

## SKILLS AND TRAINING UPDATE

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### 1 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide scrutiny members with an insight into the skills shortages faced by a local employer.
- 1.2 To update members on the progress made by local partners in addressing the issues of skills to ensure we have a work ready workforce which meets employers' skills needs.
- 1.3 To hear from local partners how they are responding to the skills and training needs of our current and future workforce to ensure we have a work-ready workforce to support employment growth in Aylesbury Vale and Bucks.

### 2 Recommendations/for decision

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2.1 To further explore with partners what the skills gaps are in Aylesbury Vale and Bucks and how they are hindering the growth of existing businesses located in the Vale as well as hindering investment to the district.</li><li>2.2 To Propose what further support the council and its partners can provide to employers to address current and future skills gaps to ensure a work ready future workforce</li></ol> |
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### 3 Supporting information

- 3.1 Members were given testimonial evidence by a leading major employer in the district of the difficulties experienced in recruitment and skills issues at the Economic Development and Business Development Scrutiny Committee in February 2013. Members were informed that this was a common issue among local businesses and that further support was required by employers to address this. This was then followed by the Economic Development and Business Development Scrutiny Committee in March 2013, where a review was undertaken with regard to the identification of the skills needs of Aylesbury Vale businesses and members were provided with presentations of local training providers to understand what the most significant education and skills training issues were to support future growth.

**(See Annex 1 for the Economy Scrutiny Committee, 4 February 2013 Minutes for referencing the local skills provision and challenges experienced by local employers)**

**(See Annex 2 for the Economy Scrutiny and Business Development Committee, 25 March, 2013 Minutes for review of the training provision and skills support within Aylesbury Vale)**

- 3.2 As a result, our previous chair, Cllr Pearl Lewis wrote to all education and training providers about two projects members were looking to invest in, to address the improvement of links between education, business and training providers and the difficulty of young people accessing information on alternative vocational career paths, as opposed to the traditional route to

University to support skills development within Aylesbury Vale and Bucks. The projects included an advertising/promotional campaign stressing the importance of alternative career paths in Buckinghamshire and an employment conference.

- 3.3 Members were then updated at the Economy and Business Development Scrutiny meeting in September 2014 of the 'Bucks Going for Gold' project which provided a web portal to support young people with accessing information on a broad range of opportunities that were available to them including details on Apprenticeship programmes within a wide spectrum of areas including business admin, electrical and engineering, amongst others.

**(See Annex 3 for the Economy and Business Development Scrutiny, 3 September 2014 Minutes referencing the 'Bucks Going for Gold' project)**

- 3.4 One of the key building blocks of the Economic Development strategy 2011 to 2014 is "the need to ensure that the current and future workforce skills are appropriate for the 21st century global marketplace, as well as offering young people alternative career paths to help retain professionals, graduates, apprentices and qualified technicians in the local economy". This echoes the messages that economic development and other partners are receiving from local businesses in the area. Therefore, education and training partners need to be more responsive to the needs of businesses, with learners selecting training and qualifications that is appropriate to business and employer skills needs.
- 3.5 The UK Commission's Employer Skills Survey report in 2014 reported that too many organisations were experiencing difficulties with recruiting the skilled people they needed and that this posed "serious risks to the health and survival of businesses and to their bottom line performance". The survey revealed a sharp rise in skills shortages which may be holding back the UK's economic recovery. The report indicated that this was not a new phenomenon and that such deficiencies had persisted over time in some sectors and occupations, indicating that there was a need to take decisive action. The report also revealed that as well as a growing shortage of certain skills, there was also evidence of a surplus and mismatch of skills in other areas. The report highlighted the pressures on skills investment and revealed the amount spent on training by employers had fallen by £2.5 billion since 2011 to further exasperate the situation.
- 3.6 The SEMLEP Business Survey 2015 surveyed just under 2000 businesses in the South East Midlands and reported that a third of businesses currently had skills gaps within their existing workforce. The report identified that almost half of the businesses that have had any vacancies in the last 12 months, found some vacancies hard to fill. Job Specific and technical or practical skills remained the two most frequently mentioned skills that have been difficult to obtain when recruiting from outside the organisation. The report revealed that advanced IT skills, sales and marketing skills, technical or practical skills as the main skills lacking within current workforces. From the Aylesbury Vale businesses surveyed, the most difficult skills to obtain included technical or practical skills, sales and marketing skills and advanced IT skills.

- 3.7 South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) has recently started to build a network of 'Enterprise Advisers' across the South East Midlands to work directly with the leadership of individual schools and colleges in order to develop effective employer engagement plans. The partnership aims to improve the careers and enterprise activities of schools and colleges, improve employer engagement with schools and colleges and ensure that programme and activities are delivered which provide young people with the best choices. SEMLEP has also launched a new partnership "Inspiring The Future" which aims to provide a free brokerage service to link local businesses to schools and colleges to help create a workforce with the talent and aspirations that meets the needs of its growing economy. As part of SEMLEP's support to skills development, the "SEMLEP Apprenticeship Ambassador's Network" provides not only promotion of Apprenticeships but shares best practice, encourages and mentors businesses that are keen to take on or introduce Apprenticeships to their workforce and is made up of large and small apprenticeship employers across the South East Midlands. SEMLEP's Skills Forum provides an ideal opportunity to link education providers with business to ensure they meet employers' needs.
- 3.8 The Bucks Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP) Skills and Employability Board was recently set up to support BTVLEP with its skills Strategy. The Bucks Skills Hub is at the centre of the activities for the Bucks Skills & Employability Programme and was recently launched and will provide an online presence to improve engagement between schools, employers and training providers.
- 3.9 The BTVLEP Skills and Employability Programme will provide;
- i. a closer engagement between Schools and employers to work ready employees;
  - ii. information, advice and guidance to young people by showcasing opportunities in Bucks
  - iii. increasing apprenticeship opportunities including higher level apprenticeships
- 3.10 University Campus Aylesbury Vale (UCAV) is a partnership between Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC) and Buckinghamshire Education, Skills and Training (BEST). BEST is an educational partnership formed by Aylesbury College and Buckinghamshire New University in order to pool the partners' leadership, industry links and expertise, enabling them to deliver a broad range of educational opportunities to meet the region's education and skills needs, including the delivery of degree level courses and professional development programmes at UCAV. The facility will also include two technology centres and will combine research, innovation and education to support the delivery of technician and higher level workforce skills development within Aylesbury and Bucks.
- 3.11 It is proposed that a local employer will be presenting to provide an overview of the difficulty in recruitment and skills gaps and local partners will present the local support available to address employer skills needs.
1. A local business, tbc
  2. Ian Harper, General Manager University Campus Aylesbury Vale (UCAV) will be providing members of the committee with an overview of the goals

and aspirations of UCAV and inform members how this new facility will support skills growth and development within Aylesbury Vale/Bucks wide.

3. Ruth Farwell, Bucks Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP) will provide members with an overview of the strategic position of the BTVLEP Skills and Employability Programme.
4. Jackie Campbell, Skills Development Manager, (BTVLEP) will provide members with an overview of the “OppsinBucks” initiative which was recently launched to provide a platform for educators and employers to work together to deliver practical skills and real experience based learning opportunities.

Mena Caldbeck,  
Background Documents

Business Relationship Officer Ext. 5657  
Names of Background documents

## Annex 1

### ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

4 February, 2013

#### 5. SKILLS PROVISION

Members received a report that set the scene prior to the meeting of 25 March on the subject of Skills Provision following reports that local businesses were finding it difficult to recruit staff with suitable skills. Some had reported that many applicants lacked even the basic literacy skills.

To determine the exact position it was proposed to conduct a review that encompassed the skills needs of Aylesbury businesses whilst scrutinising the level of education, training and skills that were available through local education facilities and training organisations with the overall aim to understand the biggest barriers to future employment growth.

The format of the meeting was to cover the following issues:-

- Current skills trends and issues as applied to Buckinghamshire economy
- What are biggest barriers to growth of Buckinghamshire employers?
- What are providers/trainers currently doing to address any of the issues and how could we do better?
- What are providers doing to up skill the workforce which will lead to further job creation?
- What are the immediate to medium term opportunities and challenges?
- Where might we work alone or across LEP boundaries with others and why?
- What could be done differently?
- What do we do next and what will be achieved in the short term?

Members considered the above proposals and were supportive with the inclusion of the following:-

- There would need to be a company in attendance that was currently experiencing recruitment problems
- Consideration to be given to expanding the scrutiny to include basic education provision
- The attendance of BCC's Cabinet Member responsible for Education
- Information on the National Apprentice Association should be included
- The meeting must establish the facts, proposals to remedy the situation would follow at the next meeting

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted
2. That the comments of Members, as shown above, be considered as part of the scoping requirements for the next meeting.

## Annex 2

### ECONOMY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

25 March, 2013

#### 4. BUSINESS SKILLS AND TRAINING REVIEW.

Following on from the meeting on 4 February 2013, Members received a report that set out the current position on the subject of Skills Provision following reports that local businesses were finding it difficult to recruit staff with suitable skills or training.

To determine the exact position it had been proposed to conduct a review that encompassed the skills needs of Aylesbury Vale businesses whilst scrutinising the level of education, training and skills that were available through local education facilities and training organisations with the overall aim to understand the biggest barriers to future employment growth.

To enable Members to fully appraise the situation the following people attended to give presentations which clarified the present situation within each of their respective organisations:-

Heather Dean – Bucks Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP)

Jane Mason – Bucks Business First (BBF)

Christopher Edwards – ARLA

Tim Keighley – Aylesbury College

Bev Flanagan – University Technical Centre (UTC)

Ian Harper – Aylesbury Training Group (ATG)

- a) The BTVLEP, working in partnership with BBF, explained that a skills group had been formed to analyse the evidence received from researching 700 employers. Various skills gaps and the need to gather more information had been identified.

Phase 2 of work had been agreed as,

- Consultation with specific employment sectors: learning networks
- 'Skills and Recruitment' portal in development
- Opportunities for local employers to provide work experience
- Improve the supply chain of suitably skilled people for specific sectors
- Opportunities for local employers to work with graduates inside and outside the county

The short term aim was to establish a "1 stop shop" as a single point of contact for employers looking for skills supply.

Long term the aims were to promote Apprenticeships, enhance work experience opportunities and to improve graduate retention in Bucks.

- b) Similarly, BBF had collaborated to research on a skills study. An aging workforce had been identified which made raising the awareness of the work possibilities, via training and apprenticeships, open to young potential

workers, most important. A major consideration would be changing the mind-set of young people to encourage them into engineering related jobs via apprenticeships.

Events aimed at raising work readiness were planned via a “Work Wise Week”, promotion of work experience and establishment of a recruitment and skills portal.

Grants up to £4,000 had also been put in place for employers that recruited an apprentice.

- c) The presentation from ARLA showed the frustration suffered by a major employer in trying to recruit educated people that had been trained to a reasonable standard.

Criticism was placed on the present education system that targeted scholars for university but placed no priority on the education of those that either were not capable of obtaining the requirements of university or wanted to obtain more “hands on” skills to work in engineering or associated trades.

In the short term ARLA required people with key skills in engineering disciplines and dairy competence. Engineers had been impossible to find in the Aylesbury Vale area.

In order that their new venture opened on time, with staff that had the basic skills required for the dairy industry, ARLA had instigated their own operational plan whereby potential workers would be given the required skills to a basic level of competence.

Also, in partnership with Aylesbury College and Aylesbury Training Group, ARLA would be putting in place a series of three month training sessions and had introduced the Eden Engineering Apprenticeship scheme. Eden Engineering is a ground-breaking apprenticeship driven by the whole dairy industry to provide an Advanced Apprenticeship for maintenance technicians and engineers with the aim of producing world class staff for tomorrow’s dairy industry. Bids for funding had been placed with Central Government.

- d) Aylesbury College was the number one provider of apprenticeships in Buckinghamshire in partnership with business to develop skills and to build and grow the workforce. After approaches from Taylor Wimpey and ARLA, partnerships had been formed to put in place specific training schemes that would produce young workers with the dedicated skills required.
- e) UTC was a new venture, built within the grounds of the Aylesbury College that would take students at 14 – 16 years old. Training was technically focused and shaped by employers to meet their specific needs. Specialisation of this nature gave students a very high employability within their technical environment.

Major employers in the construction and ICT industries had approached UTC with their specific needs and training was being tailored to satisfy those shortcomings.

- f) ATG was a 22,000 sq. ft. training facility specialising in Levels 2 – 4, advanced apprenticeships, work experience and young apprenticeships (Diplomas). One of its speciality courses was to train cycle engineers. It considered itself to be an independent employment agency.

Members expressed a general disappointment and concern that there was such a wide disconnect between education and employment and welcomed any initiative that would redress the balance whilst recognising that training

organisations should not shoulder all the blame as funding issues had often dictated which training they were able to offer. However, there were a number of issues concerning which Members expressed a view on or commented generally, including the following:-

- Members expressed an interest in knowing more about what can be done to tackle the 30% of young people that had no interest in participating in any training and what schools could do, at a lower level to encourage participation.
- It had been reported that Buckinghamshire had a record of only retaining one in five of the graduates that passed through the counties universities. Members were interested to know if this had been investigated and if it had what the reasons were.
- Schools that pushed pupils towards university rather than promoting an equal route towards NVQ training were producing a lot students that graduated with a degree in a diverse subject that did little to enhance their work ready skills or attractiveness to potential employers. Members were of the opinion that Bucks County Council Education should be asked to give their opinions/reasons as to why the education system was working in this way.
- Schools and employers should also be encouraged to spread the message to parents that young people can benefit from NVQ/Diploma or apprenticeship training.
- Availability of apprenticeships needed to be made more accessible and better exposure given to encourage young people to take up the training being offered. Although the hourly rate of £2.65 per hour for an apprentice was recognised as a major obstacle to achieving progress.
- Some Members advocated that AVDC should fund a number of apprentice placements and that AVDC should also compel its suppliers to take on apprentices.

#### RESOLVED –

1. That the disconnect between education and employment be recognised.
2. That Bucks County Council Education be asked to explain the workings of an education system that did not produce young people that had the necessary work readiness skills and had not been encouraged to participate in training by raising awareness of the training on offer to pupils.
3. That the education system better involve parents to further raise awareness.
4. That AVDC continued to work in partnership with organisations that were likeminded to encourage a change in mind-set so that, in the near future, employers were able to take advantage of a ready supply of young, potential engineers that already possessed a basic level of training and were mindful of progression.



## **Annex 3**

### **ECONOMY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**3 September, 2014**

#### **6. SKILLS UPDATE**

Members received a report that updated them on the current progress of work being carried out to address the skills issues relating to young people's access to information and opportunity to a wider range of career paths. Members were also asked to note the progress of opportunities for Apprenticeships and Traineeships and to support the project by marketing it through the AVDC media channels and encouraging our partners to do the same.

In 2013, the scrutiny committee had undertaken a review of skills and employment issues. During that review Members raised concerns about the lack of Information and support to young people to be able to make real choices for alternative career paths and asked that more be done to highlight the options.

Similar concerns had been raised across Buckinghamshire in 2013 about the opportunities for young people to get into work, Buckinghamshire County Council had put forward nine recommendations designed to better prepare young people for the world of work. Among these recommendations was suggested the development of a 'ready for work passport', which would be offered to young people in schools and colleges. The report also recommended that school governing bodies appoint a lead member for careers advice and to hold head teachers to account over their statutory duty to provide high quality careers guidance to all pupils. In addition it was considered that schools should develop more partnerships with local businesses and for primary school teachers to raise awareness of employment as part of pupils' preparation for secondary school.

The Committee was informed of a new project named Going for Gold that had been set up, and being led by Buckinghamshire CC which was to be formally launched on 14 September 2014. AVDC was a member of the project group. The project would encourage and support people of all ages to take up apprenticeships and traineeships in a range of different careers.

Members noted that a contribution of £5,000 had been made available from AVDC's Economic Development budget to support and promote this project.

**RESOLVED-**

That the report be noted and the Going for Gold project supported.