

# **Economy and Business Development Scrutiny Committee**

**17 JANUARY 2018**

**PRESENT:** Councillor P Strachan (Chairman); Councillors C Branston (Vice-Chairman), J Bloom, M Collins, M Hawkett, T Hunter-Watts, P Irwin, C Poll and W Whyte

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors B Adams and A Christensen

## **1. MINUTES**

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2017 be approved as a correct record.

## **2. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE SKILLS STRATEGY**

Aylesbury Vale was covered by two different Local Enterprise Partnerships: South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) which included the following councils; Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Cherwell, Corby, Daventry, Kettering, Luton, Milton Keynes, Northampton and South Northants, and Bucks Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP) which consisted of the following other Councils; Wycombe, Chiltern and South Buckinghamshire and Bucks County Council. Representatives from SEMLEP had attended Scrutiny on 31 October 2017 to provide an update on the pending Strategic Economic Plan and Skills Plan which was subsequently launched on 8 November 2017.

The item was attended by Jackie Campbell, Skills Development Manager at BTVLEP and Ian Barham, Partnership Manager at BTVLEP who introduced Members to the Buckinghamshire Skills Plan. The intention of BTVLEP was to build conditions for the sustainable economic growth in the entrepreneurial heart of Britain and this would be achieved through a strategy that provided a framework and focus for joint commitment to developing skills across the county. There were four key themes in the strategy:

- Developing future workforce: ensure young people are prepared for work and make informed career choices.
- Develop robust supply of skilled ambitious talent for growth sectors and Enterprise Zones with a focus on creative, digital high performance engineering, life sciences, food and drink manufacture and space industries.
- Support lifelong learning by addressing skills gaps.
- Support skill development and recruitment in the health and social care, construction, tourism, service and public sector.

BTVLEP itself was the second smallest LEP in the UK and had three arms of delivering its services:

Buckinghamshire Skills Board – focussed on promoting and optimising links between employers and educators in order to enable young people to become more work ready through employer involvement and ensure they gain the right skills for the local growth sectors.

Buckinghamshire Business First – business led and business focussed community for new, established and growing business in the County. Community members were provided knowledge, support and opportunities for growth and benefited from

connections, facilities, products and services. Currently 10,500 businesses were members of BBF.

Buckinghamshire Advantage – operational element of BTVLEP’s delivery of funded capital schemes to ensure local growth funds were invested to maximum effect.

The BTVLEP Strategic Economic Plan was originally produced in 2014 and had been refreshed in 2016. The plan had provided the framework for Local Growth Deals for Buckinghamshire. Since 2012, over £100m had been secured which had been utilised for new road and rail connections (such as Stoke Mandeville relief road), town centre investment, skills and business incubation facilities, business investment funds and digital infrastructure. The BTVLEP Skills Capital Projects in the Vale included Westcott and Silverstone, as well as a business incubation centre based on cycle technology and a centre of Entrepreneurship at University of Buckingham which was under construction and due to open in September as part of wider plans to double its intake in the next ten years. Meanwhile, University Campus Aylesbury Vale sought to create an exciting Digital Innovation Hub to support business incubation.

Members heard of the challenges that BTVLEP faced with skills issues in Buckinghamshire which they were working to resolve in collaboration with SEMLEP as crucial elements to promote economic growth. The first was that employers stated that 17-18 year olds recruited were not prepared for the work place. Secondly was the ‘brain drain’ of educated young adults leaving Buckinghamshire for further education and not returning which resulted in a comparatively small proportion of people aged 24 – 30. There was also the daily loss of skilled people which commuted to London for higher salaries. It had been found that the skills shortage was more apparent in Thames Valley compared to the rest of the UK with 30% of vacancies unfilled compared to the national average of 25% and the key challenge was to retain and attract talent.

For 2018, the activities and focus of BTVLEP was to consolidate and build on the impact of its Skills Programme for Under 19s. Work in secondary schools was ongoing and the intention was to expand into other schools including Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Pupil Referral Units (PRU). The Buckinghamshire Skills Hub had successfully created ‘Opps in Bucks’ and ‘Wannabe’ both of which acted as a communication portal between employers and young people. Work experience, internships, apprenticeships and jobs were advertised on this portal and it was intended to expand the pool of companies that used this. Opps in Bucks had various success stories including pupil ventures into filming at the National Film & Television School, app development, engineering in Chesham and sales experience in Hemel Hempstead. LEP funding was available to these businesses on the condition that they participated in school and education encounters. Student – Employer encounters were seen as vital in youth engagement. BTVLEP had been responsible for 52,000 such encounters in 2016/17 with 70,000 projected for 2017/18. Additionally, the Bucks Skills Show for 2018 was booked at The Gateway for 12 & 13 October, and the intention was to grow on the 100 businesses that had attended in 2017. Feedback from the Bucks Skills Show was positive as it was a ‘hands on’ experience for young people to engage with businesses and provide them the opportunity to make career choices based on inspiration rather than school subject preference. A video of interviews and insights from the 2017 was available via this link: <https://wannabebucks.org/gravity-landing/bucks-skills-show-2017/>

A collaboration which included Bucks New Universities and UCAV were submitting a bid for funding from the Institute of Technology by the deadline of 1 March 2018. There would be competition for the funding from other LEPs and it was hoped that this bid would have advantages owing to the location in the growth corridor and the investment into the buildings, the town centre and wider area. A decision on the funding bid was expected in the summer of 2018.

Members sought more information from the BTVLEP representatives and were advised that:-

- i. Future funding was secured until August 2020 with additional LEP reserves available. Sponsorship from businesses to hold events, such as the Skills Show, were being explored so that events would break even. Once BTVLEP had grown its reputation further then a subscription based model for additional services to businesses was a possibility.
- ii. Brain drain and appealing to youth was achievable through the reputation of business and of place. An example was the attraction of the Dyson apprenticeship program which was oversubscribed despite its location in Malmesbury which was a relatively quiet area. BTVLEP therefore wanted young people to be aware of the opportunities that were local in terms of key businesses in this part of the country and the benefits of living in the area and discussion was had around how to make the Vale even more attractive such as through more affordable housing and housing of the right mix and town centre regeneration. All of this had been planned for in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan.
- iii. The influence parents had on their children's career was acknowledged and BTVLEP welcomed and encouraged parental attendance at events so that they were also informed on career path options.
- iv. The impact of Carillion's activities on apprenticeships and Bucks SMEs was being investigated. BTVLEP had a relationship with Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) which would assist on this.
- v. Whilst youth resilience was an important skill to be learnt in education, employers had a role to play in nurturing young people when they transitioned into employment to help young people be 'work ready'.
- vi. There was an acknowledgement that affordability of the area had a role in retaining young talent and that Local Authority schemes, such as Help to Buy, would help.
- vii. The performance of Career Leads in schools was monitored and they receiving training for the role.

RESOLVED –

1. That the BTVLEP representatives be thanked for their presentation and that their work for the Vale was greatly appreciated by the Committee.
2. Cabinet be requested to support and advertise the schemes operated by BTVLEP, such as Opps in Bucks and Wannabe, and suggested that the work being done be promoted in AV Times.

### **3. WORK PROGRAMME**

Members considered their work programme as per the agenda. It was possible that an LEP Review would be ready for the next meeting in March. The Industrial Strategy would also be presented to Committee when it was ready.

In addition to this, Members saw the benefit of the following coming to Committee:

- Invite Rupert Walters, Head of Economic Research at Buckinghamshire Business First, to guest speak on current and future skills in the local area.
- An overall update on broadband provision within the Vale with a focus on connecting areas without it.