and learners navigate the local skills system, providing much-needed strategic leadership and accelerating the delivery of local skills strategy.
- 3.2 The Combined Authority has developed an apprenticeship careers portal, [Be More](#), which promotes careers, posts vacancies, manages case studies and Ambassador activity and resources across all areas of LCR.

- 3.3 The content and layout of the Be More website was developed working with a number of stakeholder groups including a student review panel, training providers, local colleges and regional training officers. It is part of the Metro Mayor's commitment to improving access to quality careers guidance in the region.
- 3.4 In 2019 the Combined Authority submitted a bid to secure European Social Funding to support the development and expansion of the Be More service. A key element of the funding request was for the further development of Be More to create an all age, all sector, careers Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) portal covering all areas of LCR.
- 3.5 £5.4m ESF funding was approved, together with a contribution from SIF funding. The development of the project has now commenced.

Development of Be More Portal

- 3.6 Part of the overall funding (£400k) has been ringfenced to provide additional capacity to co-ordinate careers activity across the LCR and enable support to be provided at sectoral and geographically focused levels.
- 3.7 SAH is currently overseeing the scope of development planned for Be More. This includes detailed career information on the key sectors across LCR; details of the roles within them; and how individuals of all ages can access opportunities.
- 3.8 There will be significant partnership engagement and contribution to the website with existing content and best practice from organisations being integrated within the website. Content will be tailored to meet the needs of varying stakeholders such as school leavers, unemployed, career changers, employers, schools, and training providers.
- 3.9 SAH are working towards ensuring that the Be More portal meets the Combined Authority's aspiration of the website becoming the 'go to' resource for local careers content and guidance. The team will collate and aggregate the skills needs of employers, developing progression pathways, supported by appropriate training and qualification and sector-specific careers materials. As such, it is recognised that coordination across training providers, colleges, and regulatory bodies needs to take place to ensure qualification and training pathways are in place across the region to meet future skills needs.
- 3.10 To ensure project success and delivery against the underlying principle of avoiding duplication, LCR Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance objectives, SAH will work collaboratively with a number of both internal and external stakeholders.
- 3.11 SAH are developing content for the Be More Portal around three themes; **Attract**, **Recruit**, and **Retain**. It will provide careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) relating to opportunities across LCR, be a central resource for careers materials, and provide a job posting and application service. In addition, it will, maintain links and connectivity with vacancy sites such as NAS. It is intended for Be More to provide a comprehensive CIAG service to all LCR residents, employers,

schools, and stakeholder groups and for each area within LCR to have the opportunity to add details of activity and opportunity specific to their own area.

- 3.12 At the heart of the Be More portal development, will be the desire to attract a more diverse applicant base to individual sectors within the region and ensuring content is accessible and representative of the LCR community. Some sectors or careers historically attract specific age, ability, sex or ethnic groups, or conversely have very few members from particular sections of society. The new Portal will use diverse examples of success to help break down such preconceptions and attract a wider range of applicants from all sections of the community.

Activity

- 3.13 In order to create a fuller understanding of all LCR stakeholder needs, and greater appreciation of their perspective, the decision was to create a sitemap/specification to help inform the creation of an invitation to tender to secure a high-quality web developer to develop the Be More portal.

- 3.14 As such, SAH worked with officers from within the Combined with the view to creating an evidenced report to outline the next steps in the development of the Be More Portal.

- 3.15 In summary, the report concluded;

- **Vacancy Information is important:** The top priority content for respondents is vacancy information. Honest and open information including as much detail as possible, for example pay, location, employer, hours, duties. People wanted to know as much as possible before applying or (in regard to career advisors or family) sign posting people to opportunities.
- **Behind the scenes, tips, tricks, and experience:** Particularly for the younger target audience helpful tips and tricks and case studies were seen as important. Respondents were looking for as much information as possible to make life decisions. For example Days in the life, video tours, how to write a CV, or how someone attained a certain career, were seen as potentially useful to make people aware of options and to allay any anxiousness about starting in a role.
- **Mix of content types:** 84% would be happy with written content, 74% with video, and 40% with audio. 31% happy with all 3 types of content. People have different learning styles and needs and a blend of styles are likely to be used. Offering more options can cater to more audiences.
- **Website and App:** 55% preferred website-based information. Many will still access the site “on the go”, so mobile optimisation will be key. 38% would prefer an app therefore a blend of options is being sought that have similar features, ease of use, and consistency.
- **Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and advertising:** Respondents are mainly searching generally for apprenticeships undertaking locational searches. This could potentially make SEO more complex. The research highlighted reports of people not going beyond the first search page of a search engine. It is essential to raise awareness of the site. Potentially money could be spent advertising on other sites people use, such as Indeed, gov.uk, LinkedIn, National Careers service. Also consideration should be given to advertising to different target

audiences not just 16-25 year olds. In the workshops the young people noted turning to their in-person networks quite often for advice and support so influencing these groups, is potentially another way to reach those looking for opportunities.

- **Create a one stop shop:** Whilst in the main the key content is vacancy information, particularly for career advisors having one location that caters to all their needs and audiences is ideal. Therefore, having printable documents, they can share with students or parents, market information, and even work experience opportunities under one roof would be helpful and potentially increase the amount the site can be used.
- **Easily shareable content:** 90% of the online sample would like the ability to share content by an array of channels so people can cater for the recipients needs. This includes making short shareable links available, considering any automated texts' potential impact on firewalls, and making sure content can be easily shared (or printed) from any newsletters as well.
- **Well designed, easy to use and easy to search:** 78% of online respondents noted ease of use as the most important criteria. A distinctive, simple layout, that's easy to use and easy to find content required would be ideal. Being able to search on various aspects such as location, pay, level, hours.
- **Push Notifications and Emails:** Push notifications and email Newsletters are slightly more popular for those in more of a supporting role (84% compared to 70%, and 76% compared to 51%). Yet both are seen as potentially being useful at making people aware of opportunities and information. Some individuals see them as a way to be ahead of the crowd. The trick, however, is to make sure they are relevant, people have some control over the content, and the frequency of alert or email is not too bombarding (which can be subjective).

3.16 Using the findings of the report, a specification of development need was drafted to help inform the creation of an invitation to tender (**ITT**) to secure a high-quality web developer to develop the Be More portal. Creation of the invitation to tender was a collaborative endeavour between a number of Combined Authority teams.

3.17 The ITT was launched on 20 October 2021 and the last date for return of tenders is 22 November 2021.

3.18 The development of the Be More portal is crucial to meet the Combined Authority's aspiration of the website becoming the 'go to' resource for localised careers content and guidance for all LCR residents. It will also aid delivery of the Metro Mayor's Young Person Guarantee, as included into the Combined Authority Corporate Plan.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

4.1. Financial

Funding for this project has been secured via ESF and SIF funding. The Be More Portal will be delivered within that agreed funding limit.

There are no direct financial implications to LCRCA budgets arising from the contents of this report. As discussed above, all funding for the Be More Portal development has been secured via ESF funding.

4.2. Human Resources

There are none arising from the contents of this report.

4.3. Physical Assets

There are none arising from the contents of this report.

4.4. Information Technology

There are no direct IT implications arising from the contents of this report. As discussed above, the Combined Authority's IT team have been proactive and collaborative stakeholders in the process to launch the IIT and there are no resources implication for them as the work will be carried out (and maintained) but the successful bidder.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the contents of this report. As discussed above, the Combined Authority's Procurement team are overseeing the procurement process and the Legal team will provide advice and the final contract when procured.

6. **RISKS AND MITIGATION**

- 6.1 There are none arising from the contents of this report.

7. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. The development of the BE More Portal will endeavour to attract a more diverse applicant base to individual sectors within the region and ensuring content is accessible and representative of the LCR community.
- 7.2 Some sectors or careers historically attract specific age, ability, sex or ethnic groups, or conversely have very few members from particular sections of society. The new Portal will use diverse examples of success to help break down such preconceptions and attract a wider range of applicants from all sections of the community.

8. **PRIVACY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are none arising from the contents of this report.

9. COMMUNICATION ISSUES

9.1. There are none arising from the contents of this report.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 The Be More portal must meet the criteria identified in the research and the Combined Authority's aspirations for the website to become the 'go to' resource for localised careers content and guidance for all LCR residents. This will secure the Metro Mayor's Young Person Guarantee as incorporated into the Corporate Plan.

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INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING AND DELIVERY

Mayor Joanne Anderson

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: EDUCATION, SKILLS, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

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Appendices:

N/A

Background Documents:

N/A