

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

Minutes of meeting held on Friday 16 September 2022, from 10am, via Teams

Present:	Martina Porter, All Spring Media (SAP Chair/Creative Sector Group Chair)	(MP)
	Shabnam Ali, Buckinghamshire Council	(SA)
	Eve Askey, TCHC	(EA)
	Ian Barham, BLEP Partnerships Director	(IB)
	Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First	(PB)
	CLlr Joseph Baum, Buckinghamshire Council	(JBa)
	John Browning, Bucks Skills Hub	(JB)
	Nicola-Jane Comer, Department for Education	(NC)
	Jenny Craig, Buckinghamshire College Group	(JC)
	Robert Curtis, Cities & Local Growth Team, BEIS/DLUHC	(RC)
	Heather Dean, Buckinghamshire Business First	(HD)
	Stanislas Faure, Jobs22 (Part meeting)	(SFa)
	Ian Harper, Buckinghamshire New University	(IH)
	Stephen Howe, Jobs22	(SH)
	Marina Jackson, BLEP Under 19 Skills Manager	(MJ)
	Simon James, Buckinghamshire Council	(SJ)
	Mary Johnson, DWP/Jobcentre Plus	(MJo)
	Aqsa Mahmood, Young Person Representative	(AM)
	James Moorhouse, Buckinghamshire LEP	(JM)
	Dave Oxley, Trellex	(DO)
	Richard Peters, The Misbourne School	(RP)
	Rebecca Richens, Fedcap	(RR)
	Kerry Senatore, Careers & Enterprise Company	(KS)
	Paul Skitt, Flannery Plant (Construction Employer Group Chair)	(PS)
Apologies:	Beth Baker, University of Buckingham	
	CLlr Anita Cranmer, Buckinghamshire Council	
	Katie Higginson, Community Impact Bucks	
	Mohika Kulkarni, Young Person Representative	
	Sally White, Sylo Beyond HR	
	Mark Wood, Reaction Engines/Space Sector Lead	
In Attendance:	Sarah Fraser, BLEP	(SF)

MINUTES

ACTION

1 WELCOME

MP welcomed all those joining the call, particularly Jenny Craig who has recently taken up the post of Principal and CEO of Buckinghamshire College Group.

The passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was noted and condolences offered to the Royal family.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Noting the meeting was held in person rather than via Teams (as stated), the minutes from the meeting held on 8 July 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

- 2.1 Matters arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)
- 2.1.1 ➤ **Green economy/Net Zero audit** – Work on the Net Zero Audit is ongoing and results will feature as part of the Local Skills Improvement Plan.
- 2.1.2 ➤ **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**
- 2.1.3 ➤ **Skills Hub – carried forward** - JBa/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. Whilst still tbc, it was reported the briefing session is likely to take place in November 2022. **JBa/HD**
- 2.1.4 ➤ **Flannery Mobile Operator Unit** – It was reported additional funding has been secured to widen the mobile outreach service; the full programme for the mobile unit will be shared once finalised.

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

3 **SKILLS ADVISORY PANEL VICE CHAIR APPOINTMENT**

It was confirmed Paul Skitt, currently chair of the Construction Employer Group which reports to the SAP, has been appointed as SAP Vice Chair, and will work alongside MP in taking the SAP agenda forward.

Thanks were offered to PS for taking on this role.

4 **NEW FUNDING FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

- 4.1 Local Skills Improvement Plan/Employer Representative Body (Presentation attached)
HD provided an overview of what is required in terms of the development of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) in the coming months, and the role that BBF, as Employer Representative Body, will play in this.

BBF is contractually bound to meet timescales defined by Government in development of the LSIP, culminating in submission of the LSIP to Government by 31 May 2023.

In looking at collaborating with other LEP areas/Local Authorities, it was suggested this will be dependent upon Buckinghamshire's agreed priorities, once finalised, and how these align with neighbouring geographies.

- 4.2 Multiply Programme (Presentation attached)
SJ provided an overview of the Multiply Programme, part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, aimed at improving numeracy skills (including the use of excel). Buckinghamshire's maximum allocation (for use by Buckinghamshire residents) through Multiply being £2.17m over a 3-year period.

It was suggested 'marketing' the programme as a way for individuals to make themselves more attractive to employers, perhaps working with larger employers who may have employees who would benefit, may attract greater registrations to the programme.

It was also suggested it may be useful to work with prison leavers and those on licence to help develop employability skills.

BBF is working closely with Buckinghamshire Council and will be surveying businesses in the county to identify specific numeracy gaps that need addressing and looking at how to encourage take up of the programme amongst employees.

SAP members commented that training providers are required to help learners achieve Level 2 functional numeracy skills and questioned whether this might be seen as “double funding”. **SJ to check this point.**

SJ

4.3 Strategic Development Fund (Presentation attached)

JC provided an overview of the bids submitted to the Strategic Development Fund by the Buckinghamshire College Group supported by Buckinghamshire LEP and BBF, inviting SAP members to contact her with any questions.

4.4 Bootcamps (Presentation attached)

NC shared an overview of the background to Skills Bootcamps, their aims and objectives, and the outcomes achieved to date (as attached). It was anticipated Skills Bootcamps will provide an important route to addressing gaps in the LSIP going forwards.

£550m funding has been secured through the Spending Review for 2022-2025 to deliver c40,000-50,000 learners per year for the next 3 years. Bootcamps largely address employer gaps in Level 3 to Level 5 skills, although Wave 3 will see some Level 2 skills introduced.

For those going through Bootcamps, it is estimated 75% that take up an interview will secure a new job or an improved role with their current employer as a result. Those wishing to take part in a Bootcamp must have been a resident for 3 years.

Wave 4 will commence in April 2023 and DfE will be calling for proposals/sector ideas/skills suggestions from October 2022. It will be important for Buckinghamshire to submit ideas if there is an appetite to secure funding to support additional Bootcamps in the county. It was confirmed there will be an opportunity to instigate a “rolling programme” once a Bootcamp has been established and shown to be successful, removing the need to complete a full application for each programme extension.

5 **RESTART PROGRAMME** (Presentation attached)

RR/SH/EA shared an overview of the Restart Scheme, how this is being delivered in Buckinghamshire through Jobs 22 and Fedcap, skills in demand, barriers seen in implementing the scheme to date, and lessons learned to be taken in to delivering a redesigned programme in the future.

It was acknowledged there is more to be done around establishing the detail of skills required in a number of Buckinghamshire’s key sectors eg the Creative Industries, and encouraging Restart customers to think about the skills they may be able to offer.

A Jobs Fair held on 15 September proved to be very successful in bringing together employers and Restart participants and work is underway to arrange further job fairs on a bi-monthly basis.

It was noted that in some sectors, particularly the Creative Industries, a key sector for Buckinghamshire, or in the Digital sector, jobs are not advertised but are filled through “word of mouth”. Restart customers often perceive these sectors as inaccessible and there is work to be done with employers etc to lessen/remove this perception.

Those that enter the Restart programme are supported to an outcome over 4-6 months, at which point individuals are passed to another organisation eg the National Careers Service for ongoing support, if required.

Jobs22 are also working with Momentic to support those choosing to go into self-employment; Buckinghamshire having a very high proportion of self-employment.

It was suggested many SMEs have not heard of Restart and perhaps there is work to be done on the referral process and marketing of the programme to the SME business community. There is also a need to ensure appropriate support is in place to help SMEs take on new employees through Restart, particularly those where there may be identified barriers to employment.

It was agreed:

- **To use the SAP and the Training Provider Network (once established) to tease out (post-16) what the barriers might be to people taking up employment, for example, mental health challenges, declared disabilities, “word of mouth” vacancies, etc.**
- **IB will link SH/RR/EA with Health on the High Street contacts.**
- **EA/JB to discuss the Restart referral process and how to better engage with SMEs.**

HD/IB/JB

IB

EA/JB

6 NEW PROVIDER ACCESS LEGISLATION (Presentation attached)

MJ provided an update on new Provider Access Legislation (PAL) due to come into force in January 2023 specifying schools must provide at least six encounters with providers of approved technical education qualifications or apprenticeships between Year 8-Year 13.

As per the attached, the role of the Bucks Skills Hub will be to support schools and providers to understand, deliver and record compliance with the new requirements; and ensure that this is part of a continual wider improvement in careers programmes.

It was suggested there may be challenges in ensuring all schools progress this agenda, that providers are aware of the change, and that there are enough providers available to meet demand. It was suggested the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) may already be disseminating information to members on this subject.

It was agreed:

- **The Skills Hub/SAP need to take a lead role in ensuring providers across Buckinghamshire are aware of the changes to come in from January 2023.**
- **MP/EA will discuss TCHC’s model for engaging with schools and colleges.**
- **To consider how to ensure parents are informed/involved in this change.**

MP/EA

ALL

7 UPDATE ON FUNDING RULES FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

MP provided a brief update on the changing rules around apprenticeship provision including:

- The requirement to undertake a minimum of 6 hours per week off the job training.
- Much closer alignment of employer, training provider and apprentice.
- Mandatory 12 weekly reviews.
- The removal of the requirement to present functional skills certificates prior to gateway choices being made.

It was suggested the changes to be made will go some way (if not the whole way) to overcoming issues in delivering apprenticeships.

8 PARTNER UPDATES

8.1 Construction Employer Group/Flannery Plant Hire

- Thanks were offered to BBF/Bucks LEP for ensuring that employers were aware of the Skills Bootcamps in development. Flannery Plant Hire has been involved with development of the Plant Operative Bootcamp for new entrants to the sector and existing operatives looking to upskill.
- The initial bid was for £2.4m funding for 800 learners; the final award being for £1.2m for 400 learners over a 6-month period, commencing October 2022 and running to end March 2023, but with the possibility of extensions to the programme thereafter.
- Stakeholder engagement has started within the construction sector, its supply chain, with DWP, the prison service, and organisations supporting ex-military personnel, to find learners.
- The Construction Employer Group and the Solutions Sub Group will be working to support work on the LSIP in the coming months, in addition to again supporting the Bucks Skills Show and the Buckinghamshire College Group Construction event/jobs fair in April 2023.

8.2 Digital Innovation Advisory Group

- The Digital group has been established and has met for the first time. The group has committed to working jointly on a Digital Bootcamp application.
- The group also shared information on the digital apprenticeship programmes being progressed through Buckinghamshire New University.

8.3 Buckinghamshire LEP update

- The LEP is reviewing the implications of new Government appointments and the direction of travel for the new administration.
- Work on the Buckinghamshire Growth Deal progresses; as with the work of the SAP, this is very much a coming together of partners to work in a joined up fashion.

8.4 Creative Industries Sector Action Group

- The Creative group received an update on new studios being developed/expanded.
- The group also considered the DfE report on the number of new crew needed in the sector to 2024 (21,000 people), how to ensure the pipeline is in place for new staff, and how to get these people in front of employers.
- The group is increasingly aware of the need to work more cohesively in order to address issues in the sector.

8.5 BBF

- Significant time is being taken up in progressing BBF's role as Employer Representative Body co-ordinating development of the Buckinghamshire LSIP.
- The Peer Ngage programme continues, aimed at business owners and senior execs offering peer support and one to one advice.
- BBF continues to work with Bucks College Group on a number of initiatives.
- BBF has worked with Oxfordshire LEP on a combined bid to provide targeted business support to the creative sector; the outcome of this bid is awaited.

Partners were asked to forward to SF via email any further updates they wished to share with SAP members.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Nothing of note.

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

2022

➤ **18 November, venue required, please contact SF.**

2023

➤ 13 January, 10 March, 12 May, 7 July, 29 September, 1 December

11 SUMMARY ACTIONS

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| 11.1 | ➤ 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 |
| 11.2 | ➤ Skills Hub – carried forward - IB/JB/HD to arrange a briefing session for all Buckinghamshire Councillors on the work of the Skills Hub (likely November 2022). | IB/JB/HD |
| 11.3 | ➤ Multiply - SAP members commented that training providers are required to help learners achieve Level 2 functional numeracy skills and questioned whether this might be seen as “double funding”. SJ to check this point. | SJ |
| 11.4 | ➤ Restart - HD/IB/JB to facilitate use of the SAP and the Training Provider Network (once established) to tease out barriers to people taking up employment. | HD/IB/JB |
| 11.5 | ➤ Restart - IB will link SH/RR/EA with Health on the High Street contacts. | IB |
| 11.6 | ➤ Restart - EA/JB to discuss referral process and how to better engage with SMEs. | EA/JB |
| 11.7 | ➤ Provider Access Legislation - MP/EA to discuss TCHC’s model for engaging with schools and colleges. | MP/EA |
| 11.8 | ➤ Provider Access Legislation – Consideration to be given as to how to ensure parents are informed of the change in legislation and aware of the implications. | ALL |
| 11.9 | ➤ Partner updates - Partners to forward to SF any updates they wished to share. | ALL |

Meeting closed 12pm