

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

Minutes of meeting held on Friday 18 November 2022, from 10am, at All Spring Media
The Old Drill Hall, Bellington Road, Chesham, Bucks HP5 2HA

Present:	Martina Porter, All Spring Media (SAP Chair/Creative Sector Group Chair)	(MP)
	Shabnam Ali, Buckinghamshire Council	(SA)
	Ian Barham, BLEP Partnerships Director	(IB)
	Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First	(PB)
	Cllr Joseph Baum, Buckinghamshire Council	(JBa)
	John Browning, Bucks Skills Hub	(JB)
	Jenny Craig, Buckinghamshire College Group	(JC)
	Heather Dean, Buckinghamshire Business First	(HD)
	Ian Harper, Buckinghamshire New University	(IH)
	Katie Higginson, Community Impact Bucks	(KH)
	Marina Jackson, BLEP Under 19 Skills Manager	(MJ)
	Mary Johnson, DWP/Jobcentre Plus	(MJo)
	Mohika Kulkarni, Young Person Representative	(MK)
	Aqsa Mahmood, Young Person Representative	(AM)
	James Moorhouse, Buckinghamshire LEP	(JM)
	Paul Skitt, Flannery Plant (Construction Employer Group Chair)	(PS)
	Mark Wood, Reaction Engines (Space Sector Lead)	(MW)
Apologies:	Juliet Anderson, Buckinghamshire Health & Social Care Academy	
	Beth Baker, University of Buckingham	
	Cllr Anita Cranmer, Buckinghamshire Council	
	Robert Curtis, Cities & Local Growth Team, BEIS/DLUHC	
	Simon James, Buckinghamshire Council	
	Richard Peters, The Misbourne School	
	Jon Wardle, NFTS	
	Sally White, Sylo Beyond HR	
In Attendance:	Kirsty Etherington, Dr Challoner's High School (Young person rep chaperone)	(KE)
	Sarah Fraser, BLEP	(SF)

MINUTES

ACTION

1 WELCOME

MP welcomed attendees to the All Spring Media offices and shared a little of the building's history.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes from the meeting held on 16 September 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

2.1 Matters arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)

- 2.1.1 ➤ **SAP/Sub Group Chairs – carried forward** – HD/JB to arrange meetings for the SAP Chair and the Chairs of each of the Sub Groups to consider opportunities arising. The number of Sub Groups will be increased in the coming months to focus on specific areas of the development of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

HD/JB

- 2.1.2 ➤ **Multiply** – It was confirmed that where learners are working with Training Providers, (who have a responsibility to help learners achieve Level 2 functional numeracy skills) then any support through Multiply for these particular individuals would be seen as double funding.
- 2.1.3 ➤ **Provider Access Legislation – Carried forward** - MP/Eve Askey (TCHC) to discuss TCHC’s model for engaging with schools and colleges.

MP

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

3 **LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN (LSIP)** (Presentation attached)

Further to the presentation shared, HD confirmed the Buckinghamshire LSIP project plan and budget were submitted to DfE on 3 October and, subject to some final discussion on the budget, these have been approved.

3.1 LSIP Priorities

The next stage of work is to agree Buckinghamshire’s priorities and thereafter to establish further areas of research in order to progress development of the LSIP. It was confirmed the aim is to create a draft LSIP by end March 2023, partly to allow training providers to build necessary training into curriculums for September 2023. The final document will be submitted to Government by end May 2023, being published by Government thereafter; the document being reviewed at the end of 3 years reflecting research undertaken in the intervening period.

Reflecting on the priorities presented, the group commented as below; JB to incorporate:

JB

- The priorities identified (as per the attached presentation) appeared correct and SAP members endorsed progressing with work around Construction, Film & TV and Digital whilst debate over other areas continues.
- SAP members were asked to contact JB with any priority areas not already identified that might merit inclusion.
- **Health and Social Care:**
 - SAP members supported Health & Social Care being omitted as a priority based on the level of national support already available and a number of key issues being outside the reach of the LSIP ie pay, work environment, attractiveness of the professions, etc but accepted it would be useful to undertake some more research in this area.
 - Leadership and management training may help alleviate retention issues.
 - Improved digital skills may also assist recruitment/retention in this sector.
- **Work readiness:**
 - Employer readiness should be included within this cross-cutting priority; focussing on Leadership and Management training for employers.
 - Focussing on work readiness will help prepare people for roles as freelancers, Buckinghamshire having a high number of freelancers/self-employed people.
 - It is very clear that there are skills that young people do not learn at school that are vital in the workplace.
 - There is a culture in Buckinghamshire of encouraging students to pursue university education and more needs to be done (in some schools) to increase awareness of alternatives to university.

ALL

- **Construction/engineering:**
 - More needs to be done to encourage young people into careers in construction/engineering, and to engage with parents to support this.
 - Companies working on large infrastructure projects in the county must be encouraged to offer work placements.
 - A focus on civil engineering courses may provide a clear link between construction and engineering.
 - The inclusion of something on town planning within this priority would be welcomed; planning often being cited as a barrier to growth.
- **Film & TV:**
 - Production companies can be seasonal in their work (although this is not as great an issue now as it has been in the past) and this can make it difficult to provide the consistency required for apprenticeships.
 - There may be merit in looking at mini apprenticeships running over 3-6 months rather than a year.
- **Digital Skills**
 - The need for improved digital skills has increased as more people work remotely.
- **Volunteering** can offer people a route to developing improved workplace skills.

3.2 Governance

With regards to governance of the LSIP, it was confirmed JB has taken on the role of LSIP Manager and will be taking this work forward. There is significant work to do to ensure effective comms with all stakeholders in the county and to speak to training providers about training provision already in place, to look at what is needed in the future and what future qualifications might be. With the limited resource available, newsletters and comms materials will be created in order to reach as many people as possible to share information.

The SAP will remain in place until end March 2023, at which point Government funding will cease, however, the group will be expanded to include greater employer representation and will become the LSIP Steering Group with a revised membership and refreshed Terms of Reference by April 2023.

Other strategic groups in Buckinghamshire eg the Growth Board, and Buckinghamshire LEP etc, will be kept informed of progress with development of the LSIP, ensuring alignment with other work taking place in the county.

It was suggested attending the “Future of Work” event due to be held at Milton Park in Oxfordshire w/c 21 November looking at growth sectors between Oxford and Aylesbury may assist in developing the evidence base to support the LSIP.

It was agreed:

- **To share information underpinning the headline priorities, particularly to assist training providers in planning future curriculum.**
- **To look at the detail of the Buckinghamshire Local Plan to ensure alignment with the LSIP.**
- **It would be useful to arrange an online meeting for Buckinghamshire Councillors to attend if free to share the context around development of the LSIP and progress being made.**

HD/JB

JB

PB

4 **BOOTCAMPS UPDATE** (Presentation attached)

Further to discussion at previous meetings and to the information contained in the attached presentation, JB confirmed the decision has been taken not to progress with a regional bid for a Bootcamp currently.

It was noted a bid may be considered to run a Digital Bootcamp in the future and more information on this will be shared at the next meeting.

5 **BUCKS SKILLS SHOW UPDATE**

MJ provided an update on progress with development of the 2023 Bucks Skills Show, which will be held on 8/9 March at the Stoke Mandeville Stadium:

- 100 businesses have already booked to exhibit (space available for 120 maximum).
- Over 4,000 students are already booked to attend.
- Sessions will be held 9am-3pm for students. Evening sessions will be available for parents/young people/job seekers/job changers and the invitation to the evening sessions will be publicised in January 2023.
- Funding is in place to support the Skills Show with headline sponsors being: Flannery Plant Hire, EKFB, Align, the Rothschild Foundation and Bucks College Group.
- High profile speakers are being lined up, linked to Buckinghamshire's priority sectors.
- Work is underway with Sector Groups (Construction, Creative Industries, Space, etc) to ensure employers work together to provide a cohesive picture of the opportunities available in their particular sector and the different pathways/careers available. This builds on the success of the Construction sector group's work in 2022.

6 **SECTOR GROUP UPDATES**

6.1 Construction Employer Group

- The most recent Construction Employer Group meeting focussed on 3 items: the LSIP; ensuring appropriate employer representation on the Construction group from both large and small employers; and preparations for the Bucks Skills Show to ensure construction companies present offer attendees a good understanding of the jobs available within the sector.
- The Construction Solutions Sub Group continues to meet to focus on specific items, such as preparation for the Skills Show, in between the main group meetings.
- Work is progressing with Buckinghamshire College Group on a Construction jobs fair type event at the college on 26 April 2023 aimed at students coming to the end of their courses and starting to look at job opportunities. The event will include access to simulators, careers discussions, and interview opportunities for roles.

6.2 Creative Industries Sector Action Group

- The most recent Creative Industries Sector Action Group meeting focussed on development of the LSIP, and looking at current membership of the group to ensure appropriate employer representation, recognising that membership will be driven largely by the needs of the LSIP.
- Recognising that organisations such as Netflix and Amazon are working locally but also have national reach the Creative group consider it would be useful to involve them in future discussions about how to develop their supply chain pipeline of staff.
- The Creative group will also be working to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the Bucks Skills Show, showcasing the extensive range of roles available in the Creative Industries sector.

7 PARTNER UPDATES

7.1 Buckinghamshire College Group

- Buckinghamshire College Group is developing its 5 year strategic plan and is keen to ensure that curriculum provision is aligned with the needs of the LSIP. Progress on development of the strategic plan will be shared at future meetings.
- The college is also in the process of building its electric vehicle provision within its motor vehicle courses.

7.2 Buckinghamshire Council

- Liz North will be joining Buckinghamshire Council in February 2023 and will help better co-ordinate the Skills agenda/provision in the council and establishing closer links with partners. Once Liz has started in post, this may be an opportune moment to progress the full council online briefing around skills.
- Liz will also be reviewing the skills element of local growth proposals developed recently, establishing realistic goals and what freedoms/funding/flexibilities will be required to deliver the future skills agenda.
- The Opportunity Bucks programme continues to try and support those in the most deprived communities in the county, looking at interventions in terms of skills and employment that will improve life outcomes. Cllr Martin Tett (Leader) and Rachael Shimmin (Chief Executive) will be visiting Chesham in January as part of this work.
- Work is underway to set up the council's next Jobs Fair (date tbc) which will again be held in Chesham, likely at the Leisure Centre.
- The council is in the process of refreshing its Education Strategy. There are a number of key priorities, one being to enable young people to realise their full potential; this links with Opportunity Bucks work.
- The council continues to work with Bucks Skills Hub and is seeking funding for some supported internships for young people.
- Buckinghamshire Council's education team has progressed an initiative around awards for people in the education sector, Teachers, Teaching Assistants, etc. Sponsorship has been offered by Wycombe Wanderers and an event will be held towards the middle of 2023 to celebrate these achievements.

7.3 Bucks Skills Hub

- The Skill Up Bucks programme is now well underway, working with and encouraging SMEs to offer work placements to students. A number of excellent events have been held under the banner of this programme, which will also be supporting the Construction Employer Group with the jobs fair at Bucks College Group in April 2023.
- There are x5 schools working on a Green Skills Challenge pilot, working with 2 business and getting students to develop a green solution for their schools. This helps students in looking at work readiness and what employers may be looking for in terms of soft skills.
- The Skills Hub is also working to support a pilot project around "Teacher Encounters" getting teachers into businesses to understand the opportunities available, and to gain a better understanding of what employers are looking for in terms of work readiness, etc.
- The Skills Hub has received some funding to support people who are "looked after".
- Work is underway to prepare for National Apprenticeship Week, and looking at engagement with parents around this agenda.
- The Skills Hub is also supporting the Pinewood Futures event taking place on 18/19 November.

- 7.4 BBF
- BBF continues to provide business support to businesses in the county.
 - BBF has set up a number of Peer Ngage groups which is focussed on peer networking including Leadership and Management discussions.
 - The Buckinghamshire Business Awards 2023 will be launched early in the new year which will include a category for the “Apprentice And Young Person Employer Of The Year” and it would be useful for as many businesses as possible to get behind this.
- 7.5 DWP/Job Centres
- Job Centres continue to support claimants, an increasing number of these being in-work claimants who require financial support.
 - The Job Centre is working with the Oasis Group to target the 50+ age group that are not currently working and help them back into employment.
 - Consideration is being given to opening “Health Pubs”, taking discussions with people into a more informal setting to try and better support their needs.
 - The Job Centres are working with clients to look at their transferrable skills.
- 7.6 Space Sector/Reaction Engines
- There is significant activity taking place at Westcott Venture Park in the space sector and promotion of activity and opportunities is gaining traction.
 - The key barrier to growth currently remains around recruitment of staff with the right skills.
 - There is more work to be done on the LSIP around greater engagement with employers, and the need to look at how to remove the stigma around apprenticeships and these types of routes into employment.
- 7.7 Flannery Plant Hire
- Flannery has launched the Bucks Skills Operator Hub.
 - The Flannery mobile outreach training facility (with 3 simulators) is delivering training across the county.
 - Flannery is delighted to be one of the main sponsors for the Bucks Skills Show 2023.
- 7.8 Buckinghamshire LEP (BLEP)
- The LEP has been involved in a number of funding bids over the last month, some of which will progress but some, like the Investment Zone bid where Government rhetoric has changed, will not.
 - The LEP continues to work with Bosch at their site in South Denham around developments in hydrogen power.
 - The LEP is working with Innovate UK as part of the Launchpad programme around building on local innovation strengths, supporting SMEs to deliver more jobs, and is looking to link the capabilities at Westcott and Silverstone.
 - BLEP was the only LEP in the country to host events during DiT’s International Trade Week, including an event held at Pinewood.
 - The BLEP AGM was held on 15 November 2022 with support from Skyports and the Space Applications Catapult who shared an update on the development of drone ports, work on “beyond line of sight” drone operation, and the need for development in regulation to allow growth in this area to progress.
- 7.9 Community Impact Bucks (CIB)
- The cost of living crisis is dominating all discussions as more people struggle to cope with rising costs.

- The crisis has impacted on volunteers available, people not able to volunteer as much time, at a time when demand is increasing, many organisations relying on volunteers to deliver their services.
- Foodbanks, mental health support, domestic violence charities have all seen the need for their services increase, as donations and grant funding reduce.
- Recruitment and retention of paid employment in the sector is difficult; pay is low, but now so is resilience and the need for health and wellbeing support for staff.
- CIB is seeking funding to help voluntary organisations to “reimagine volunteer roles”.
- CIB continues to work with Ukrainian (and other) refugees in the county, many of whom are working below their level of capability.

7.10 Buckinghamshire New University (BNU)

- BNU has seen 1300 higher and degree level apprenticeships completed this year.
- Changes in the Police Force no longer requiring a degree for entry into the Police Force may affect degrees offered at the university.
- New programme areas are being investigated across the university with the aim of increasing to 2k-2.5k undergraduates. It is possible the university will be offering engineering/civil engineering courses commencing in September 2023.

7.11 Young Person Representatives

- Dr Challoner’s is working with Young Professional Brand Ambassadors in an attempt to share the many opportunities available with students.
- It was suggested there is a focus in schools on guiding students towards university careers where perhaps there should be greater emphasis placed on apprenticeship and other opportunities.

7.12 All Spring Media

- Following a battle with DfE, All Spring Media will no longer be delivering apprenticeships, with effect from w/c 21 November 2022. This situation has affected a large number of independent training providers across the country.
- The employers for whom the company had been delivering apprenticeships had all been very supportive and had wanted the company to continue. Work with these employers may continue but in a different guise.
- All Spring Media has won funding from the Sector Skills Council and will be delivering internships in Bristol, Sheffield, Manchester and Leeds.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Nothing of note.

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

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

10 SUMMARY ACTIONS

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| 10.1 | ➤ SAP/Sub Group Chairs – carried forward – HD/JB to arrange meetings for the SAP Chair and the Chairs of each of the Sub Groups to consider opportunities arising. | HD/JB |
| 10.2 | ➤ Provider Access Legislation – Carried forward - MP/Eve Askey (TCHC) to discuss TCHC’s model for engaging with schools and colleges. | MP |
| 10.3 | ➤ LSIP – JB to incorporate comments made by SAP members on the priorities presented into development of the LSIP. | JB |

ACTION

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| 10.4 | ➤ LSIP – SAP members to contact JB with any priority areas not already identified that might merit inclusion. | ALL |
| 10.5 | ➤ LSIP – HD/JB to share information underpinning the headline priorities, particularly to assist training providers in planning future curriculum. | HD/JB |
| 10.6 | ➤ LSIP – JB to look at the detail of the Buckinghamshire Local Plan to ensure alignment with the LSIP. | JB |
| 10.7 | ➤ LSIP – PB to arrange an online meeting for Buckinghamshire Councillors to attend (if free) to share the context around development of the LSIP and progress being made. | PB |

Meeting closed 12.15pm