

## **SKILLS UPDATE**

### **1 Purpose**

- 1.1 To provide scrutiny members with an update on the progress made since the last Skills update in October 2015.

### **2 Recommendations**

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| 2.1 To note and comment upon the developments within the Skills agenda in Buckinghamshire to ensure we support a 'work ready' future workforce. |
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### **3 Executive summary**

- 3.1 Members will recall from the previous update on skills that one in three businesses had reported a skills gap, which included job specific skills relating to technical or practical skills and IT skills and that businesses across the Vale had reported experiencing difficulties recruiting skilled people.
- 3.2 This was then supported by testimonial evidence from David Handley, Director of Thame Workholding, a local engineering company who stated that from his experience educational centres did not talk to businesses with regard to the skills sets required by businesses, in order to match students according to the opportunities available to them. He also stated that there should be links between education providers and employers to support this opportunity. Members noted that the current provision of careers advice within schools could be improved and the difficulty experienced by businesses to communicate with schools and parents to inform them of the careers opportunities available to young people locally.
- 3.3 Members received presentations from Ian Harper, Managing Director at University Campus Aylesbury Vale (UCAV) highlighting the different degree level courses and professional development programmes on offer in support of higher level workforce skills development within Aylesbury Vale.
- 3.4 Members also heard from Ruth Farwell and Jackie Campbell from the Bucks Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP) Skills Board on activities within the Bucks Skills & Employability Programme which aimed to support closer engagement between schools and employers to ensure a future work ready workforce including providing information, advice and guidance to young people as well as increasing the number of apprenticeship opportunities, including higher level apprenticeships in Bucks.
- 3.5 Following the Economy and Business Development Scrutiny Committee Meeting, the Chairman wrote to Jackie and Ruth at BTVLEP Skills and Employability Programme highlighting our support for the Board's ambitions and the Council's intention to work more closely with them and other local partners to ensure there was an improvement in the engagement between businesses, local schools and colleges so that young people were aware of the opportunities available to them.
- 3.6 The Chairman also wrote to Ian Harper at UCAV in support of the UCAV's aims and how we could work together. The Chairman also wrote to David Handley with the offer of support to provide engagement with the Bucks Employability Skills Board with regard to some of the initiatives on offer and

other training providers to support his business. The Economic Development team also drew up a list of recommendations to take to the BTVLEP Employability Skills Board to ensure we support our employers and young people for a prosperous and growing future economy, with agreement by the Chairman of the Business Development Scrutiny Committee . This is in alignment with aims from both SEMLEP and BTVLEP, local educational partners and stakeholders. **(See Annexe 1)** AVDC Skills Support for Employers and addressing of Skills for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Economy.

3.7 Economic Development have subsequently met with the Ruth Farwell and Jackie Campbell to see how we can support them to ensure these recommendations secure:

- a closer engagement between schools and employers for 'work ready' employees;
- information, advice and guidance to young people by showcasing opportunities in Bucks
- increasing apprenticeship opportunities, including higher level apprenticeships

#### **4. Activities underway**

AVDC's team is actively engaged in several of the developments underway to deliver against the actions set out in Annexe 1.

4.1 Many of them have already been started and AVDC will continue to work with partners to progress those not currently initiated. The pressing one, AVDC would like to see, is to address the Science Technology Engineering Maths (STEM) skills at the higher apprenticeship level and also those currently in employment in their 20s and 30s in the manufacturing sector. This has been raised as a priority by AVDC for inclusion in the latest refresh of BTVLEP's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and will in part be carried forward as part of the sector development work linked to the Enterprise Zones (EZ) and the EZ offer and activity.

4.2 A key number of the recommendations from Annexe 1 are being carried forward by BTVLEP and actively supported by AVDC which include:

#### 4.3 Skills hub

These include the promotion of the Skills Hub and its activities with employers, in particular the OppsinBucks web portal [www.oppsinbucks.org](http://www.oppsinbucks.org)

Awareness of the Skills Hub was raised at AVDC's Annual Business Consultation, as well as an article in the Aylesbury Vale Times and in the Business Rates annual bill.

#### 4.4 Enterprise Advisers

*"Promotion of a skills system that is more responsive to the needs of local employers"* is also being supported through engaging with businesses for them to become "Enterprise Advisers". A representative from a business volunteers to work directly with the leadership of individual schools and colleges in order to develop effective employer engagement plans to improve careers and enterprise activities of schools and colleges.

This in turn should improve employer engagement with schools and colleges and ensure that programme and activities are delivered which provide young people with the best career choices and options locally. AVDC has ensured that there is co-ordination between the Enterprise Advisers programme in SEMLEP and BTVLEP, especially where we share common showcase sectors such as Advanced Manufacturing and High Performance Technologies.

#### 4.5 The local Careers and Enterprise Company

The creation of the new Careers and Enterprise Company National Programme for schools was recently announced. The Careers Enterprise Company is meant to be employer-led and independent of government and will focus on young people aged 12 to 18, encouraging greater collaboration between schools and colleges and employers to ensure the best advice and inspiration about the world of work is provided to young people.

BTVLEP have invested in the Careers & Enterprise Company to address the poor 'work readiness' skills of young people which the current careers advice system doesn't do effectively enough.

#### 4.7 The Bucks Skills show – July 2016 <https://oppsinbucks.org/1576-2/>

One of the recommendations as in Annexe 1, by BTVLEP Employability Skills Board Skills Board and AVDC, was to develop an event to promote key growth sectors and showcase the diverse careers opportunities for students in Bucks.

The Bucks Skills Show, which is being hosted by BTVLEP at University Centre Aylesbury Vale and actively supported by AVDC, will provide an excellent opportunity for Bucks employers to promote their company and the diverse careers opportunities they offer to young people in Bucks.

The event is aimed at young people and their parents and provides opportunities for exhibition space and includes keynote speakers from a range of industries including; Advanced Engineering, Food manufacturing, TV/Creative Industries, Medical Technologies, Lifesciences & Digital Technologies amongst others. The event will take place on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July between 10am and 4pm at University Campus Aylesbury Vale.

#### 4.8 University Centre Aylesbury Vale (UCAV)

As part of its support to UCAV, ED along with Buckinghamshire Business First and some of the members of the Business and Economic Development Scrutiny committee met with Ian Harper at UCAV to ascertain how we could support the aims of UCAV and businesses in the area, including the promotion of Higher Level Apprenticeships amongst businesses and the promotion and delivery of STEM Courses. It was agreed that a joint group of stakeholders in support of UCAV "Friends of UCAV" should be set up to take this forward.

#### 4.9 Unilever/Arla University Technical Centre (UTC) bid

The Economic Development team recently supported Unilever's bid for the creation of a University Technical College (UTC) at Colworth to "*train the next generation of engineers, technicians, craftsmen and industrial innovators*" in support of the Food and Drink manufacturing and processing companies and SMEs in the area.

The UTC would help to support the ambitions of the Vale by:

- providing the availability of an appropriately skilled workforce to support the increasing demand for higher skilled occupations and new and emerging market opportunities.
- showcasing the number of opportunities within the food and drink sector amongst young people to support an ageing workforce in the sector.
- supporting the district's need to invest in research and innovation skills of it's young people to provide alternative career paths, including vocational and apprenticeship opportunities.
- providing young people with clear progression routes from learning into work, providing students with a combination of academic and practical learning, which would be strongly influenced by food and drink employers, ensuring they have the right skills and behaviours for the workplace and the specialist technical knowledge, practical skills and knowledge of modern equipment specialisms which would match the needs of the local economy.

#### 4.10 Local Area Reviews

As part of the government's devolution plans, Area Reviews are being undertaken to establish whether local institutions are financially resilient, are able to offer high quality education and training based on the needs of learners and employers within the local area need and also support the need to move towards fewer, larger, more resilient and efficient colleges. This also includes the need for greater specialisation, with concentrated expertise to support progression through professional and technical routes. Aylesbury College is currently undergoing this process with the support of SEMLEP and BTVLEP to ensure it has the right balance of provision, including capacity to deliver some of the three million apprenticeships by 2020 as targeted by Central government.

## 5. **Resource Implications**

None – activity progressed from within the AVDC team alongside Bucks and SEMLEP colleagues.

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**AVDC Skills Support for Employers and addressing of skills for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Economy**

Recommendations taken to BTVLEP Employability Skills Board by Economic Development to ensure we support our employers and young people for a prosperous and growing future economy.

1. Meet with BTVLEP Employability Skills Board to support their ambition with the Skills Hub for:
  - 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
2. To improve the current disconnect between schools/FE/HEIs and businesses, by introducing a Skills Forum which provides an ideal opportunity to link education providers with business to ensure they meet employers' needs or tapping into SEMLEP's existing scheme.
3. To improve the current disconnect between training providers and the offer for Vale in support of key growth sectors and those of basic skills. (Producing a publication to promote offer).
4. Organising an event to promote key growth sectors and careers opportunities for students.
5. Lobbying central government for funding support to ensure our businesses are supported with skills issues regarding access to engineers and technical skills.
6. Accessibility to schools for businesses through "Enterprise Advisers" similar to SEMLEP to work directly with the leadership of individual schools and colleges in order to develop effective employer engagement plans to improve 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.
7. Support hard launch of Skills Hub (OppsinBucks) with employers and MP and members at AVDC with full publicity.
8. Promote a skills system that is more responsive to the needs of local needs of employers.

9. Targeting businesses to increase opportunities of apprenticeships in Bucks by true engagement of businesses. Bring in something similar to SEMLEPs' Apprenticeship Ambassador's Network" which 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 Bucks.
10. Targeting business to increase the opportunities of work experience for students in a wide range of sectors again using the Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network or Employer Network through the Skills Hub.
11. Use different mediums to reach young people to highlight recruitment opportunities.
12. Promote the Skills Hub (OppsinBucks) to businesses HE/FEI/UTCs so all are aware of the opportunities available in Bucks.
13. Improve the level of career advice within Bucks using 'Enterprise Advisers'.
14. Assist businesses with access to young people by providing something similar to SEMLEPs "Inspiring The Future" 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. Add this to the Skills Hub as part of its offering.
15. Promotion of Higher Level Apprenticeships with businesses in a degree through partnership working with employers may be delivered through UCAV.
16. Promotion and deliver of STEM Courses within Bucks, delivery through UCAV.
17. Social Media campaigns to highlight opportunities for students and businesses.
18. Supporting the High Performance Technologies and Motorsport Big Bang STEM event at Silverstone in 2016.
19. Bring a UKTI Sector Skills specialist to provide support to Skills Board for access to further support and funding.