

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

Minutes of meeting held on Friday 8 July 2022, from 10am, via Teams

Present: Ian Barham, BLEP Partnerships Director (Chairing) (IB)
 Shabnam Ali, Buckinghamshire Council (SA)
 Beth Baker, University of Buckingham (BB)
 Cllr Joseph Baum, Buckinghamshire Council (JBa)
 John Browning, Bucks Skills Hub (JB)
 Adrian Champney, Buckinghamshire Business First (AC)
 Cllr Anita Cranmer, Buckinghamshire Council (ACr)
 Marina Jackson, BLEP Under 19 Skills Manager (MJ)
 Mary Johnson, DWP/Jobcentre Plus (MJo)
 Aqsa Mahmood, Young Person Representative (AM)
 James Moorhouse, Buckinghamshire LEP (JM)
 Dave Oxley, Trellix (DO)
 Paul Skitt, Flannery Plant (Construction Employer Group Chair) (PS)
 Sally White, Sylo Beyond HR (SW)

Apologies: Juliet Anderson, Bucks Health & Social Care Academy
 Robert Curtis, Cities & Local Growth Team, BEIS/DLUHC
 Heather Dean, Buckinghamshire Business First (HD)
 Maria Edmonds, Buckinghamshire Council
 Karen Gray, DWP
 Ian Harper, Buckinghamshire New University
 Katie Higginson, Community Impact Bucks
 Simon James, Buckinghamshire Council
 Mohika Kulkarni, Young Person Representative
 Karen Mitchell, Buckinghamshire College Group
 Richard Peters, The Misbourne School
 Martina Porter, All Spring Media (SAP Chair/Creative Sector Group Chair)
 Kerry Senatore, Careers & Enterprise Company
 Claire Wardle, Health Education England
 Mark Wood, Reaction Engines/Space Sector Lead

In Attendance: Sarah Fraser, BLEP (SF)

MINUTES

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| 1 | MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING | |
| | The minutes from the meeting held on 13 May 2022 were agreed as an accurate record. | |
| 1.1 | <u>Matters arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)</u> | |
| 1.1.1 | ➤ Green economy/Net Zero audit – carried forward – The audit is due to be completed very shortly with interim results being reported to the Buckinghamshire LEP Board in July, an update being brought to a future SAP meeting thereafter. | IB |
| 1.1.2 | ➤ SAP/Sub Group Chairs – carried forward – IB/JB to arrange meetings for the SAP Chair and the Chairs of each of the Sub Groups to consider opportunities arising. | IB/JB |

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

2 FUTURE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES (Presentation attached)

Further to the information circulated prior to the meeting and to the presentation given on the day, SAP members requested that AC share the details of funding opportunities being pursued currently.

AC

2.1 DCMS Create Growth Programme

The Creative Industries Sector Action Group is supportive of the bid being submitted by Buckinghamshire to the Create Growth Programme.

BLEP/BBF are working closely with Pinewood Studios and the National Film & Television School re ongoing skills/training requirements, in addition to looking wider and discussing the possibility of a collaborative bid, if appropriate, with Berkshire, Hertfordshire, Surrey, etc.

An expression of interest (EOI) in this programme was submitted on 7 July, the full application to this competitive funding stream to be completed by 18 August should the EOI be successful (the outcome of this expected by 21 July).

2.2 Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP)

BBF has submitted an EOI in being the Employer Representative Body overseeing the transition from SAP to LSIP; BBF's application believed to be the only one from Buckinghamshire.

The LSIP will provide core funding to Buckinghamshire, noting that the EOI has indicated an intention to collaborate cross-borders on this work. AC to share a copy of the EOI submitted.

AC

2.3 UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

This funding stream replaces previous EU funded programmes (ERDF, ESIF, etc). It is hoped the bidding process moves quickly so as to maintain the momentum achieved in previous programmes.

Government is actively encouraging the evaluation of programmes and sharing of best practice through the UKSPF, which was considered to be very positive.

2.4 Levelling Up Fund

The second round of this fund has been announced. Buckinghamshire Council has submitted five applications; all being endorsed by all five Buckinghamshire MPs.

The applications are centred on High Wycombe (affordable housing), Chesham (improving the public realm), Aylesbury (transport), Buckingham (transport and links to Silverstone), and Beaconsfield (sustainable transport).

SAP members noted the importance of affordable housing/accessibility when trying to recruit staff. This has worked well at Milton Park in Didcot (JBa declared an interest). It was suggested there is also an opportunity to think of Buckinghamshire as a corridor between Milton Park and Silverstone, taking advantage of these connections.

Buckinghamshire has not been identified as a priority area for Levelling Up monies so may or may not receive funding. However, if unsuccessful, the bids developed/projects being considered can be repurposed to bid to other funding streams as they come online.

2.5 Strategic Development Fund

Buckinghamshire College Group has submitted an application for £700k under this funding stream, working in conjunction with Flannery Plant Hire around development of construction skills. The other elements of the bid are around Net Zero, looking at electric vehicle maintenance etc; and health and social care programmes, working with the UTC in Aylesbury.

The outcome of the bid application is expected by the end of July, with delivery to be completed by the end of March 2023.

3 **ACTION PLAN FOR DFE'S SAP FUNDING** (Presentation attached)

JB provided an update on the funding to come to support the SAP's work, noting that Buckinghamshire is well advanced in ensuring alignment with Government priorities due to the work carried out previously on the Skills Action Plan and the deep dive research work being carried out (links to this research will be shared when complete).

4 **UPDATE FROM DWP**

SAP members had discussed the mismatch between job vacancies and those on the claimant count at the last meeting, and had questioned whether DWP could provide more specific information around job seekers' qualifications, where gaps may exist, etc, so that issues can start to be addressed and people assisted in taking up vacancies available.

MJo reported it is not currently possible to request qualifications information. However, changes taking place at DWP will enable the provision of this data in the future if requested.

SAP members commented it would be useful to know if there are skills gaps in areas of deprivation where support can be given quickly, possibly in the locality, to upskill people and assist them into work.

It was suggested Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) may be useful in a number of areas in Buckinghamshire e.g., around Creative Industries in High Wycombe, or Health & Social Care in Aylesbury.

It was agreed:

- **MJo will provide an update at the next meeting around SWAPs and other DWP programmes in delivery.** MJo
- **MJo will forward information on all the opportunities available to Marina Jackson to advertise through the Skills Hub website in the hopes of boosting take up.** MJo
- **It would be useful to arrange a briefing session for all Buckinghamshire Councillors on the work of the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub and provide links to opportunities that Councillors can share with constituents, but also so Councillors can provide intelligence to the Skills Hub around skills gaps/demands in their areas.** IB/JB/HD
- **It would be useful to arrange a session with businesses to discuss opportunities for employing staff and the assistance available to help train people up, etc.** JB/HD

5 UPDATE ON RECRUITMENT ISSUES IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

SW provided an update on recruitment issues being observed by Sylo Beyond HR, an HR consultancy that provides support with recruitment to a wide range of businesses within a number of different sectors across Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

Trends being seen include:

- It is getting increasingly harder for businesses to recruit staff; vacancies reaching their highest point in March/April 2022.
- The skills gap has worsened.
- Employers are looking at offering flexible packages to attract recruits, not just increased wages but also more flexible benefits.
- Candidates are asking employers to map career pathways within their organisation so recruits have a clear picture of where they might be in 12/18 months' time.
- Candidates are asking businesses to demonstrate that they are value-led, ethical organisations, etc, and that any working environment they would be expected to attend can compete with working from home.
- Employers are increasing their investment in upskilling existing staff members in order to fill vacancies; growing from within.
- Businesses are investing in management development capability and skills that will be needed in the future.
- Businesses of all sizes wishing to attract investment are being asked to clearly demonstrate management team capabilities and robustness of policies and procedures in place.
- Businesses need to be innovative when looking at their application processes eg asking candidates to make a short video in order to apply for a job rather than filling in forms. There is also a need to think about taking people on and training them into a role: "recruiting to attitude; training for skills".

It was noted there may be learning to take from the work being undertaken by Buckinghamshire Council, BBF, Community Impact Bucks, etc around matching the skills of Ukrainian refugees with employment available in the county.

Additionally, a meeting has been arranged with the Voluntary Sector Network to gain a greater understanding of how to make use of/access this network when seeking to address skills mismatches.

It was reported work is being done to update Ward level data held in order to provide targeted interventions for people in certain sectors; to look at why people are economically inactive; and to consider what flexibilities can be offered to people who, for example, have family commitments restricting their ability to work at certain times (presentation attached).

It was suggested it would be beneficial to share this data with employers, perhaps in the Autumn and perhaps through a series of roundtable exercises in the hopes that sharing the information may assist in changing attitudes towards employment, and recruitment procedures, etc. There is also an opportunity to assist employers in marketing themselves to prospective new recruits, for example, as "Social Value Champions" or "Local Opportunities Employer Champions".

It was agreed to ask the "Restart" providers to provide an update at the next meeting on the programmes they are running.

6	VICE CHAIR APPOINTMENT UPDATE	
	SAP members were reminded to contact IB/JB should they be interested in taking on the role of SAP Vice Chair. The responsibilities of the role are not onerous but would offer additional support to the Chair.	ALL
	An update on the recruitment process will be shared at the next meeting.	IB
7	PARTNER UPDATES	
7.1	<u>Flannery Plant Hire</u>	
	➤ PS confirmed the outcome of Flannery's bid for Bootcamp funding is expected at the end of July and an update will be provided at the next meeting.	PS
	➤ Flannery has taken receipt of their new mobile simulator suite and trailers in the last few weeks. The simulator will be used to train existing plant operators on new technologies/new skills but will also be used to demonstrate the role of a plant operator to enthuse people who might be interested in a career in this field. PS to share a copy of the timetables being put together for local schools/colleges for access to the simulator.	PS
	➤ The Construction Sector Group is in discussion with BBF, the Skills Hub and Bucks College Group re holding a specific event in the Autumn around Construction careers/skills.	
7.2	<u>BLEP</u>	
	➤ IB reported the Silverstone Sports Engineering facility (which the LEP has invested in) is now open. This is a very bespoke facility; nothing like it available anywhere else in the world. The company is working very closely with the UTC at Silverstone. IB to share further information.	IB
8	ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
	Nothing of note.	
9	DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS	
	➤ 16 September, 10am-12pm, Bucks College Group/Flannery Simulator	
	➤ 18 November, 10am-12pm, via Teams	
10	SUMMARY ACTIONS	
10.1	➤ Green economy/Net Zero audit – carried forward – IB to provide an update at a future meeting.	IB
10.2	➤ SAP/Sub Group Chairs – carried forward – IB/JB to arrange meetings for the SAP Chair and the Chairs of each of the Sub Groups to consider opportunities arising.	IB/JB
10.3	➤ Future Funding Opportunities – AC to share the details of funding opportunities being pursued currently.	AC
10.4	➤ Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) – AC to share a copy of the EOI submitted by BBF to become the Employer Representative Body for Buckinghamshire leading development of the LSIP.	AC
10.5	➤ DWP – MJo to provide an update at the next meeting around SWAPs and other DWP programmes in delivery.	MJo
10.6	➤ DWP - MJo to forward information on all DWP opportunities available to Marina Jackson to advertise through the Skills Hub website.	MJo

ACTION

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| 10.7 | ➤ Skills Hub – IB/ JB/HD to arrange a briefing session for all Buckinghamshire Councillors on the work of the Skills Hub, providing links to opportunities that Councillors can share with constituents, but also gaining intelligence from Councillors around skills gaps/demands in their areas. | IB/ JB/HD |
| 10.8 | ➤ BBF/Skills Hub – JB/HD to arrange a session with businesses to discuss opportunities for employing staff and the assistance available to help train people up, etc. | JB/HD |
| 10.9 | ➤ Recruitment issues – JB to ask the “Restart” providers to provide an update at the next meeting on the programmes they are running. | JB |
| 10.10 | ➤ Vice Chair - SAP members to contact IB/ JB should they be interested in taking on the role of SAP Vice Chair. | ALL |
| 10.11 | ➤ Vice Chair – IB to share an update on the recruitment process at the next meeting. | IB |
| 10.12 | ➤ Bootcamps - PS to provide an update at the next meeting on Flannery’s bid for Bootcamp funding. | PS |
| 10.13 | ➤ Flannery Mobile Training Suite/Simulator - PS to share a copy of the timetables being put together for local schools/colleges for access to the simulator. | PS |
| 10.14 | ➤ Silverstone Sports Engineering facility – IB to share further information on this unique, bespoke facility, developed with funding from Buckinghamshire LEP. | IB |

Meeting closed 12.20pm