

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

Minutes of meeting held on Friday 7 May 2021, from 10am, via Teams

Present:	Professor Gavin Brooks, Buckinghamshire New University (Chair)	(GB)
	Juliet Anderson, Bucks Health & Social Care Academy	(JA)
	Ian Barham, BLEP Partnerships Manager	(IB)
	Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First	(PB)
	Lucy Bowman, DWP	(LB)
	John Browning, Bucks Skills Hub	(JB)
	Emily Cashen, MHCLG	(EC)
	Adrian Champney, Buckinghamshire Business First	(AC)
	Ian Harper, Buckinghamshire New University	(IH)
	Katie Higginson, Community Impact Bucks	(KH)
	Marina Jackson, BLEP Under 19 Skills Manager	(MJ)
	Rachel Mellors, DWP	(RM)
	Karen Mitchell, Buckinghamshire College Group	(KM)
	James Moorhouse, Buckinghamshire LEP	(JM)
	Michaela Muich, Buckinghamshire Health & Social Care Academy	(MM)
	Dave Oxley, McAfee/Digital Sector Group Lead	(DO)
	Caroline Perkins, Buckinghamshire LEP	(CP)
	Martina Porter, All Spring Media (Creative Sector Group Chair)	(MP)
	Allan Potter, Adviza	(AP)
	Kerry Senatore, Careers & Enterprise Company	(KS)
	Paul Skitt, Flannery Plant (Construction Employer Group Chair)	(PS)
	Sally White, Sylo Beyond HR	(SW)
	Donna Wilkinson, Buckinghamshire Council	(DW)
 Apologies:	Shabnam Ali, Buckinghamshire Council	
	Cllr Anita Cranmer, Buckinghamshire Council	
	Sue Cross, Adviza	
	Heather Dean, Buckinghamshire Business First	
	Karen Gray, DWP	
	Imelda Goldsboro, DWP	
	Kevin Hctor, MHCLG	
	Bev Kelly, University of Buckingham	
	Jo Meloni, The Misbourne School	
	Dena Read, Department for Education	
	Sarah Stevens, Sylo Beyond HR	
	Claire Wardle, Health Education England	
	Mark Wood, Reaction Engines/Space Sector Lead	
 In Attendance:	Sarah Fraser, BLEP	(SF)

1 **WELCOME**

GB welcomed all those on the call, particularly those attending their first SAP meeting.

2 **MINUTES**

The Minutes from the meeting held on 12 March 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

3 **POLICY AND FUNDING UPDATE/RESEARCH PRIORITIES 2021/22** (Presentation attached)

IB provided an update on changes within the funding landscape, Government moving away from a centralised 'funding pot' towards more disparate funding streams (there being far more funds available than presented at the meeting). It was noted funding has been secured to support the work of the SAP for the coming year, but additional funding will be required beyond this point. The SAP noted the bidding opportunities being presented to support the skills agenda, and the work being undertaken separately to secure a Buckinghamshire growth deal which will also include an element of skills funding.

It was agreed there is finite resource available and careful consideration is needed on which funds to bid to: whether timescales are realistic, whether there is adequate resource available, and whether the outputs to be achieved align with the requirements for Buckinghamshire outlined in the Local Skills Report, the Local Industrial Strategy, etc.

KM confirmed Buckinghamshire College Group has submitted a bid to DfE's Capital Transformation Fund; outcome awaited. However, having undertaken significant assessment, the College had decided not to pursue funding through the Strategic Development Fund to run a pilot scheme as the timescales to deploy funding were considered too tight, with no guarantees around sustainability of funding.

With regards to the Community Renewal Fund, noting that the underlying theme is around low carbon, it was agreed IB/JA/AC will consider whether there is scope to include work being undertaken by the Health & Social Care Academy in a bid to this fund. It was suggested it would be useful to involve other members of the Health & Social Care Academy Board in this work.

IB/JA/AC

It was suggested the creative sector may also play a part in developing a rounded proposal to the Community Renewal Fund, perhaps around provision of bridging courses reflecting the need for increased health & safety relating to Covid-19.

IH undertook to review bid writing capacity within Buckinghamshire New University to support this work.

IH

It was suggested more can be done to develop a proposal to Government around apprenticeships that also responds to the requirements of the Skills White Paper. IH/KM/MP to discuss further.

IH/KM/MP

It was suggested that demonstrating a clear link with the voluntary sector may help strengthen bids.

The SAP noted the early thinking being undertaken by Buckinghamshire Council around Jobs/Skills Shops, bringing skills opportunities to the High Street through an accessible presence offering drop in/taster sessions on a variety of courses and providing information on, for instance, self employment. It was suggested this work should be aligned, and perhaps co-located, with DWP's work around Youth Hubs. DW/LB/RM to discuss further.

DW/LB/RM

RM/LB undertook to link MP with the Youth Hub Manager in Chesham.

RM/LB

Further to discussion, SAP members agreed not to pursue the opportunity to submit a bid from Buckinghamshire to be a Local Skills Improvement Plan Trailblazer reflecting on the tight timescales involved, limited resource available, and the lack of clarity around the requirements of the scheme.

It was noted Thames Valley Chamber is looking at submitting a Trailblazer bid across a wider geography and a decision is awaited on whether or not this geography will include Buckinghamshire. SAP members voiced concerns around whether Buckinghamshire's businesses would be appropriately represented should this bid go ahead including Buckinghamshire.

4 **ROUNDTABLE: DELIVERING THE SKILLS ACTION PLAN** (Presentation attached)

Further to discussion at the last meeting, the Buckinghamshire Local Skills Report, including the Skills Action Plan, was published on 31 March 2021. Engagement sessions are underway to share the content of the Local Skills Report as widely as possible. In the meantime, work is being progressed to source funding to deliver the items outlined in the Local Skills Report.

Funding has been confirmed to progress the work of the Skills Advisory Panel over the coming year and objectives have been established.

The SAP moved to breakout sessions to consider a number of questions. A summary of these discussions is as below:

4.1 **What issues do we need to better understand (i.e. where should we undertake deep-dive research)?**

- A clear picture of the total skills funding environment (including HE, FE, AEB etc):
 - Where is the sustainable funding?
 - What gaps could be filled with more short-term funding opportunities?
- Transferable skills (e.g. those that are part of different apprenticeships that could help people understand how they could move between sectors).
- Lessons learned over the last 12 months.
- Deprivation/disadvantage and young carers.
- Digital skills – capability, leadership and work readiness of young people.
- Covid-19 impact.
- Engineering provision/cluster approach.
- Work experience and possible need for pre-work training, also issues for SMEs.
- Mapping provision available – including independent training providers.

4.2 **How do we ensure we maintain and enhance collaborative working across the County?**

- Explore opportunities for co-location in physical places.
- Produce a diagram showing who does what and with whom (key people within organisations and who collaborates on what) – wider inclusion of training providers.
- Join-up thinking on data observatories/shared databases.
- Mix of virtual and face-to-face SAP meetings.
- Show and tell event – a conference (physical or virtual) once a year showcasing skills activities? Or programme of visits?
- Reinstate Digital Sub Group to meet once/twice per year involving more employers.

4.3 **How do we involve more employers in the work of the SAP?**

- We need to be clear what the purpose of involving more employers is. Probably linked to the evolution of the work of the SAP (2022 onwards) to producing Local Skills Improvement Plans and involving more employers with curriculum planning.
- Not feasible to have more employers sit on the SAP, so there needs to be effective mechanisms for consulting employers (possibly via existing groups) and for cascading information on the local skills agenda.
- Producing short, sharp messaging on the Local Skills Report that can be shared.

4.4 **We are required to publish the next Buckinghamshire Local Skills Report in December 2021 or January 2022, do SAP members have a preference?**

- General consensus – January 2022.

5 **PARTNER UPDATES**

5.1 DWP/JCP

- Current focus is around supporting the Kickstart Scheme, working in partnership and opening up Job Centres.

5.2 Buckinghamshire New University

- Apprenticeship numbers continue to grow (450 in the current year with 600 due in the next academic year).
- Incubation spaces have reopened in High Wycombe and Aylesbury and interest has been received from businesses looking to take on desk space over the summer.

5.3 Bucks Health & Social Care Academy

- A strategic board meeting and workshop was held recently with partners; the outcomes will be shared as soon as available.

5.4 Bucks College Group

- All students have now returned for face to face learning. The focus is on achievement, progression, and work readiness.
- T Level numbers are 400 up on last year.
- It is planned to build a new campus in High Wycombe (overlooking the bus station) subject to planning permission being granted.

5.5 Community Impact Bucks

- CIB continues to provide the Buckinghamshire volunteer matching service, in conjunction with Buckinghamshire Council and The Clare Foundation. Over 1,000 volunteers have been mobilised across the county, with a pool of volunteers available.

- Volunteer availability has changed with people's return to work, coming off furlough. A recruitment drive for further volunteers will be timed to coincide with Volunteer Week (1-7 June).

5.6 Careers Enterprise Company

- The network has grown and now includes over 3,000 schools and colleges.
- Significant work is being done to support engagement with employers.
- 750 bursaries are due to be announced to support careers leaders' training in the coming year.
- CEC is looking at developing benchmarks for employers over the summer and recognition for offering work experience placements.

5.7 Bucks Skills Hub

- WOW Careers video, lesson resources and a Careers Guide have all been released in the last term.
- Work is being undertaken in the coming year to involve special schools and ARPs with the work of the Skills Hub.
- The Skills Hub is also receiving a significant number of enquiries from employers seeking to take on an apprentice.

5.8 All Spring Media

- Apprenticeship provision continues to grow at pace; apprenticeship numbers tripling.
- A Level 7 Production Manager apprenticeship has been launched and is receiving significant interest.
- Work is being progressed with employers to encourage engagement with apprenticeships, and also to encourage big brand names to work with smaller SMEs.
- The company is also undertaking outreach work with The Elgiva with a view to undertaking some training with them over the summer.

5.9 Flannery Plant

- The company was delighted to be shortlisted for an award through the LEP from the Getting Building Fund to set up a skills hub providing apprenticeships and with a focus on the digital and green agenda side of construction.

5.10 Buckinghamshire Business First

- This year marks BBF's 10th anniversary.
- The company is actively engaged with over 13,000 businesses in Buckinghamshire.
- As a result of interactions with BBF over the last year 804 new jobs have been created.
- A big focus for the company remains around the eco/low carbon agenda and the workplace of the future, particularly in view of the experiences over the last year.

5.11 Sylo Beyond HR

- Sylo is on a panel for the Institute of Risk Management at a conference around diversity and inclusion. It would be useful for the SAP to consider this agenda in its discussions.

5.12 Buckinghamshire LEP

- A review has been announced into the function and roles LEPs perform. It is anticipated there will be far greater focus for Growth and Skills Hubs going forward around internationalisation (Global Britain), the low carbon agenda, etc and far less on LEPs being a conduit for funding.

- The LEP is due to meet the BEIS Energy Team to talk about the Hydrogen Strategy.
- A Bucks Business Barometer has now been established which will survey businesses each quarter to gain information around business confidence/performance, with the results being published on the LEP/BBF websites.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was agreed to poll SAP members with regards to how to handle future SAP meetings (face to face or via Teams).

SF

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

- 2 July, 17 September, 12 November

8 SUMMARY ACTIONS

Funding

- Community Renewal Fund:
 - 8.1 ○ IB/JA/AC will consider whether there is scope to include work being undertaken by the Health & Social Care Academy in a bid to this fund. **IB/JA/AC**
 - 8.2 ○ IH to review bid writing capacity within Buckinghamshire New University to support this work. **IH**
 - 8.3 ➤ IH/KM/MP to discuss development of a proposal to Government around apprenticeships that responds to the requirements of the Skills White Paper. **IH/KM/MP**
 - 8.4 ➤ DW/LB/RM to discuss further how Buckinghamshire Council's proposed Jobs/Skills Shops align with DWP's Youth Hubs. **DW/LB/RM**
 - 8.5 ➤ RM/LB undertook to link MP with the Youth Hub Manager in Chesham. **RM/LB**

Any other business

- 8.6 ➤ SF to poll SAP members with regards to future SAP meetings (face to face or Teams). **SF**

The meeting closed at 11.55am