

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

Minutes of meeting held on Friday 13 May 2022, from 10am, via Teams

Present:	Martina Porter, All Spring Media (Chairing) (Creative Sector Group Chair)	(MP)
	Shabnam Ali, Buckinghamshire Council	(SA)
	Beth Baker, University of Buckingham	(BB)
	Ian Barham, BLEP Partnerships Manager	(IB)
	Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First	(PB)
	John Browning, Bucks Skills Hub	(JB)
	Robert Curtis, Cities & Local Growth Team, BEIS/DLUHC	(RC)
	Heather Dean, Buckinghamshire Business First	(HD)
	Caroline Eagling, DWP/Jobcentre Plus	(CE)
	Maria Edmonds, Buckinghamshire Council	(ME)
	Ian Harper, Buckinghamshire New University	(IH)
	Katie Higginson, Community Impact Bucks (part meeting)	(KH)
	Marina Jackson, BLEP Under 19 Skills Manager	(MJ)
	Mary Johnson, DWP/Jobcentre Plus	(MJo)
	James Moorhouse, Buckinghamshire LEP	(JM)
	Kerry Senatore, Careers & Enterprise Company	(KS)
	Mahmood Shabana, DWP	(MS)
	Paul Skitt, Flannery Plant (Construction Employer Group Chair)	(PS)
	Sally White, Sylo Beyond HR	(SW)
	Mark Wood, Reaction Engines/Space Sector Lead	(MW)

Apologies:	Cllr Anita Cranmer, Buckinghamshire Council
	Simon James, Buckinghamshire Council
	Mohika Kulkarni, Young Person Representative
	Aqsa Mahmood, Young Person Representative
	Karen Mitchell, Buckinghamshire College Group
	Dave Oxley, McAfee/Digital Sector Group Lead
	Richard Peters, The Misbourne School
	Cllr Julie Ward, Buckinghamshire Council

In Attendance:	Sarah Fraser, BLEP	(SF)
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ACTION

1 CHAIR ANNOUNCEMENT/APPOINTMENT OF NEW CHAIR

Further to the correspondence circulated to SAP members prior to the meeting, it was confirmed Professor Gavin Brooks has now left Buckinghamshire New University and had stepped down as Skills Advisory Panel Chair. Thanks were offered to Gavin for his leadership over the last few years, the SAP achieving a significant amount during this time.

SAP members noted and endorsed the recommendation that Martina Porter, the current Vice Chair, be appointed as the new Chair of the SAP; this appointment to be ratified at the BLEP Board meeting on 27 May 2022.

Those present were encouraged to contact IB/JB prior to the next SAP meeting should they be interested in taking on the role of Vice Chair of the SAP.

ALL

2 MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting held on 18 March 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

2.1 Matters arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)

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|-------|--|-------|
| 2.1.1 | ➤ Green economy audit – carried forward – The audit is due to be completed by the end of June 2022; the results will be brought back to a future meeting. | IB |
| 2.1.2 | ➤ Future funding – carried forward – The outcome of the funding group meetings, convened by Adrian Champney, to be shared at a future meeting. The Creative Industries Sector Action Group has started future scanning for funding coming up that might support the work the group is focussing on, and it is important that the SAP does this as well. | IB/HD |
| 2.1.3 | ➤ SAP/Sub Group Chairs – carried forward – IB/JB to arrange a meeting for the SAP Chair and the Chairs of each of the Sub Groups to consider opportunities arising. | IB/JB |
| 2.1.4 | ➤ Local Skills Report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The report is due to be discussed at a future meeting of the Buckinghamshire Growth Board; skills being a key area of focus. ○ Partners were asked to let HD/JB know if they are using the Local Skills Report and in what context, so that this information may be fed through to the Department for Education, and the impact of the report can be monitored. | ALL |

All other actions arising from the last meeting had been completed or would be covered in the course of the agenda.

3 TRANSITION FROM SAP TO LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN (LSIP)

Those present noted developments since the last meeting, including Government recognising the importance of the role played by SAPs and funding being received for the coming year to enable SAPs to continue their work.

Information has also been received in recent weeks that DfE will be basing LSIPs on existing LEP geography where there is no overlap. Development of LSIPs is to be led by an employer representative body (ERB), such as a Chamber of Commerce. In Buckinghamshire's case, it is recommended that Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) leads on this work. BBF meets the key criteria laid out by Government for an ERB, is considered by Government to be "a safe pair of hands", is highly representative of the Buckinghamshire business community, and has significant experience in producing successful bidding documents. SAP members commented that BBF is the perfect vehicle through which to deepen employer engagement with the skills agenda. The importance of the LSIP being developed through a highly collaborative approach, all SAP members playing their part, was acknowledged.

It was confirmed that, if endorsed as the ERB, the next steps for BBF will be to work with SAP members to develop Buckinghamshire's LSIP, building on the highly developed evidence base built up over the last few years and drawing on the knowledge of the Sector Sub Groups. It was noted the LSIP will be the document used to bid to future funding pots. It was suggested that the LSIP must be daring in its thinking; the skills challenge has been discussed for many years and never been fully addressed.

It was confirmed funding is available to support development and implementation of LSIPs, enabling far more interventions to take place in the "here and now", in line with the long term skills agenda for the county, than has previously been the case.

It was reported other workstreams in this area are focussed on Levelling Up and communities within the county that either do not have, or are not accessing, the same opportunities as everyone else, for whatever reason eg transport issues.

It was agreed:

- **MP will write to BBF, endorsing BBF leading on development of the LSIP submission, prior to the Expression of Interest deadline of 6 June.**
- **Constituent organisations of the SAP (eg training providers) will, additionally, write directly to BBF to support the above as well.**
- **BBF will aim to share a copy of the Expression of Interest (EOI) prior to submission. [Post meeting note: On reflection it should be noted that due to the tight timeframes involved, which includes the Jubilee weekend, this may prove difficult to achieve.]**

MP/IB

ALL
HD/PB

4 **DISCUSSION ITEM: The growing mismatch between local skills and job availability**

Further to the “Unemployment Deep Dive” document circulated in advance of the meeting, the SAP considered the mismatch between high claimant count levels (still at approximately twice the level of pre-pandemic levels) despite high numbers of job postings, and what the reasons for this might be, with the aim of creating an action plan to start to address this issue.

It was noted more investigation is needed to understand the issues for these people, why they are finding it hard to return to the workplace, and what skills and training provision may be relevant.

In terms of levelling up, the narrative around supporting all communities within the county and providing equal access will be very important in supporting bids to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other funding pots.

4.1 Plenary Feedback

- **Outreach:**
 - Use the voluntary sector to access people in harder to reach communities.
 - Organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau and Oasis who are involved in financial security, can assist in reaching these communities, as can smaller grass roots groups.
 - Using outreach venues in community locations, rather than Job Centres, to may elicit a better response/success rate.
- **Training:**
 - To help people recognise their transferrable skills, broaden horizons, and frame their CV to match skills sought by employers.
 - To help people ensure their skills are up-to-date.
 - Look to reduce the time on the claimant count before people are able to meet with a Job Coach (currently 6 months).
 - To help employers better frame job adverts.
 - To help Recruitment Managers broaden their thinking about who might be appropriate for a role, and support that can be offered to new recruits to help them “train into a role properly”.
 - For those brokering roles to ensure they have a clear understanding of what is required in a particular sector.
 - To help training providers better tailor their literature rather than producing very generic information.

- **Promotion:**
 - More job fairs with direct access to engage with employers would be beneficial.
 - Consider how to encourage people to come out of retirement to take up shortage roles (particularly in a health & social care environment).
 - Of apprenticeships to young people and to support for employers through the process of taking on an apprentice.
- **Skills gaps**
 - Could current skills/training provision be improved to address skills gaps?
 - What skills do people currently on the claimant have, and can this be shared?
- **Other**
 - Where people do two jobs and stop one, is this reflected in the claimant count?
 - There are a significant number of economically inactive people who are not currently included in the claimant count.
- **Sector specific information:**
 - Can the SAP appoint Sector Representatives to help advise Job Centre Work Coaches re sector specific information on career pathways?
 - Are roadmaps available for career pathways in different sectors? If not, can these be produced and transferrable skills highlighted?

4.2 Immediate actions

- To try and establish the existing skill sets for those currently on the claimant count. **SA/IB**
- To try and reduce the waiting time before seeing a Job Coach for those currently on the claimant count. **CE/MJo**
- To incorporate all suggestions/comments made into an action plan which will be brought back to the SAP, ensuring the Local Authority is closely involved. **HD/IB**
- To establish a small working group to look at this workstream including: **IB/HD**
 - x1 DWP representative
 - x1 Voluntary sector representative
 - x1 Business sector representative
 - x1 Local Authority representative
 - x1 LEP or BBF representative
- To hold a future SAP meeting in one of the harder to reach areas identified. **IB/HD**

5 **SECTOR GROUP UPDATES**

5.1 Construction Employer Group

PS reported the Construction Employer Group held its first face to face meeting in 2 years on 28 April. The meeting was well-attended and covered x3 main agenda items:

- Bucks Skills Show – feedback and learning points for future events.
- Restart Scheme – presentation from Fedcap and TCHC.
- How to attract, recruit and retain talent in the sector. A Construction Careers event is planned at Bucks College Group in June aimed at: students about to leave college and seeking employment; employers seeking apprentices/workers; inspiring younger students thinking about a career in Construction.

5.2 Creative Industries Sector Action Group

MP reported that a Sub Group to the Creative Industries Sector Action Group has been established to work more directly with large employers coming into the area on the wider skills agenda prior to them landing in Bucks.

6 EXTERNAL FUNDING UPDATE – BOOTCAMPS (Presentation attached)

JB provided an update on the funding provided for Bootcamps to date and commented that a further wave of funding is expected in the coming months. Reflecting on the volume of work required to prepare a Bootcamp bid, it was suggested thinking should start now around whether Buckinghamshire should apply for Bootcamp and, if so, where any bid should focus.

Those present were asked to contact JB to speak further on any suggestions they might have with regards to Bootcamps.

ALL

In the meantime, it was confirmed a DfE representative will be at the next SAP meeting to talk further about Bootcamp requirements.

7 PARTNER UPDATES

7.1 University of Buckingham

- The University has hosted a number of events in recent weeks including:
 - ‘Collaborate MK’ networking event, held in the Vinson Centre, with students and local businesses in attendance. A number of the businesses attending have been invited back to the University to talk to students.
 - A successful event has been held with 6th Form students to talk about business and entrepreneurialism.
 - Community events have also been held with more planned now that the threat of the pandemic has receded.
- The University is still receiving lots of interest in its medical courses and is looking at the possibility of setting up a nursing course (likely on the Crewe Campus).

7.2 Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF)

- Work on the ‘Boost’ programme is ongoing, supporting, largely, the hospitality and leisure sector, but also the wider visitor economy, offering free digital training: [Visit Buckinghamshire Boost - Buckinghamshire Business First \(bbf.uk.com\)](https://www.bbf.uk.com). This programme continues to the end of June. BBF continues to work with tourism and hospitality businesses on a number of things, including: helping them reduce their carbon footprint, using that reduction to promote their business; looking at how to grow their business; how to make venues more accessible; and how to get those who are currently economically inactive into the sector.
- A “Talent Showcase” event is planned with Bucks College Group, w/c 16 May 2022 to bring together employers and students to talk about future careers.
- BBF continues to provide grants up to £2k for people continuing to work from home.
- The organisation also continues to support start up ventures including online support and providing a mentoring service matching mentors and mentees.
- The Buckinghamshire Business Awards are underway, the closing date for applications being 16 May 2022. Those present were encouraged to submit entries and share information on the “Apprentice or Young Person Employer of the Year”, sponsored by Buckinghamshire Council and open to all employers who have employed or provided work experience for a young person under the age of 24.

7.3 BLEP

- Work continues on preparation to bid to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This work is being led by Buckinghamshire Council with support from BLEP/BBF and other partners. One particular concern is to maintain continuity of funding, particularly for

business support programmes which are at risk of coming to an end as EU funding ceases.

- A launch event is planned at Silverstone for the cycling efficiency rig at Total Sim, part funded by the LEP.
- 28 July sees the Westcott Space Expo showcasing the services and facilities at Westcott. The LEP is very keen to encourage young person representatives from across the county to attend this event.

7.4 Buckinghamshire New University (BNU)

- BNU and Bucks College Group are looking forward to the college's impending move to High Wycombe and are working to ensure the best use of the space available.
- At the Aylesbury Campus, the 3rd Floor digital health training suite is now complete. This provides training space but also provides space for businesses to come and test their products.
- Incubation space at the Aylesbury and High Wycombe campuses is still being under-utilised.
- Re apprenticeships, BNU currently has over 1,000 learners on programmes. The University has also just secured a contract to provide apprenticeships for a very high level regional employer.
- The University has established a "First Generation Fund". This provides a 5 year bursary for any student who is the first in their family to attend university, to support them through their course and on into a job, an internship, or a post-graduate degree. This is not bound by an upper age limit but did arise from a donation received, which was to be used for the benefit of young people. It was suggested, if the bursary is flexible, it may assist with the issues raised earlier in the meeting around supporting people into employment.

7.5 Community Impact Bucks (CIB)

- CIB continues to see high demand for volunteers, who are in short supply. Flexibility is needed in these roles and there is a synergy with the paid labour market.
- CIB has been working with Clinical Commissioning Groups to place volunteers in non-clinical roles in GP surgeries and have just confirmed the first volunteer going into paid employment as a result of this scheme.

7.6 Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC)

- CEC is expanding its hubs across the country; Buckinghamshire led the way with its Skills Hub. As of September 2022 87% of all schools will be in a Hub and Buckinghamshire will be sharing best practice.
- All partners have now received funding offer letters and work is underway to look at how to grow teams.
- CEC is working on a Future Skills questionnaire, the biggest survey ever of young people's perceptions on careers advice, their careers journey in school, employability levels and their confidence in applying for a job. The survey will cover young people in Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4, Post-16, and SEND. It is anticipated c40k young people will have responded to the survey by the summer and it is hoped to provide results of the survey at individual LEP level. It was suggested it would be useful to survey those that have just left school, perhaps canvassing employers' experience.
- CEC is also working on a national piece of work developing a best practice framework for employers to enable them to measure the impact they can have when getting involved in the skills agenda with young people. The CEC has had x100 employers feeding into the development of these standards and it is hoped they will assist with continuous employment, development of a strong pipeline of talent, etc. The pilot for this work starts in September.

- 7.7 Bucks Skills Hub
- Work continues on the Skill Up Bucks programme, bringing together SME employers with people looking for jobs.
 - As a spin-off from the Bucks Skills Show, a smaller event is planned on 20 June at Stoke Mandeville Stadium for young people with SEND requirements. Approximately 20 employers will be in attendance who are sympathetic to young people with special educational needs and disabilities who are looking for job opportunities, work experience placements etc. **Those present were asked to let MJ know if they would like to be involved with this event.**
 - The Skills Hub Annual Conference will be held on Friday 8 July from 8-10am at the Waterside Theatre in Aylesbury. The Conference will be followed by a BASH meeting, also at the Waterside, so it is hoped to have good engagement from secondary school Headteachers at the Conference.
 - The Skills Hub has been successful in progressing to the second round of the Hub Innovation project, aimed at engaging with young people who, without intervention, will likely become NEET. The project works with the young people to hone their employability skills, improve self-esteem, and link them with employers.

ALL

- 7.8 Sylo Beyond HR
- Sylo have launched a diagnostic tool for business; a quick “health check” for businesses looking at what to do for their staff around wellbeing and compliance.
 - Sylo are seeing an increased take up by businesses of psychometric testing in order to gain an understanding of how new recruits work and interact with others. This is proving useful for team development and recruitment.

- 7.9 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
- RC reported that details around the UK Shared Prosperity and the Levelling Up Fund Round 2 have both now been announced.

- 7.10 All Spring Media
- All Spring Media were recently announced as national winners of the Creative & Design Apprenticeship Provider of the Year.
 - The organisation will be taking on a further 30 apprentices this month in collaboration with CMS and Screen Skills, with a further 100 expected in the next quarter (in September), taking the total to over 300 apprentices per year.
 - All Spring Media is working on a Flexi-job apprenticeship in partnership with the BBC.
 - All Spring Media are part of the funding consortium recently mentioned by the GLA in London that will be launching an internal job agency looking to find jobs in the sector for apprentices to progress on to, and to look at short courses for people with transferrable skills in order to fill some of the skills gaps that exist within the sector.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 Bucks College Group - Karen Mitchell
- IB reported that Karen would be leaving Bucks College Group in July and as such would be stepping down from the SAP. Jenny Craig has been appointed to replace Karen, commencing in post in July; Jenny will be invited to join the SAP going forward.

SAP members offered their thanks to Karen for the contribution she has made to the SAP work over a number of years; wishing her well for the future.

9	DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 8 July, 10.30am-12.30pm, Aylesbury Waterside Theatre ➤ 16 September, 10am-12pm, Bucks College Group ➤ 18 November, 10am-12pm, via Teams 	
10	SUMMARY ACTIONS	
10.1	➤ SAP Vice Chair – Please contact IB/JB prior to the next SAP meeting if interested in being considered for this role.	ALL
10.2	➤ Green economy audit – carried forward – IB to share results, once completed.	IB
10.3	➤ Future funding – carried forward – The outcome of the funding group meetings, convened by Adrian Champney, to be shared at a future meeting.	IB/HD
10.4	➤ SAP/Sub Group Chairs – carried forward – IB/JB to arrange a meeting for the SAP Chair and the Chairs of each of the Sub Groups to consider opportunities arising.	IB/JB
10.5	➤ Local Skills Report - Partners to let HD/JB know if they are using the Local Skills Report and in what context.	ALL
10.6	➤ LSIP - MP to write to BBF, endorsing BBF leading on development of the LSIP submission, prior to the Expression of Interest deadline of 6 June.	MP
10.7	➤ LSIP - Constituent organisations of the SAP (eg training providers) to write directly to BBF to support BBF leading on development of the LSIP.	ALL
10.8	➤ LSIP – BBF will aim to share a copy of the Expression of Interest (EOI) prior to submission (noting that this will be difficult to achieve due to timescales involved).	HD/PB
10.9	➤ Skills/Jobs Mismatch – SA/IB to seek information to establish the existing skill sets for those currently on the claimant count.	SA/IB
10.10	➤ Skills/Jobs Mismatch – CE/MJo to investigate the possibility of reducing waiting times before seeing a Job Coach for those currently on the claimant count.	CE/MJo
10.11	➤ Skills/Jobs Mismatch – HD/JB to incorporate all suggestions/comments made into an action plan to be brought back to the SAP.	HD/JB
10.12	➤ Skills/Jobs Mismatch – IB/HD to establish a small working group to look at this workstream including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ x1 DWP representative ○ x1 Voluntary sector representative ○ x1 Business sector representative ○ x1 Local Authority representative ○ x1 LEP or BBF representative 	IB/HD
10.13	➤ Skills/Jobs Mismatch – HD/IB to look to hold a future SAP meeting in one of the harder to reach areas identified.	HD/IB
10.14	➤ Bootcamps – Please contact JB with any suggestions with regards to Bootcamps.	ALL
10.15	➤ SEND/Employer event – Please contact MJ if you would like to be involved with this event on 20 June.	ALL