



**CONFIDENTIAL**

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (BLEP)  
SKILLS ADVISORY PANEL (SAP) MEETING**

Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 17 June 2020, from 11.15am, via Teams

**Present:**

Professor Gavin Brooks, Buckinghamshire New University (Chair)	(GB)
Juliet Anderson, Health Education England	(JA)
Harpriya Chaggar, Buckinghamshire Council	(HC)
Cllr Anita Cranmer, Buckinghamshire Council	(AC)
Heather Dean, Buckinghamshire Business First	(HD)
Imelda Goldsboro, DWP	(IG)
Gill Harding, Buckinghamshire Council	(GH)
Ian Harper, Buckinghamshire New University	(IH)
Marina Jackson, BLEP Under 19 Skills Manager	(MJ)
Dave Oxley, McAfee/Digital Sector Group Lead	(DO)
Caroline Perkins, Buckinghamshire LEP	(CP)
John Spoerry, University of Buckingham	(JS)
Mark Warrilow, HS2/Construction Sector Group Lead	(MW)
Mark Wood, Reaction Engines/Space Sector Lead	(MWo)

**Apologies:**

Ian Barham, BLEP Partnerships Manager  
 Professor Nick Braisby, Buckinghamshire New University  
 Katie Higginson, Community Impact Bucks  
 Kevin Hoctor, BEIS  
 Jo Meloni, The Misbourne School  
 Karen Mitchell, Buckinghamshire College Group  
 Allan Potter, Adviza  
 Dena Read, Department for Education  
 Ailie Smith, Creative Media Skills/Creative Industries Sector Group Lead  
 Sarah Stevens/ Sally White, Sylo Associates

**In Attendance:** Sarah Fraser, BLEP (SF)

**1 WELCOME**

HD introduced GB who, subsequent to a recruitment campaign following the last meeting, has been appointed as the new Chair of the Skills Advisory Panel.

GB outlined his experience within the skills arena, both currently at Buckinghamshire New University and previously at the University of Reading and in other roles, and his deep interest in careers and learning, and within the life sciences arena.

GB emphasised the importance of the agenda being tackled by the Skills Advisory Panel, particularly in a post COVID-19 world and in conjunction with the Redundancy Taskforce that has been established to help reskill/upskill those losing their job in the county.

## 2 **REVIEW OF SAP ACTIVITY** (Spreadsheet attached)

Following discussion at the last SAP meeting, an enormous amount of research and analysis was completed looking at Buckinghamshire's skills needs compared with needs at a national level and reviewing where the county is experiencing skills gaps and how these might be addressed.

The Skills Action Plan arising from this work had been due to go to consultation the week before lockdown but, as the severity of the pandemic became obvious, this exercise was paused. The evidence base has since been reviewed in light of COVID-19 and consideration given to the short, medium, and long term impacts of the pandemic. The Skills Action Plan has been repackaged in light of changed evidence and a consultation exercise will be undertaken on this revised work.

HD/CP presented the distillation of this work within the framework attached.

Further to discussion, it was agreed:

- More specificity is required around some of the statements eg "work ready" to include base competencies but also softer skills, communication, attitude. The work Adviza, Building Futures, Bucks UTC, Bucks College Group will be vital in ensuring students are ready for the workplace.
- Digital infrastructure will be paramount going forward.
- IT training and delivery within schools, colleges and businesses must be improved.
- There is some overlap in the Skills Production Packages that should be reviewed.
- The importance of "place" must not be forgotten when trying to attract and retain talent in the area.

It was agreed the spreadsheet presented provided a manageable way to look at what is needed in the county and who might be able to provide resource.

**Further discussion on this subject will be brought to the next meeting.**

## 3 **IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LABOUR MARKET** (Presentation attached)

CP provided an update on the impact of COVID-19 on the Buckinghamshire labour market.

It was reported that concern about the level of redundancies/business failures likely to affect the county had led to the creation of the Redundancy Taskforce. This group will endeavour to bring together information from all those providing support to the recently redundant, collating this information in one place and identifying any gaps in support. The Taskforce will also seek to identify what funding might be required to help provide what is needed in terms of training/re-training/upskilling etc.

## 4 **SKILLS STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Buckinghamshire Skills Strategy for place was last published in 2018, covering the period up to 2022, and underpinning the Buckinghamshire LEP's vision for a Buckinghamshire economy that is "vibrant, balanced and resilient". The main purpose of the Skills Strategy was to provide a framework and focus for joint commitment to skills development across the county.

Subsequent to this, the Buckinghamshire LEP published its Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) identifying 4 economic assets around: Space (Westcott); Creative Industries (Pinewood); High Performance Technology (Silverstone); and Digital Health/Med Tech (Stoke Mandeville).

The LIS is underpinned by a significant evidence base through which “people” emerged as a strong theme with the need for a “skills and inspiration revolution”.

In discussion across Buckinghamshire Council, Buckinghamshire LEP, Buckinghamshire Business First etc, it has been agreed it would be useful to refresh the Skills Strategy for the county providing the collective aspiration, strategy and prioritisation for work should future funding streams become available. It was anticipated the first draft of the refreshed Skills Strategy will be available September/October 2020.

**This subject will be brought back for further discussion at the next meeting.**

## 5 PARTNER UPDATES

### 5.1 Buckinghamshire LEP

- BLEP are recruiting for a new analyst to pick up some of the work previously undertaken by Catherine Godward <https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/view/1916666171>

### 5.2 Buckinghamshire Council (BC)

- A number of issues have been identified during the meeting but looking at these from a bottom (schools) up perspective, with a change in thinking, culture and provision, these seem eminently fixable.
- Skills is a key priority for the new unitary authority and work is underway to eliminate fragmentation of this agenda across the organisation, enabling the council to be a more effective partner.

### 5.3 Buckinghamshire Business First

- BBF staff are all operating remotely and were fortunate to have all systems in place prior to the pandemic hitting.
- A significant number of new staff have been taken on to assist in supporting businesses impacted by COVID-19.
- Many businesses have been able to repurpose being entrepreneurial in taking advantage of opportunities presenting themselves.
- Digital skills remain a focus and free support in this area continues to be highlighted through the BBF weekly newsletter.
- Paddy Patterson, Apprenticeships Manager, left the organisation at the end of May. It is hoped, from the end of July, to employ a full time Workforce Skills Manager to assist the work of the Redundancy Taskforce.
- Any business requiring support can find all available on the [BBF website](#)

### 5.4 Buckinghamshire New University

- The University moved its operation online quickly as the pandemic hit but now plans to return to on campus teaching in September with social distancing measures in place, retaining online capability, and with incentives and packages of support available to students from September.
- There will also be packages of support for new graduates, including internships within the University, mentoring for those setting up new businesses, discounts on accommodation etc.
- With regards to Apprenticeships, a number of those working on health and social care apprenticeships have been taken off programme to work on the NHS frontline. Bucks Healthcare Trust and health providers have now said they are ready for learners to return from July/August. A good level of recruitment is anticipated for nursing qualifications, and Thames Valley Police are recruiting now for their apprenticeship programme commencing in November.

- 5.5 DWP
- DWP staff are largely working from home with Job Centres closed except to the most vulnerable users.
  - There are unprecedented numbers claiming benefits, with a huge percentage increase of those claiming Universal Credit and Jobseeker's Allowance in Buckinghamshire.
  - DWP is now engaging in labour market calls to understand individuals' situation, what support is required and where funding needs to be directed.
  - There is a specific focus on Youth Hubs across the county and further information will be provided on this.
- 5.6 University of Buckingham
- The University is going through a period of change, looking for a new Vice-Chancellor.
  - The current crisis has necessitated a re-engineering of delivery and much has been learnt during this.
  - The University will suffer as a result of the reduction in international students, which might also impact on the local Buckingham community with reduced footfall/spend in the town.
  - The University has a new Employability Team; more info will be shared at the next SAP meeting.
  - There has been a significant increase in post graduate requests; more students opting to remain at university rather than enter the labour market, as well as those expecting to be made redundant.
- 5.7 Health Education England/Bucks Health & Social Care Academy
- Increased awareness of the importance of health and social care appointments has improved reputation with regards to these roles.
  - There have been a significant number of volunteer roles taken up, but the work now is looking at how to retain these people longer term.
  - Placements may be more difficult to arrange, particularly when having a mind for how to address a 2<sup>nd</sup> wave should this arise.
  - The Health & Social Care Academy is keen to work closely with the SAP.
- 5.8 Buckinghamshire Skills Hub
- The Skills Hub continues to deliver the Careers and Enterprise Company programme and has secured funding for a further year (to August 2021).
  - The Careers Hub has bid for additional funding, which has been granted and will allow this work to be extended to all secondary schools.
  - The Skills Hub continues to work closely with the county's schools, signposting to/sharing support available.
  - A Head Teachers' event is planned for the end of the academic year to look at the success of the Careers Hub and looking at how to extend this programme.
  - The Bucks Skills Show has been postponed until 2021; there will, however, be an alternative online event in November, likely to be a week long programme of inspirational talks linked to areas within the curriculum.
- 5.9 HS2/Construction Sector Employers' Group
- The construction sector requires investment but can also play a big part in recovery. The sector continues to hire in volume; CITB continue to run training sessions and virtual careers events, there continues to be a large number of entry level positions.
- 5.10 Reaction Engines/Space Sector Group
- Work continues on a Level 4 engineering apprenticeship programme to be available from September onwards, in addition to work underway on a Level 6 Engineering Apprenticeship.

#### 5.11 McAfee

- The company is not hiring new staff until things become clearer with the economy.
- The organisation has 6.5k people working remotely.
- There is concern in the industry around security of platforms such as Zoom.

#### 5.12 Bucks College Group

- 81% of apprentices are on furlough. The College is supporting apprentices and employees back to work, with 147 returning last week. We have a significant number of apprentices on break in learning with the NHS for obvious reasons.
- In RESPONSE phase (from March 23<sup>rd</sup>) the nursery remained open for key worker children and vulnerable children, the College remained open to offer dedicated support for vulnerable students. The nursery fully reopened on June 1<sup>st</sup>.
- The college moved to RESTART phase 1 on 16<sup>th</sup> June with a focus on supporting students who have licensed to practice/occupational competence-based assessments to complete their qualifications, predominantly in Construction trades and Motor vehicle. Level 3 students going into 2<sup>nd</sup> year are also in for classroom support and the College continues to support vulnerable young people. In line with Government industry guidance, the College will look to extend this to hair, beauty and personal fitness occupational competence assessments in RESTART phase from 6<sup>th</sup> July.
- There is significant planning taking place for the new academic year RESTORE phase which will start from 18<sup>th</sup> August.

### 6 **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- Weds 22 July 2020, 10am-12pm, via Teams.
- Mon 7 September 2020, 2-4pm, venue tbc or via Teams
- Weds 18 November 2020, 10am-12pm, venue tbc or via Teams

The meeting closed at 12.50pm