

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

Minutes of meeting held on Friday 12 March 2021, from 10am, via Teams

- Present:**
- Professor Gavin Brooks, Buckinghamshire New University (Chair) (GB)
 - Shabnam Ali, Buckinghamshire Council (SA)
 - Juliet Anderson, Bucks Health & Social Care Academy (JA)
 - Ian Barham, BLEP Partnerships Manager (IB)
 - Lucy Bowman, DWP (LB)
 - John Browning, Bucks Skills Hub (JB)
 - Maria Butler, SiteReady Ltd (MB)
 - Heather Dean, Buckinghamshire Business First (HD)
 - Ian Harper, Buckinghamshire New University (IH)
 - Marina Jackson, BLEP Under 19 Skills Manager (MJ)
 - James Moorhouse, Buckinghamshire LEP (JM)
 - Caroline Perkins, Buckinghamshire LEP (CP)
 - Dave Oxley, McAfee/Digital Sector Group Lead (DO)
 - Claire Reeves, Adviza (CR)
 - Kerry Senatore, Careers & Enterprise Company (KS)
 - Ailie Smith, CMS/Creative Industries Sector Group Lead (Part meeting) (AS)
 - Claire Wardle, Health Education England (CW)
 - Sally White, Sylo beyond HR (SW)
 - Mark Wood, Reaction Engines/Space Sector Lead (MW)
- Apologies:**
- Cllr Anita Cranmer, Buckinghamshire Council
 - Sue Cross, Adviza
 - Imelda Goldsboro, DWP
 - Katie Higginson, Community Impact Bucks
 - Kevin Hocter, BEIS
 - Bev Kelly, University of Buckingham
 - Jo Meloni, The Misbourne School
 - Karen Mitchell, Buckinghamshire College Group
 - Dena Read, Department for Education
 - Sarah Stevens, Sylo Beyond HR
- In Attendance:** Sarah Fraser, BLEP (SF)

ACTION

1 WELCOME

GB welcomed all those on the call, particularly Shabnam Ali, attending her first SAP meeting.

Shabnam shared a little of her background and information on her new role, Head of Local Economic Growth, with Buckinghamshire Council, and the skills element within this role.

2 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 15 January 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

2.1 Matters arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)

Bucks Business Awards – It was reported a good number of applications have been received and judging is now taking place. Announcements on the outcome of judging will be made April/May time.

3 LOCAL SKILLS REPORT (Presentation attached)

Further to discussion at the last meeting, CP provided an update on development of the Local Skills Report, a DfE requirement. It was confirmed final changes will be made to the report on Monday 15 March prior to this being sent for design, and publication online thereafter and by the deadline of 31 March 2021. Going forward, it was noted the report will be updated in November 2021, and thence likely moving to Local Skills Improvement Plans, pending advice from DfE.

It was noted the Local Skills Report provides the bedrock re skills in terms of the work being undertaken by the Buckinghamshire Growth Board on a Growth and Recovery proposition for Buckinghamshire and, as such, the two documents will be very much aligned. A conversation around the Growth and Recovery proposition has started with Government but it was reported there is more to be done to produce a fully developed proposition prior to the Comprehensive Spending Review later in the year.

4 SKILLS FOR JOBS WHITE PAPER (Presentation attached)

GB provided an overview of the content of the Skills For Jobs White Paper, a summary of the proposals therein, and the potential impact on HE providers (presentation attached).

It was noted one proposal made by Government is around the development of further Institutes of Technology (IoT). Buckinghamshire currently has one IoT, sited at Bletchley and focussed on cybersecurity. Under existing rules, Buckinghamshire is barred from applying for a second IoT. However, it was suggested the Growth and Recovery proposition being developed offers the opportunity to request flexibility around this guidance, assuming a compelling case, with support from employers and education providers, can be made.

The SAP moved to breakout sessions to consider the following:

- How does the White Paper impact my business and/or sector?
- What are the opportunities?
- How can we work together as a SAP and LEP to ensure that Buckinghamshire benefits from the proposed changes?

4.1 Plenary feedback

Providers:

- Buckinghamshire is an academic county and there is work to do to persuade parents re students pursuing technical routes.
- Clear information is needed on pathways, progression, careers and salaries available.
- The involvement of employers in designing programmes, bringing the curriculum to life and upskilling teachers, is very welcome.

Employers:

- The move away from a focus on HE is welcomed and offers additional opportunities to recruit from other sectors.
- There is currently too much emphasis on degrees when recruiting; sometimes technical qualifications are just as, or even more valuable than degrees, dependent upon the sector.
- Questions remain around how to encourage people to upskill/reskill.
- Young people leaving HE will already have large loans, what can be done to incentivise them to reskill if required.

Others:

- Buckinghamshire should volunteer:
 - To become a Trailblazer location.
 - To become an area to pilot initiatives eg Digital Bootcamps.
 - To develop a new IoT, building on the excellent infrastructure already in place.
- Degree Apprenticeships – More work is needed to understand what is required at a local level and to address local supply issues.
- Deprivation – Consideration is needed re those furthest from the labour market and how to support this group.

5 APPRENTICESHIP REFORMS (Presentation attached)

JB provided an update on apprenticeship reforms, temporary flexibilities created due to Covid-19, and new Traineeships in development (a classroom training programme delivered by any provider able to do so).

6 NEW BUCKS SKILLS HUB WEBSITE DEMONSTRATION

HD provided a demonstration of the new Bucks Skills Hub website functionality; the website is now live, but with development ongoing - www.bucksskillshub.org. It was noted BBF is able to provide a marketing toolkit and, if required, SAP members were asked to contact marketing@bbf.uk.com.

SAP members were asked to share news of the website with employers/individuals within their networks, and to share content to the website.

ALL

It was confirmed all under-19s will be made aware of the website through schools etc, Buckinghamshire Council will be showcasing the website, and all Enterprise Advisers working with schools will also be sharing information.

It was confirmed the BBF team will be collecting and interrogating analytics around website hits, parts of the website most visited etc; and will provide data at a future SAP meeting, if required.

7 PARTNER UPDATES**7.1 Bucks LEP**

- An open call for projects to utilise £2.8m Getting Building Fund monies has received applications for a number of skills projects. Project appraisals are underway prior to a decision being made on funding.
- A new Space Strategy was announced in the Budget in March which it is hoped will benefit development at Westcott Venture Park.
- Recruitment is underway for a new Bucks LEP Chair to be in place by the end of 2021.

- 7.2 Buckinghamshire New University
- Students are returning to the University.
 - There have been minimal breaks in learning for Healthcare apprentices.
 - Numbers for March remain healthy with 160 Nurses and Health Care Assistants joining.
 - The Aylesbury Campus building continues to be used as a vaccination centre and this work is progressing well.
 - Incubation facilities in Aylesbury and High Wycombe will be reopening very soon.
- 7.3 Adviza
- Adviza looks after Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) provision in many Buckinghamshire schools, in addition to running the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge for Schools and Colleges programme (ASK) – please contact Adviza if further details are required on Apprenticeships or T Levels.
 - Adviza is currently working on a project to support careers for Looked After Children.
- 7.4 Careers & Enterprise Company
- The CEC has appointed a new Chief Executive, Oli de Botton, who is in the process of meeting teams across the country.
- 7.5 Bucks Skills Hub
- The Skills Hub has a suite of resources available supporting labour market information for parents, children and schools, if required, with detail around the jobs of the future.
 - The first virtual work experience pilot for schools has been completed and went well.
- 7.6 Buckinghamshire Council
- The Council continues to look at service design/restructuring and is working to ensure this is as undistruptive as possible.
 - The focus currently is on reopening High Streets as lockdown comes to an end, looking at how to support retailers and regenerating town centres, hopefully creating economic vibrancy and new jobs.
- 7.7 Buckinghamshire Business First
- BBF has taken on additional staff in recent months targeted with contacting 5,000 local businesses by the end of March to ensure they are fully aware of all the opportunities and grants etc available to them. It is hoped to retain additional advisers post 1 April to service the workload.
 - BBF will continue to deliver the Peer Networks programme for a further year; great results have been seen from those that have already been through the programme.
 - From 1 April, BBF will be able to provide support for businesses to take up digital opportunities.
- 7.8 Space Board
- There has been discussion around accessibility of the Westcott site, and how to make sure people are able to get there.
 - As an industry, the space sector is looking at the way job specifications are written to ensure they are inclusive.
- 7.9 Construction Employer Group
- The Group is in the process of restructuring, addressing Terms of Reference etc, having spent time feeding into the Redundancy Taskforce over the last year.
 - With regards to training, consideration is being given as to how to accelerate routes into construction, and how to bring new skills into the county.
 - The group is also looking at the legacy being provided by large infrastructure projects.

- 7.10 Sylo
- There has been an increase in recruitment in the last month.
 - There has also been an increase in the number of enquiries around hybrid working as businesses prepare to bring people back into the office.
 - Sylo is setting up HR clinics to try and address questions being raised by employers and employees.
- 7.11 McAfee
- McAfee is splitting the company and is in the process of selling its “Enterprise” business to a private equity company. The majority of the Aylesbury office is “Enterprise” and it is likely, therefore, that it will be rebranded once the deal has been completed (anticipated to be at the end of 2021).
- 7.12 Job Centre Plus
- JCP is in the process of establishing Youth Hubs alongside every Job Centre (location is still required in Aylesbury).
 - A significant amount of resource is being put towards the Kickstart programme; the gateway criteria for the programme having changed in recent months to make application easier.
 - JCP is working with the Police Crime Commissioner on a bid to set up programmes around employability with people in prison, establishing peer to peer mentoring. It is hoped to engage employers in this either with funding, projects, mentoring, or changed policies around apprenticeships.
- 7.13 Health Education England
- Work is underway on a virtual work experience pilot in Buckinghamshire.
 - A recruitment event is planned and details will be shared once announced. A number of career insight events are also planned across the Thames Valley.
 - HEE is working with Mencap to support children with learning disabilities.
 - HEE are working with Springpod on careers associated with healthcare and medicine.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was agreed to review time allocation given to the use of Breakout sessions in future meetings.

GB/HD

9 DATES OF 2021 MEETINGS (all 10am-12pm)

- 7 May, 2 July, 17 September, 12 November

10 SUMMARY ACTIONS

Bucks Skills Hub Website

1. SAP members to share news of the website with employers/individuals within their networks, and to share content to the website.

ALL

Any other business

2. GB/HD to review time allocation for Breakout sessions at future meetings.

GB/HD

The meeting closed at 12.05pm