

CONFIDENTIAL

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

Minutes of meeting held on Monday 7 September 2020, from 1pm, via Teams

Present:	Professor Gavin Brooks, Buckinghamshire New University (Chair)	(GB)
	Juliet Anderson, Health Ed England/Bucks Health & Social Care Academy	(JA)
	Ian Barham, BLEP Partnerships Manager	(IB)
	John Browning, Bucks Skills Hub	(JB)
	Clr Anita Cranmer, Buckinghamshire Council	(AC)
	Heather Dean, Buckinghamshire Business First	(HD)
	Nadine Edwards, DWP	(NE)
	Gill Harding, Buckinghamshire Council	(GH)
	Ian Harper, Buckinghamshire New University	(IH)
	Marina Jackson, BLEP Under 19 Skills Manager	(MJ)
	Jo Meloni, The Misbourne School	(JM)
	Karen Mitchell, Buckinghamshire College Group	(KM)
	James Moorhouse, Buckinghamshire LEP	(JMo)
	Dave Oxley, McAfee/Digital Sector Group Lead	(DO)
	Paddy Patterson, EFKB	(PP)
	Caroline Perkins, Buckinghamshire LEP	(CP)
	Kerry Senatore, Careers & Enterprise Company	(KS)
	Mark Warrilow, HS2/Construction Sector Group Lead	(MW)
	Mark Wood, Reaction Engines/Space Sector Lead	(MWO)

Apologies:	Imelda Goldsboro, DWP
	John Spoerry, University of Buckingham
	Maria Butler, SiteReady Ltd
	Katie Higginson, Community Impact Bucks
	Kevin Hoctor, BEIS
	Allan Potter, Adviza
	Dena Read, Department for Education
	Ailie Smith, Creative Media Skills/Creative Industries Sector Group Lead
	Sarah Stevens/ Sally White, Sylo Associates
	Sue Cross, Adviza
	Claire Wardle, Health Education England
	Janine Thomas, DWP

In Attendance:	Sarah Fraser, BLEP	(SF)
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ACTION

1 MINUTES

The minutes from the meetings on 17 June and 5 August were agreed as accurate records of the discussions held.

2 **WORKFORCE SKILLS MANAGER**

John Browning introduced himself as the new Workforce Skills Manager, employed through the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub, and outlined his experience within the skills sector, both from the perspective as an employer but also as someone involved with promoting skills and qualifications.

3 **RESEARCH UPDATE** (Presentation attached)

CP provided an update on the impact of COVID-19 on the Buckinghamshire labour market, and how employers skills needs have changed, and may continue to change, as a result of COVID-19.

Further interrogation of the raw data and discussion with people on the ground are required to understand why some areas in the county have been more severely hit than others in terms of claimant count, the percentage increase in High Wycombe's claimants outstripping the national average. Within the country, it was noted Buckinghamshire sits within the top third of LEP areas in terms of the impact that COVID-19 has had on the county's labour market.

4 **REDUNDANCY TASKFORCE UPDATE** (Presentation attached)

JB provided an update on the work of the Redundancy Taskforce; the resources and support currently available to employers and employees, and where there may be gaps in support. It was noted the Sub Groups will be discussing this work further, considering what more can be done to assist employers/employees, and what capacity is required, recognising that, particularly, one to one support for individuals is limited as resource requirements have been based on pre-COVID levels.

Further to the presentation given it was noted:

- In 'normal' times approximately 70% of those unemployed will claim benefits and there is work to be done to understand how to support those who are unemployed but not claiming benefits.
- Whilst it would appear that there is significant resource available, particularly online, there is a need to look at how accessible this information is, 'stress testing' the level of resource and how easy it is to find, recognising this will be assisted greatly by the single portal which will ultimately become the Skills Hub website. A significant marketing campaign will be planned to promote this new website, with the help of all SAP members, but it was acknowledged the portal is unlikely to be available until the New Year. In the meantime, information will be added to the BBF website and promoted to businesses, and shared with partners to promote.
- There is a need to look at how to 'bespoke' some of the nationally available support to tailor it to fit Buckinghamshire's needs appropriately.

5 **SKILLS STRATEGY SCENE SETTING** (Presentation attached)

HD/IB provided an overview of the work being undertaken on economic development strategies/recovery plans, preparations for progressing devolution and the work of the Growth Board in Buckinghamshire.

One of the first tasks for the Growth Board has been to produce a vision for Buckinghamshire to 2050 reflecting the ambitions within, for example, the Local Industrial

Strategy (LIS) which includes elements around how skills and training will be delivered going forward and the opportunity to use the county as a test bed. The recent pandemic has accelerated some of the concepts within the LIS regarding delivering skills and training in a different way, eg home learning, blended learning, and how the ethics of these things operate.

The Economic Recovery Plan builds on the fundamentals within the LIS but with a COVID-19 lens. For example, those people in long term stable careers prior to COVID-19 who now require retraining eg the aviation and hospitality sectors which have changed fundamentally.

Below the LIS and the Recovery Plan sits the Digital Strategy, which looks at infrastructure but also at how businesses and individuals use digital to best effect and the skills required to support that. This has been further highlighted as a priority in view of the number of businesses that were poorly prepared to work remotely when the pandemic hit.

The Buckinghamshire Skills Strategy was last looked at in 2018 and there has been significant change since that time. Key issues that need to be reviewed are:

- Digital Skills
- Supporting flexibility in career development/change
- Retaining and attracting new talent to the area
- Reflecting on the relationship with neighbouring areas eg London and the effect of COVID-19 in discouraging people from out-commuting for work and learning, considering how to capitalise on this, making the provision within Buckinghamshire as accessible as possible, whilst working with neighbouring areas.

5.1 Local Action Plan (Presentation attached)

HD shared an update on contractual obligations to the Skills Advisory Programme and requirements from DfE to develop a local Skills Report, the “goto” document for everything local skills related; this report is to be ready by March 2021 and will inform Government’s skills decisions in the future.

Progress on development of the Skills Report will be shared with the SAP going forward with a draft of the final report being shared with the SAP prior to sending to DfE. The Skills Report references the Skills Strategy and work will need to be undertaken to bring the two together at the same time, ensuring interdependence between the two and with the various other strategies referenced above.

6 **SKILLS STRATEGY DISCUSSION** (Presentation attached)

SAP members acknowledged the research information shared in the meeting only reflects skills shortages within BLEP’s key strategic growth sectors, which encompass a small proportion (c20%) of the economy/workforce as a whole.

Further to discussion around development of the updated Skills Strategy, the SAP:

HD/JB

- Suggested using the wording in the current LIS document to create a Vision for the Skills Strategy, amending “Buckinghamshire businesses” to be “Buckinghamshire employers” to reflect the importance of the Local Authority/Local Government as an employer, adding something within the wording around “choice”.

- Endorsed the key sectors identified but suggested Digital should be separated from the Creative pillar of work, creating a separate pillar for Digital (recognising this is a cross cutting theme covering all sectors) and focus not just on high tech digital skills but also on the digital technician level. Digital work falling under the Skills Strategy must align and feed into the work on the Digital Strategy being undertaken ensuring consistency across the two.
- Suggested the pillar around MedTech/Health should be widened to more broadly support the Health & Social Care sector within the county, not limited to Medical Device regulation.
- Suggested a separate Construction or Green Growth pillar is added, the latter being a Government priority, and the skills associated with this. This may also support the LEP's aspirations to provide testbeds within the county for innovative product. Like Digital this may be a cross cutting theme. To be discussed further at the Construction Employers Group meeting recognising that Green Growth in no way reflects the full scope of construction taking place which provide a considerable number of jobs and local opportunities. HD to discuss with Maria Butler.
- Suggested the Skills Strategy should cater for the majority of people within the county (not just those covered in the key strategic growth sectors), seeking to retain existing talent but also to attract new talent to the area and develop the large cohort of people within the county who may not follow the higher level career paths and how to frame/develop their aspirations and ambitions.
- Looking at the feasibility of providing employer partners/HE contacts to all students graduating at GCSE with an ambition to move into the identified key sectors, perhaps an employer that might provide work experience placements.

HD

7 NEXT STEPS

It was agreed the next step will be to appoint someone to write the Skills Strategy over the coming months who will then liaise with members of the SAP to gather views to inform further development. Progress on the draft strategy will be shared at future meetings.

HD/JB

It was suggested one key area missing from the current strategy is how to help people change careers mid-life, providing retraining opportunities and facilitating this move. The contribution of the "hidden skilled workforce" must also not be lost and consideration given as to how this can be brought into best effect for Buckinghamshire, driving forward an agile, adaptable workforce, providing people with the tools they need to change as required.

8 PARTNER UPDATES

8.1 Buckinghamshire Council

- Conversations are taking place at Buckinghamshire Council around how to better corral skills within the Local Authority to help improve communications externally.

8.2 Buckinghamshire New University

- All 3 campuses are now open and students are due back in shortly, with incubation spaces also due to open up soon.
- Health apprenticeships have seen a significant increase with applications being 25-30% higher than anticipated.
- Policing programmes starts in November with 38 students starting every month from November.

- 8.3 Buckinghamshire Skills Hub
- The Skills Hub are going into its new extended hub this term with all mainstream secondary schools involved.
 - SEN schools have also been grouped together to facilitate closer working.
 - The Bucks Skills Show will be held online w/c 9 November with c25 sessions being planned, linking curriculum with careers.
 - In response to issues arising from research findings, the MyChoices project will provide careers information, advice and guidance to Years 11/12/13 – more information available through the Skills Hub.
- 8.4 Health Education England/Bucks Health & Social Care Academy
- Significant funding is being put into care and health currently linked with registered nurse expansion targets and additional funding for nurse apprenticeships.
 - From the Trust's perspective work progresses on the Health Care Assistant Programme linked with the Kickstart programme. There is a dictate from NHS England that there be no HCA vacancies anywhere in the country by the end of October.
- 8.5 Careers & Enterprise Company
- From a national perspective CEC has launched the MyChoices campaign aimed at all young people at various transition stages. Funding has been rolled out and Bucks will be delivering part of this campaign. A recent event for schools saw 38k students involved.
 - A recent 'My Week of Work' campaign saw 120k students involved in learning more about virtual work experiences.
 - CEC is to launch a Primary resource platform on 5 October recognising that elements of this work needs to start with younger students.
 - CEC is in discussion with DfE about securing 3 years funding to provide sustainability to the work being undertaken.
- 8.6 HS2
- MW confirmed this would be his last SAP meeting; GB offered the SAP's thanks to MW for his contribution to the SAP's and the Construction Employers Group work.
- 8.7 EKFB
- A new version of Skills Employment and Education Plan has been submitted by EKFB. This moves from 100+ employees 6 months ago to 400-500 now with the aim to be 800-900 when fully mobilised. Once the number of apprenticeships, work experience placements and graduates needed is finalised these will be shared with the SAP. The plan covers apprenticeships, work placements, sector based work academies, and how to engage with under-represented groups.
- 8.8 DWP
- There is significant focus on young people at present and DWP are working on creating physical Youth Hubs where a member of DWP will be based 5 days per week alongside other organisations to support young people. In Buckinghamshire DWP is working with Action For Youth, and a bid has been submitted to source a building (probably in Aylesbury) to progress this project. It is also hoped to utilise family centres across the county to undertake outreach work.
 - Kickstart Programme – This is a Government programme offering grants to provide work experience work placements to 16-24 years who are unemployed and at risk of being long term unemployed. First placements are due to start in November. Companies must be able to offer 30 places, or, failing that, to work with others on a

consortium basis to provide the 30 places. £1.5k is provided per placement to cover administration costs. More information is available through the .gov website.

- Sector Based Work Academy work and Mentoring Circles are also ongoing for 16-24 year olds.
- DWP (with Buckinghamshire Council and Transition UK) are working to offer bespoke support for care leavers in the county. Please contact NE for more info.
- Pinewood Studios – A pilot scheme is taking place to support unemployed people from the aviation industry with transferrable skills, looking at how these people might transition into work in the film and TV industry.

8.9 McAfee

- McAfee offices will be shut worldwide until mid-January 2021. This means there will be no ability to offer work experience placements or tours etc. Internships will continue, at a reduced number, but will be handled remotely.

8.10 Buckinghamshire Business First

- Restart Grants will be available soon to help businesses access support from consultants/professional services, but also for small projects. Grants of £1k-£3k will be available. Please complete expression of interest form on the BBF website.
- Peer Networks – This is peer to peer learning for Executive Directors or Managing Directors. 100 places are available through 10 cohorts offering 2 hours every fortnight for 9 weeks. The cohorts will stay together to learn from each other facilitated by a specialist in the field.
- Kickstart Programme – BBF is investigating the possibility of being an organisation to corral applications from SMEs that wish to take part in this programme but are unable to offer 30 places.

9 **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- Weds 18 November 2020, 10am-12pm, venue tbc or via Teams

The meeting closed at 2.56pm