
Title:	Publication of the 2022 Buckinghamshire Local Skills Report.
Purpose:	To provide Board members with information about the 2022 Buckinghamshire Local Skills Report.
Recommendation(s):	That members note the publication and contents of the Report. Note the continued uncertainty regarding the role the LEP / SAP will play within the new local skills policy landscape and support the campaign to evolve the existing and effective SAP structure in Buckinghamshire into the first phase of Local Skills Improvement Plans.
Impact on Risk Register:	It is unclear whether the LEP will continue to receive funding to support the work of the SAP post March 2022.

- 1 Gavin Brooks, the Chair of the Buckinghamshire Skills Advisory Panel (SAP), will provide a summary for Board Members of the 2022 Buckinghamshire Local Skills Report – which was published on 28 January [here](#).

About Skills Advisory Panels

- 2 Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) bring together employers, skills providers and other key stakeholders to better understand and resolve skills and recruitment challenges at a local level. There are 36 SAPs across England co-ordinated by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs).
- 3 LEPs and MCAs are currently funded by the Department for Education (DfE) to build and maintain relationships to deliver the local skills agenda, undertake high quality analysis of local labour markets and produce annual Local Skills Reports. The Buckinghamshire SAP was established in 2019 and reports to the Buckinghamshire LEP Board. The Buckinghamshire SAP membership includes the chairs of four employer sub-groups, post-16 education and training providers and other key local stakeholders.
- 4 The future of SAPs is unclear, they are currently funded until the end of March 2022. The Government then plan to begin to roll out Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) which will be developed by Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs) and local stakeholders. We believe that a Buckinghamshire-level LSIP is required to support the growth of the local economy, that BBF should take-on this ERB role for Buckinghamshire, working through the SAP / LEP structure, with analytical input provided by the LEP. This message will be conveyed to the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP, at his visit to Pinewood on February 10th by demonstrating how the effectiveness of the Buckinghamshire SAP and Sector Groups have helped support facility development and an aligned and improved training offer for the Creative Industries sector.

- 5 The Levelling Up White Paper states that the Government will prioritise areas with the ‘most pressing skills needs’ when they roll out LSIPs (and associated funding).

About the 2022 Buckinghamshire Local Skills Report

- 6 The Report is designed to be the ‘go-to’ document for all involved in the skills ecosystem in Buckinghamshire. It follows a set structure (provided by DfE) and includes evidence, the identification of skills priorities, case studies and the Buckinghamshire Skills Action Plan.
- 7 The Report provides a framework for skills activity across the County. It is intended to inform investment decisions, collaborative activity and curriculum planning for post-16 education and training providers.
- 8 Accompanying the report is a comprehensive evidence base (including real-time labour market dashboards) which is published on the LEP, Skills Hub and Buckinghamshire Economic Intelligence Observatory websites. Stakeholder workshops will be held late February / early March 2022.
- 9 The report highlights Buckinghamshire’s key skills strengths and challenges.
- 10 Key skills strengths
- A strong collaborative culture (between education institutions, and between employers and educators).
 - Further and Higher Education Institutions with a strong history of business engagement, and a focus on applied learning and employability.
 - Significant job growth underway in the construction and film and TV sectors.
 - Higher than average Level 2 and 3 attainment by young people aged 19 and high levels of qualifications amongst residents.
 - World-class talent in industries such as high-performance engineering, film and TV, space and medtech.
- 11 Key skills challenges
- Recruitment difficulties are causing problems for employers in many sectors and are hampering economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. This is linked to a reduction in the size of the economically active population, and a rise in the number of economically inactive working-age residents.
 - Unemployment is at its highest level since 2016, although lower than anticipated at the start of the pandemic and is improving. Certain areas have been harder hit than others. Pre-pandemic five Buckinghamshire wards had ‘higher than national average’ Claimant Count rates, in October 2021 this had risen to 13 (most of which were in High Wycombe and Aylesbury).
 - There is evidence of a growing mismatch between the demand for skills and labour within the local economy, and the skills and jobs sought by local residents.

- There is a need to ensure strong local talent pipelines for growing sectors (including life sciences, health and social care; creative industries; construction; high performance engineering; space).
- The need to ensure a strong talent pipeline of green skills (including digital and engineering skills) to enable the shift towards a net zero economy.

Next steps

- 12 Over the last 12 months, the Buckinghamshire SAP, industry sub-groups, and partners have made considerable progress against the ambition and activities set out 2021 Local Skills Report. However, there is much more to do. Significant investment is needed to secure the long-term growth ambitions of the local space, film and TV, high performance engineering and life-science, health and social care sectors, and immediate action is required to address critical skills shortages within the healthcare, social care, construction and film and TV sectors.
- 13 As Buckinghamshire is not earmarked as a priority for levelling-up funds, it is vital that we work smartly as a County to ensure the local skills system is working as effectively as possible. A major focus over the coming year will be the ramping up of green skills provision across the County, ensuring it is made available at an appropriate pace to facilitate the shift to a net zero economy. This will involve a wide range of organisations working together to plan and deliver what is needed at the right time.
- 14 By maintaining a real-time labour market and skills evidence base over the last 18 months we have been able to react quickly to rapidly changing labour market conditions and challenges and pivot our activities accordingly. It is vital that we continue to do so over the coming months and years as we remain are likely to remain in a period of flux in the short term at least.

Board members are asked to:

- i. **Note the publication of the 2022 Buckinghamshire Local Skills Report.**
- ii. **Promote the Report and dissemination workshops through their networks.**
- iii. **Note the continued uncertainty regarding the role the LEP / SAP will play within the new local skills policy landscape and support the campaign to evolve the existing and effective SAP structure in Buckinghamshire into the first phase of Local Skills Improvement Plans.**