

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

Minutes of meeting held on Friday 10 March 2023, from 10am, via Teams

Present:	Heather Dean, Buckinghamshire Business First (Chairing)	(HD)
	Beth Baker, University of Buckingham	(BB)
	Ian Barham, BLEP Partnerships Director	(IB)
	Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First	(PB)
	ClIrr Joseph Baum, Buckinghamshire Council	(JBa)
	John Browning, Bucks Skills Hub	(JB)
	Jenny Craig, Buckinghamshire College Group	(JC)
	ClIrr Anita Cranmer, Buckinghamshire Council	(AC)
	Maria Edmonds, Buckinghamshire Council (Part meeting)	(ME)
	Gemma Evangelista, DWP/Job Centre Plus	(GE)
	Karen Gray, DWP	(KG)
	Ian Harper, Buckinghamshire New University	(IH)
	Katie Higginson, Community Impact Bucks	(KH)
	Marina Jackson, BLEP Under 19 Skills Manager	(MJ)
	Simon James, Buckinghamshire Council	(SJ)
	Mohika Kulkarni, Young Person Representative	(MK)
	Aqsa Mahmood, Young Person Representative	(AM)
	James Moorhouse, Buckinghamshire LEP	(JM)
	Liz North, Buckinghamshire Council	(LN)
	Allan Potter, Adviza	(AP)
	Mark Readman, National Film & TV School	(MR)
	Paul Skitt, Flannery Plant (Construction Employer Group Chair)	(PS)
	Sarah Stevens, Sylo Beyond HR	(SS)
Apologies:	Martina Porter, All Spring Media (SAP Chair/Creative Sector Group Chair)	
	Juliet Anderson, Buckinghamshire Health & Social Care Academy	
	Robert Curtis, Cities & Local Growth Team, BEIS/DLUHC	
	Richard Peters, The Misbourne School	
	Sally White, Sylo Beyond HR	
In Attendance:	Sarah Fraser, BLEP	(SF)

MINUTES

ACTION

- 1 **WELCOME**

HD welcomed attendees, particularly Mark Readman of the National Film & TV School (NFTS), attending his first SAP meeting.
- 2 **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.
- 2.1 Matters arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)
 - 2.1.1 ➤ **Provider Access Legislation – Carried forward** - MP/Eve Askey (TCHC) to discuss TCHC’s model for engaging with schools and colleges.

MP

- 2.1.2 ➤ **LSIP** - Two dates have now been arranged to brief Buckinghamshire Councillors. The first will provide an overview of the skills landscape and the context in which the LSIP has been developed. The second meeting will be to share the detail of the LSIP.
- 2.1.3 ➤ **Skills events:**
- Members of the SAP were thanked for their ongoing support in uploading skills events to the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub website to ensure that there is one portal through which people can access all events taking place.
 - MJ will be attending the Careers Leaders event due to be held at Pinewood Studios on Tuesday 14 March and will check at the same time whether the Studio intends holding a skills/careers event this year.
- 2.1.4 ➤ **Community Impact Bucks (CIB) Survey:**
- KH confirmed the CIB survey around volunteering was shared with SAP members (and wider) and the survey is now complete. **KH will share the report findings from the survey once finalised.**
 - **Carried forward** – MP/KH to discuss large organisations, such as the BBC, who offer staff paid time off to volunteer and how to leverage this.

MJ

KH

MP/KH

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

3 BUILDING FUTURES PROJECT

AP provided an overview of the Building Futures Project, an employability programme, supported through ESF funding, and focussed on the hardest to reach unemployed in the county.

The project, which is now coming to the end of its funding through the ESF, has supported over 1,100 participants in Buckinghamshire, 80% of which have come from the 10 most deprived wards in Buckinghamshire, as identified in the Opportunity Bucks programme. AP commented that this has caused Adviza to consider whether the organisation is doing enough to support people in these wards.

Over 25% of the people helped under the programme have moved into employment, with others moving into further education and training.

Adviza are seeking to replace the Building Futures Programme with another programme linked to the levelling up agenda and funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This programme will also focus on employability support for economically inactive individuals. The programme will offer group work for those who are furthest from the job market and will seek to develop bespoke courses for these individuals.

It is hoped the new programme will start as the existing Building Futures programme comes to an end, launching in April, and being run in conjunction with the Oasis Partnership, linking to DWP's Youth Hubs. The new programme will also be called Building Futures, mainly because people/providers etc are familiar with the name and it offers a platform upon which to build.

The existing programme has been very much an outreach programme, reducing the need for people to travel to centres and recognising that Buckinghamshire has a large rural community, and this will continue. The new programme is due to run for 1 year with the opportunity to extend this for a further 2 years, if successful.

It was noted Adviza are also seeking to make greater use of their skills portal to provide talks to parents and students, etc; it is possible that in the future this portal could link to the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub website. Adviza are also investigating the use of an AI device "Careers Bot" to provide advice where people are unable to access frontline workers.

Comments from SAP members:

- Buckinghamshire Council is able to provide additional data to Adviza particularly around the 10 wards in the Opportunity Bucks programme to assist in ensuring the new Building Futures Programme is as targeted as possible. Adviza is also able to share data that may be useful to the council. **AP/SJ to liaise.**
- The closure of the Healthy Living Centre will be a huge loss in this area of work. The Centre has worked with a number of other organisations to try and ensure that its groups continue to be supported.
- Adviza will be working with BBF and linking into the Skill Up Bucks project to ensure cohesion and that the skills being provided to people through the Building Futures Programme are the skills in demand by employers.

AP/SJ

AP undertook to revert to the SAP with more information on the new Building Futures Project as development of this progresses.

4 LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN (LSIP) UPDATE (Presentation attached)

JB provided an update on progress with development of the Buckinghamshire LSIP, as attached.

Further to the presentation provided, in relation to careers advice, it was commented that a recent forum in the Thames Valley had suggested schools lack funding to be able to provide detailed careers advice, and that the recent introduction of Provider Access Regulation gave the impression that work on careers advice is a "tick box" exercise.

It was suggested it would be useful to provide schools with something that identifies what good careers advice might look like within the available budget for schools. **JB/AP to discuss in more detail.**

JB/AP

It was noted the requirements under the Provider Access Regulations state that schools must provide two encounters for each student during Key Stage 2. Schools are keen to be compliant, but there is concern about their ability to meet the requirements of the regulations; there is a high need for the Bucks Skills Hub, Adviza, BBF, Buckinghamshire Council etc, to assist them. Buckinghamshire currently outperforms all other areas on achievement against the Gatsby benchmarks, with the exception of Advice and Guidance, and it was suggested it would be useful to look at this in more detail.

With regards to employers' observations re the lack of necessary skills being seen in young people, it was noted this applies to both those young people leaving school and also to university graduates. More work is needed to establish what employers want to see in young people looking to join the workforce. It was suggested the most impactful engagements come when students hear directly from employers or where students undertake work experience/internships; it is very important for employers to be involved with careers curriculum, and many wish to be. This is an area that has seen great improvements over the last 5 years or so but provision needs to be accelerated.

One of the advantages of being 'ahead of the game' with regards to the LSIP work is the opportunity to distil some of the key things coming out; work readiness and the need for digital competency in employees, being clear examples.

The work of the LSIP is moving towards the stage where employers and providers will work together to establish exactly what is needed in the county.

Work on the initial LSIP report into emerging priorities will be undertaken in the next few weeks, to be available by the end of March, at which point it will be shared with SAP members.

It was reported the momentum Buckinghamshire has been able to maintain in production of the LSIP is very much ahead of other areas and has benefited greatly from the continuity of BBF being the Employer Representative Body co-ordinating the work, and also the Growth Hub for the county. By dint of BBF's/Skills Hub's continued involvement, Buckinghamshire has been able to progress far greater face to face consultation with employers on the LSIP than has been seen in other geographies which have focussed predominantly on desk-based research/data.

In April and May the LSIP team will start to engage more with other areas with similar priorities, note initial discussions are already taking place.

JC undertook to share with SAP members the slides etc from a recent webinar held on the Local Skills Investment Fund (LSIF).

JC

5 SUPPORTED INTERNSHIPS

ME provided an overview of the work being undertaken by Buckinghamshire Council on Supported Internships, structured work-based programmes for 16-24 year olds with SEND.

Internships offer a work placement with students spending most of their time in a workplace situation; this is supplemented with support from the learning provider in the form of a Job Coach. Students remain in full-time education, with the Supported Internship forming part of the course and providing the student with the skills they will need for future employment.

The DfE is funding a 3 year programme to strengthen internships in England and Buckinghamshire Council has been successful in a bid for funding to bolster its existing provision in this area. Buckinghamshire Adult Learning is working with Stony Dean School on Supported Internships, as part of the bid was around upskilling.

Work on the programme is currently focussed on Aylesbury but with plans to extend it to High Wycombe with discussions ongoing with Bucks Skills Hub on how to further expand the programme.

It is planned to map/research existing provision and to provide an Employers' Guide outlining what employers can do to help support young people on internships and what the benefits to the employer might be.

It is hoped to utilise some funding to encourage engagement on a Level 6 training course for teachers around Advice and Guidance.

It was suggested ME look at the national Paralympic Trust as a possible route towards funding future internships.

6 PARTNER UPDATES

6.1 Buckinghamshire Council

- As above, briefings are planned for Councillors on the skills landscape, the development of the LSIP, and the introduction of the new Skills Strategy Board reporting to the Place-based Growth Board (which comes into effect from 1 April), with the first meeting of the Skills Board planned for end April/early May at which there will be full discussion around the Terms of Reference of the Skills Board.
- Multiply – The year 1 submission has been completely accepted as has a request for year 2 funding. Buckinghamshire Council will continue to work with Bucks College Group on this programme.
- The council will be running the Buckinghamshire Schools Awards at the end of June; this will be the first ever awards programme for teachers. Thanks were offered to BBF for its help in sourcing sponsorship; 8 employers being involved.
- Buckinghamshire Council had been represented at the Bucks Skills Show on 8/9 March.
- The council now has a Skills Section on its website with links through to the Bucks Skills Hub website.
- Buckinghamshire Council will be sponsoring the Young Person Award at the Bucks Business Awards 2023.

6.2 Bucks Skills Hub

- **Bucks Skills Show:**
 - 4,700 young people attended from 30 different schools (grammar, non-selective, independent, and out of county)
 - Further to feedback received following the 2022 Skills Show, student attendees were from Year 9-Year 13.
 - A further 500 people attended the evening session, which was a little disappointing in terms of numbers, but it is thought largely down to snowy weather on the day.
 - Excellent feedback has been received on the venue and the exhibitors.
 - The Skills Show also featured prominently on the ITV Meridien news on 9 March.
 - More feedback/video will be shared at the next meeting.
- The Skills Hub continues to run the “Teacher Encounters” project, bringing teachers out to spend time with employers.
- Work continues on the “Looked After Children” booklet.
- The Skills Hub is also working to support Buckinghamshire Council on its Supported Internships project.
- As mentioned previously, the Careers Leaders meeting will be taking place at Pinewood Studios on Tuesday 14 March, with 35 careers leads from across the county already signed up to take part.
- “Skill Up Bucks” is ongoing.
- Robert Evans will be joining the Bucks Skills Hub team as a Skills Advisor.

6.3 Adviza

- As above, Adviza continues to work on developing its Building Futures course.

- The organisation continues to work with Buckinghamshire Council on the Multiply programme embedding this within employment sector courses. It is hoped to continue this into year 2 of the programme.

6.4 University of Buckingham

- The University's Speed Networking event bringing together SMEs and students went very well and it is hoped to repeat this annually.
- The University has launched a Level 7 Senior Leader apprenticeship.
- It has been confirmed that many of the University's courses will include T Levels as an appropriate entry qualification.
- 11 February saw the 40th anniversary of the University being granted its Royal Charter and there will be events planned during the year to celebrate this.

6.5 Buckinghamshire LEP

- As part of the work around the Place-based Growth Board, a new Business & Enterprise Board is to be established, as is a new Pooled Investment Fund (PIF) for investment into business critical infrastructure/projects, the mechanisms for allocating this funding currently being established.
- Pinewood Studios recently secured planning approval for its expansion plans, making it the world's largest studios. Part of the approval relates to the construction of the Centre Stage facility and discussions are underway with the NFTS under the Co-Star project on the skills, facilities etc that will be available through this facility.
- The next Bucks Business Barometer will be launched w/c 13 March, timed to coincide with Government's Budget announcements. The more businesses that respond to this survey, the more information can be fed into Whitehall.
- The BLEP research team are preparing economic profiles for each of the wards identified through the Opportunity Bucks programme.

6.6 Buckinghamshire New University

- Degree and higher level apprenticeship numbers remain strong and undergraduate numbers are good.
- The University recently held the investiture of Jay Blades MBE. Jay is keen to see furniture courses being reintroduced at the University, and some new bursaries will be launched linked to this and aimed at supporting people who will be the first in their family to attend University.
- The University has a group looking at further hi-tech qualifications.
- BNU is working with Buckinghamshire College Group about the new College facility due to be constructed in High Wycombe and the possibility of working on joint opportunities.

6.7 Buckinghamshire College Group

- The College continues to support BBF on development of the LSIP, ensuring this aligns with the College's new 5 year strategy.
- With regards to work readiness, the College is looking at redesigning its study portfolio and looking at the ways in which it teaches, focussing more on project based learning to provide students with greater experience of a work environment.
- The College will be employing a new T Level Business Manager from September.
- A new T Level in health is now due to start in September (this had been paused) but Government, very late in the day, has paused progressing 4 other T Levels (Hair, Beauty & Aesthetics; Craft & Design; Media Broadcast & Production; and Catering). It was suggested this could serve to add to the potential confusion and possible lack of confidence that employers have around T Levels.

- The College is spending significant time collaborating with employers and engaging with students to help them with their career choices.

6.8 DWP

- A new Partnership Manager for Buckinghamshire, Dawn Bridge, will be starting on 3 April and will come to the next SAP meeting.
- The 3 main priorities being focussed on are: Customers' health journey; the 50+ age group; work progression.

6.9 Community Impact Bucks (CIB)

- A VCSE stand at the Bucks Skills Show provided a great opportunity to talk to people about opportunities in the sector as well as talking to people about volunteering.
- CIB is working with Aylesbury Youth Action to try and encourage people to offer work experience to young people.
- Latest national volunteering surveys show the proportion of adults volunteering are at their lowest levels since 2013 and that is reflective of what is happening in Buckinghamshire.
- There is a national "Big Help Out" campaign linked to volunteering opportunities around the Coronation. In Buckinghamshire the messaging around this is for people to pledge support to volunteer in the weeks and months ahead rather than just on the day/weekend of the coronation.

6.10 NFTS

- The NFTS has been exploring possibilities around Level 7 apprenticeships and are about to advertise a fixed term post for 18 months for an Apprenticeship Development Manager to look at the feasibility of Level 7 apprenticeships. This work is looking at alternative ways into the industry and also at upskilling people already working in the industry.

6.11 Young Person Representative (Dr Challoner's High School)

- The school has held Careers Week events in the last week or so, including workshops around CV writing and the use of LinkedIn, in addition to speakers coming into the school eg from Morgan Stanley.
- The school is attempting to bring more employer speakers in to speak to students.
- MH/AM agreed to speak to JB regarding the LSIP work.

6.12 Construction Employer Group/Flannery Plant Hire

- Flannery was proud to be one of the main sponsors for the Bucks Skills Show, which was the best Skills Show to date.
- Flannery's Plant Operator Skills Bootcamp has been extended for a further 12 months. A report is being prepared on the outputs of the work to date but it was estimated that 100+ people have been through the Bootcamp to date.
- A new Plant Operatives Skills Hub is due to open in West London which will provide greater access to training for those in the southern half of Buckinghamshire.
- PS continues to work with Buckinghamshire College Group on the Teacher Encounters project.
- The Construction Employer Group is working with Buckinghamshire College Group on another Construction Careers event.

6.13 BBF

- Businesses contacting the BBF helpline continue to speak of the difficulties/importance of recruitment and retention of staff.

- 22 March - BBF will be holding a “Focus on Workforce Skills” event at Westcott.
- 22 March - LSIP Training Provider meeting will be taking place at Westcott.
- 29 March - Launch of the Buckinghamshire Business Awards at Waterside Theatre.
- 19 April – Demystifying Apprenticeships, online webinar.
- The full list of all events can be found at [Business events in Buckinghamshire - Buckinghamshire Business First \(bbf.uk.com\)](http://Business events in Buckinghamshire - Buckinghamshire Business First (bbf.uk.com))

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Nothing of note.

8 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS (All 10am-12pm)

- 12 May, 7 July, 29 September, 1 December

9 SUMMARY ACTIONS

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|-----|---|---------------------------|
| 9.1 | ➤ Provider Access Legislation – Carried forward - MP/Eve Askey (TCHC) to discuss TCHC’s model for engaging with schools and colleges. | MP |
| 9.2 | ➤ Skills events - MJ to check whether Pinewood Studios intend holding a skills/careers event this year. | MJ |
| 9.3 | ➤ Community Impact Bucks (CIB) Survey: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ KH will share the report findings from the survey once finalised. ○ Carried forward – MP/KH to discuss large organisations, such as the BBC, who offer staff paid time off to volunteer and how to leverage this. | KH
MP/KH |
| 9.4 | ➤ Building Futures Programme – AP/SJ to share data around the 10 wards in the Opportunity Bucks programme. | AP/SJ |
| 9.5 | ➤ LSIP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ JB/AP to discuss provision of something to schools that identifies what good careers advice might look like within available budgets. ○ JC to share with SAP members the slides etc from a recent webinar held on the Local Skills Investment Fund. | JB/AP
JC |
| 9.6 | ➤ Supported Internships - ME look at the national Paralympic Trust as a possible route towards funding future internships. | ME |

Meeting closed 11.58am