

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>Lead Member for Economy</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>14 October 2025</b>
<b>By:</b>	<b>Director of Communities, Economy and Transport</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Get Sussex Working Plan</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>	<b>To seek endorsement of the Get Sussex Working Plan and agreement to the current Partnership Group overseeing the delivery of the Plan until new governance structures are determined.</b>

---

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** The Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) Endorse the Get Sussex Working Plan (The Plan) as a strategic framework for employment, health and skills integration across Sussex.**
  - 2) Agree the continuation of the current Partnership Group to oversee delivery of the Plan until governance structures are confirmed via the proposed new Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA); and**
  - 3) Delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to make future minor amendments to the Plan.**
- 

## **1. Background Information**

1.1 The Get Sussex Working Plan (GSWP or 'the Plan') is a pan-Sussex response to the UK Government's Get Britain Working white paper. It aims to reduce economic inactivity and increase long-term employment to 80% by 2035, through a whole-system approach to employment, health and skills. The Plan is live and evolving, to be delivered and reviewed over the coming decade.

1.2 The Plan has been developed collaboratively by East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council at the request of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

1.3 As per DWP requirements, the draft plan in its current form has been formally endorsed by the DWP Regional Office, supported by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and has been submitted for review to the DWP and ICB in line with the end of September 2025 deadline.

1.4 To produce the Get Sussex Working Plan (Appendix 1), the partners commissioned a Labour Market Data Mapping and Analysis Report (Appendix 2) and stakeholder consultation and user voice workshops (Appendix 3 - Stakeholder list and Appendix 4 - Stakeholder consultation reports).

1.5 Over 200 stakeholders contributed to the consultation process, including employers, Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises, education providers, National Health Service and the DWP. Insights from Connected Futures Hastings peer research further shaped the

Plan. In East Sussex, the Skills and Employment East Sussex Board was actively involved in the development of the plan from inception, at a mid-point workshop and undertook a review of the draft plan.

1.6 An officer working group from across the 3 authorities reviewed findings of the analysis and stakeholder reports, in conjunction with local and national policy and strategies including Economic Growth Plans, the Local Skills Improvement Plan, DWP and ICB reports and the NHS 10-year plan. The officer group made recommendations to the Get Sussex Working Partnership Group, established to steer the development of the Plan.

1.7 The Partnership Group includes the DWP, Sussex Chamber of Commerce (the lead accountable body for the Local Skills Improvement Plan), Public Health and Employment and Skills leads from all 3 upper tier local authorities. Officers from the 3 authorities collaborated to draft the Plan.

1.8 The Plan will run from 2025 until 2035, spanning a period of major change including:

- Reorganisation of the Integrated Care Board
- Development of the second Local Skills Improvement Plan 2026-2029
- Formation of the proposed Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) from May 2026 and devolution of funding (including funds for skills and employment support)
- Development of the MCCA Strategic Skills Plan by December 2026
- Proposed Local Government Reorganisation by 2028
- Merger of Job Centres and National Careers Service into the new National Jobs and Careers Service.

All of the above developments have implications for the delivery of the Get Sussex Working Plan.

## **2. Supporting Information**

2.1 Sussex faces significant challenges in relation to employment including low job density, a predominantly SME (Small to Medium Sized Enterprise) based economy, skills shortages, a low skilled workforce, low wages but a high cost of living, intergenerational worklessness and relatively high levels of economic inactivity. In addition, the geography of the county limits access to jobs, with pockets of significant coastal deprivation and limited transport links providing another barrier to employment for many living in rural parts of the county.

2.2 Targeted employment support interventions are needed and the GSWP identifies how results can be maximised by targeting the priority groups identified by the data mapping and stakeholder consultation. Groups identified are: NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) young people (including those who are SEND and care-experienced), older adults, migrants and refugees, unpaid carers, adults with multiple complex needs, low skilled adults and those with mental and physical health needs.

2.3 The GSWP identifies system changes that could support greater economic activity, such as improved coordination of training, inclusive employment advice for SMEs, leveraging social value to yield employment and learning outcomes, and working closely with primary care settings to create referral pathways between GP surgeries and employment support provision.

## 2.4 The GSWP sets out 6 ambitions:

**Ambition 1:** Build an education, skills and employment infrastructure to achieve the Get Sussex Working Plan.

**Ambition 2:** Address needs of diverse resident groups to increase economic activity.

**Ambition 3:** Develop a joined-up approach with employers to inclusive workforce development, training and careers progression.

**Ambition 4:** Respond to diverse place-based needs to increase economic activity, health and wellbeing outcomes.

**Ambition 5:** Embed careers, employment and skills at the heart of decision-making to facilitate a systems-wide approach.

**Ambition 6:** Develop and upskill our workforce to boost employment and growth

2.5 The accompanying Implementation Plan identifies short, medium and long-term actions to support each of the ambitions and 7 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to enable progress to be measured.

2.6 The GSWP outlines proposed governance and oversight, advocating quarterly monitoring and reporting by the current GSW Partnership Group; and in East Sussex, ongoing input and scrutiny by the Skills and Employment East Sussex Board.

### Mapping provision

2.7 The GSWP maps current provision in the Employment and Skills arena across Sussex, identifying areas of best practice that can be built on, ongoing core delivery, as well as gaps such as a lack of employment support programmes for NEET young people or funding for 'stepping stone' programmes for those furthest from accessing work or learning.

### Risk and/or liability for East Sussex County Council

2.8 The GSWP is developed and led by the 3 local authorities but will transition to the proposed MCCA when it is ready to oversee it. Targets are set by the GSW Partnership Group and the Implementation plan is a live document which can change.

2.9 Actions focus on delivering programmes with known funding (e.g. Connect to Work) or on activities where there is no cost (e.g. sharing best practice in employer engagement). Where aspirational activities and/or asks for the longer term are included, these are recorded as 'subject to funding' in the Implementation Plan, as instructed by the Minister for Employment, with no obligation to deliver them unless funds are forthcoming.

2.10 The Plan states that delivery towards the identified KPIs is subject to funding and subject to a policy and economic environment that is conducive to the delivery of the identified actions.

2.11 The Government has not provided any requirements for reporting to the DWP on progress against the GSWP, however, has advocated that it is for the Local Authority to agree reporting and monitoring processes.

## 3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The Get Sussex Working Plan (the Plan) provides a robust, evidence-based framework to address employment and skills challenges across Sussex. It supports inclusive

growth, aligns with national policy, and prepares the region for future governance and funding changes.

3.2 The Lead Member is therefore recommended to endorse the Get Sussex Working Plan as a strategic framework for employment, health and skills integration across Sussex and to agree the continuation of the GSW Partnership Group to oversee the Implementation Plan until governance structures are confirmed via the proposed new Mayoral Combined County Authority.

3.3 To allow for the plan to be finalised, the Lead Member is recommended to delegate authority to the Director of Communities Economy and Transport to make future minor amendments to the Plan.

## **RUPERT CLUBB**

Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

### Contact Officers:

Holly Aquilina

Email: [Holly.Aquilina@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:Holly.Aquilina@eastsussex.gov.uk)

and Caroline Bragg,

[Caroline.Bragg@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:Caroline.Bragg@eastsussex.gov.uk)

## LOCAL MEMBERS

All members

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

NONE