

ECONOMY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP

23 SEPTEMBER 2013

Attendees: Councillor Miss Pearl Lewis (Chairman), Councillors: Mrs Glover and Richards. Paula Buck BTVLEP and Mark Wathen AVDC attended also.

Discussion

Cllr Lewis provided Paula with an update of the discussion that the skills sub-group had been having. The sub-group were keen to continue their involvement in the skills issues, working with BTVLEP and others as appropriate.

Cllr Lewis emphasised that it was good to tell members of the public about the activity they were progressing on this topic.

Cllr Lewis referenced the several issues that the working group had uncovered:

1. A disconnect between what is happening in business and schools
2. The fact that young people aren't being encouraged to take alternative career paths
3. The ease of access to young people to make them aware of the range of opportunities was proving difficult; they wanted to get to parents

The main outcomes of the working group's deliberations and activity to take forward included:

1. Some form of advertising/promotional campaign stressing that pursuing alternative career paths in Buckinghamshire can be exciting – using examples such as motorsports and Silverstone and the Paralympics and Stoke Mandeville as well as the range of engineering and other companies on the doorstep such as Arla. Such a campaign might include radio, magazines and social media campaigns
2. There was a desire to hold a skills and employment conference with the aim of improving the links between education, business and training providers.

Paula Bucks, an employee of the County Council but present in her capacity of BTVLEP skills lead responded by outlining the 6 key strands which were to form the basis of the LEP's skills strategy going forward.

1. Apprenticeships and Higher Apprenticeships – accountancies now offer such higher level apprenticeships and represent alternatives to going to University for degrees, allowing students to study whilst working
2. Information, Advice and Guidance – Matthew Hancock from BIS has recognised that the current system of careers advice had failed to Inspire; hence there is a new programme coming out from BIS to do with 'Inspiring Young People'. Certainly Bucks should play into this.

There will also be a framework introduced and monitored by Ofsted about how schools are delivering against this new framework, which will be built into the new national careers service. There is a greater recognition that parental involve in choice

of education is key. Parents will be given up-to-date information to better inform young people.

3. Market Intelligence – more information will be gathered about the skills which employers need. The LEP have acquired some software which allows it to scan jobs advertised and examines the specific skills employers are looking for. This information can be cut and sliced and analysed by sector or technical skills. The LEP will use this to let schools know what is currently being advertised and out there.
4. Supply side planning - £11m-£15m is spent on skills in Bucks. Ways in which the supply side can improve to meet existing and future skills needs will continue.
5. Educated in Bucks – although there are good educational skills, there is a lack of work readiness; the LEP will work to improve the ‘educated in Bucks’ brand by focusing also on improving work readiness skills.
6. Future skills – this will be scenario testing what the jobs of the future might look like and how the system needs to adapt.

The key priority currently was in ensuring that the skills needs were reflected in the EU and SLGF plans being submitted by the LEP to draw down future funding to support the skills programme and work streams.

A key focus was to make the massive investment in skills already in the mainstream institutions work better.

A range of initiatives might be tried to attract graduates to stay in the area, including promotional videos from prospective employers placed on YouTube, what its like to work in a small company, offering a wide range of skilling and opportunities for fast track and perhaps offering bursaries for pupils whilst they are still at school.

There is also a significant issue of ‘underemployment’ by well qualified graduates doing menial jobs. The LEP might work with employers to fast track the more capable students to provide more ‘entry level’ jobs.

Opportunities for AVDC members to be involved going forward

1. Involvement in improving the ‘educated in Bucks’ branding going forward, around work readiness as well as qualifications
2. Working with the LEP and skills partners in promoting alternative career paths and planting these ideas in students’ heads through a marketing campaign
3. A meeting with children could be held at AVDC but meeting with educational providers beforehand in preparation for a conference
4. Sue Imbriano of the County was keen to establish some form of Young People’s forum to put their perspectives across
5. There was the opportunity of engaging with young people locally who had 4-5 years work experience as INSPIRATIONAL role models for future generations locally

6. The National Apprenticeship scheme has a programme linked into MPs which involves schools linking with employers to go into school which could be exploited more

At the Member level, there were opportunities for AVDC members to engage in:

- Branding and promotional work
- Connectivity between schools and business
- Supporting partners to deliver
- To work with the County and the LEP to take things forward

Immediate actions and ideas put forward:

1. Labour market vacancies and adverts in key employment sectors:
an initial action could be to ask Rupert Waters of BBF to review jobs adverts in Aylesbury Vale in the engineering and technical skills area and identify what types of jobs were already being advertise to give everyone a sense of what was already needed. Following on from that, a similar review could be done for other key sectors in Bucks and the Vale which could help inform the start of a campaign with the LEP.
2. Use existing links of residents and others with employers and bring together partners with employers in a conference/discussion (Gt Missenden cited)
3. Councillors who are school governors should raise the issues and opportunities to do something different
4. Another vehicle could be meetings such as the Local Area Forums or the Bucks Association of Local Councils
5. A regional skills conference could be a good idea
6. The Chair of the Scrutiny committee to draft a letter to the LEP to state how it would like its members to be involved going forward