

Report to Cabinet

Title:	Skills Strategy
Date:	Monday 25 September 2017
Date can be implemented:	Tuesday 03 October 2017
Author:	Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
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Local members affected:	All Members
Portfolio areas affected:	All Portfolio Areas

For press enquiries concerning this report, please contact the media office on 01296 382444

Summary

Skills contribute significantly to the economic prosperity of an area and improving skills is an important way to drive both business growth and prosperity. Businesses, education and public services all play a critical role in shaping and developing the skills needed within the county.

Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP) has set itself a vision ***'that the Buckinghamshire economy will be a vibrant, balanced and resilient economy, underpinned by innovative, high-value, globally-orientated firms'***. Skills for growth will be an important element in achieving this vision, particularly in terms of STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) skills development and higher apprenticeships. Buckinghamshire County Council has also adopted a Strategic Plan priority to ***'Keep Buckinghamshire Thriving and Attractive'*** which will rely on getting more local people into local jobs and the development of sector specific skills to ensure an adequate supply of local labour.

All key stakeholders have come together to develop a countywide strategy for collaboration on the skills agenda. It is proposed that by working more effectively together around a common set of agreed actions, we can be even more effective in addressing the specific skills deficits

and shortages across the County. Therefore, the purpose of the joint Skills Strategy, is to provide a framework and focus for the joint commitment of all partners to skills development. It will address the county's specific needs, based on evidence, and help align a wide range of stakeholders around a clear plan of action.

Recommendation

That Cabinet:

- **Agree the joint Skills Strategy for Buckinghamshire attached to this report**

A. Narrative setting out the reasons for the decision

1. Given the increasingly important role that skills play in the economic prosperity of an area, it is considered vital that the County Council and partners develop an evidence based Skills Strategy which focusses resources on the areas that will deliver the greatest benefit.
2. The Government published its Green paper – Building Our Industrial Strategy – in January this year. The paper proposes that 'skills' are one of the ten pillars to support the growth of the economy and identifies a number of key these that need to be focused on across the UK.
3. Based on evidence and research, a number of priority skills themes have been identified in the specific Skills Strategy for Buckinghamshire. These are:
 - a. Developing our future workforce - improve work preparedness of our young people and ensure they are able to make informed career choices
 - b. Develop a robust supply of skilled ambitious talent for our priority growth sectors and enterprise zones – **creative industries, digital industries, high performance engineering, life sciences, food and drink manufacture, space industries.**
 - c. Address widening skills gaps by supporting lifelong learning
 - d. Actively support skills development and recruitment in the **health and social care, construction, tourism, service and public sector.**
4. In delivering the Skills Strategy for Buckinghamshire by 2020 we would expect to see:
 - Increased and enhanced understanding of employers skills needs.
 - The development of our future workforce resulting in a significant decrease in the number of employers reporting a lack of basic skills and work preparedness skills amongst young people.
 - An increase in the delivering of impartial advice, guidance and careers education for young people.
 - An increase in the growth of high value jobs across the county.
 - A growth in apprenticeships at all levels.
 - An established culture of lifelong learning through a growth in workplace learning and adult learning across the county.

- Reduced skills shortage in health and social care, construction, tourism, services and the public sector.

B. Other options available, and their pros and cons

Other options considered prior to making this recommendation were:

- For the County Council to develop its own Skills Strategy
- For the County Council to continue without a Skills Strategy

Both these options were rejected as they failed to demonstrate value for money and to capitalise on the benefits of partnership working on this agenda.

C. Resource implications

The Skills Strategy will be delivered through existing resources. The focus provided by the Skills Strategy will enable existing resources to be used even more effectively thus providing greater value for money.

D. Value for Money (VfM) Self Assessment

Evidence suggests that areas that adopt formal skills strategies have a greater impact on the supply of skills than those who don't have such a strategy. Benchmarking is difficult to use in this area as the needs of each place differ depending on a range of economic, demographic and other factors. However, very clear impact assessment criteria have been set in the strategy and these will be closely monitored to demonstrate value for money.

E. Legal implications

None

F. Property implications

None

G. Other implications/issues

The proposed Skills Strategy is a joint document with the BTVLEP. It is proposed that it be used for wider consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.

H. Feedback from consultation, Local Area Forums and Local Member views

The Skills Strategy is a county wide plan, therefore local Member consultation is not applicable

I. Communication issues

Consultation will take place with a wide range of stakeholders, including other public services and businesses, through the BTVLEP Skills and Employability Board.

J. Progress Monitoring

Progress on implementation of the Strategy will be monitored via the BTVLEP Skills and Employability Board and regular reports will also be made to the County Council via the relevant Cabinet Members.

K. Review

The Strategy will be reviewed after three years.

Background Papers

None

Your questions and views

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.

If you have any views on this paper that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Member Services Team by 5.00pm on Friday 22 September 2017. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 382343), or e-mail to democracy@buckscc.gov.uk