

4. Business-Education Workshop and OEBP Update

VG and KS are in the process of organising the workshop to link businesses and the education sector together. The event is being planned for April although no date has been set. VG will circulate possible dates for the workshop to get as many of the SIG members present. The objective of the event is to identify how businesses and schools can work more effectively together to help develop the human resources of the future.

Action: VG and KS to continue working on the arrangements for the business-education workshop.

VG also provided a written update on the workshop and on the Oxfordshire Education Business Partnership (circulated with the minutes).

5. LAA2 Update

Several LAA proposals around skills are being developed. Once they have been submitted, DW agreed to translate the forms into a more suitable language and circulate to the group.

Action: DW to draft and circulate summary of each LAA proposal tackling skills.

6. Learning and Skills Partnership Update

FN is meeting with Keith Mitchell to discuss the Learning and Skills Partnership. There is a general enthusiasm about initiating a partnership covering the lifelong learning agenda, but the OEP is primarily concerned with workforce skills, which, currently falls under the remit of several organisations but that has no strategic leadership.

SEEDA are also proposing to introduce Employment Skills Boards, which would be based on the Local Skills for Productivity Alliance but with a wider remit. The proposal is for a MKOB Board, but FN, KS and Keith Mitchell have written to John Parsonage of SEEDA to contest this, and to communicate support for an Oxfordshire Board.

7. Update on retail skills feasibility study

The specification for the feasibility study on retail skills has been drafted and the project is being incorporated into the LAA through the Area Programme.

8. Promoting Train to Gain and other learning

Train to Gain provides employers with a free Training Needs Analysis and impartial advice on how to improve staff skills. Funding is also often provided to help pay for training. There has been poor take up of the services, despite a large marketing campaign, possibly due to a lack of local engagement.

BJ noted that he had a Train to Gain assessment done on his business and is happy to share the report produced.

Action: BJ to circulate Train to Gain assessment report.

Skills South East is responsible for providing the brokerage service for Train to Gain (see link for more information -

http://www.seeda.co.uk/Work_in_the_Region/Learning_&_Skills/Skills_for_Productivity/docs/RSPANewsletter.doc). However, from March 09, the service will be provided by local Business Links. KS agreed to make contact with the local Skills SE representative and invite them to the next SIG meeting.

Action: KS to invite local Skills SE representative to next meeting.

JK met with Bob Walding, Area Director for the Thames Valley region (Oxon, Bucks, Berkshire and Milton Keynes). FN will also be meeting with Bob on 25 January to discuss how OEP and LSC can work more closely together. JK informed the group that Oxfordshire receives the most amount of funding across the region due to a larger need. There is also a culture within the LSC to not invest in promotion, including various initiatives. Overall, there is a general lack of knowledge of businesses and employers by colleges and training providers and vice versa.

JK also noted that one of the IoD members that specialises in marketing (Nina Hutchins from chase Marketing) is willing to provide some free time to the OEP to help raise the profile of her company.

Action: EMc to meet with Nina Hutchins to identify where her services could support the work of OEP.

BMc advised that there is a small pot of LSC funding that could be used to promote Train to Gain locally.

Action: BMc to send information re. LSC funding to promote Train to Gain to JM.

9. AOB

- KS suggested that Liz Gifford, Manager of the Local Skills for Productivity Alliance covering Milton Keynes Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

Action: JM to invite Liz Gifford to next SIG meeting.

- The link with Job Centre+ should be explored as they are an untapped resource locally.
- The Bicester Chamber will be running an event on 24th January with the Cabinet Member for school improvement, Michael Wayne, as the guest speaker.
- The annual 'Going For It' careers event is being held at Cooper School on 15th February and BJ is looking for businesses to get involved. The Oxford Trust, the Centres of Vocational Excellences and the Industrial Trust could also be approached.

Action: BJ to circulate information about Bicester Chamber event and 'Going For IT'.

- A Retail Summer School event is being held at the Saïd Business School in March and although the cost is expensive, KS is trying to get permission to attend as an observer.
- The MKOB LSPA is holding an event on 19th March and JM would like support in designing and promoting the event.

Action: JM to circulate details about MKOB LSPA event.

10. Dates of next meetings (all at Unipart)

- Thursday 28 February 8-10
- Monday 7 April - 8-10
- Monday 19 May - 8-10
- Monday 7 July - 8-10

11. Action Points

- i. JM and JH to organise pre-meeting with Jeff Hayward.
- ii. All to circulate 2 questions to business networks as appropriate.
- iii. VG and KS to continue working on the arrangements for the business-education workshop.
- iv. DW to draft and circulate summary of each LAA proposal tackling skills.
- v. BJ to circulate Train to Gain assessment report.
- vi. KS to invite local Skills SE representative to next meeting.
- vii. EMc to meet with Nina Hutchins to identify where her services could support the work of OEP.
- viii. BMC to send information re. LSC funding to promote Train to Gain to JM.
- ix. JM to invite Liz Gifford to next SIG meeting.
- x. BJ to circulate information about Bicester Chamber event and 'Going For IT'.
- xi. JM to circulate details about MKOB LSPA event.

Replies of Banbury Chamber Member Companies to 2 Questions

(Reply time: December 2007 - 4th January 2008.)

Question 1: "What is the ONE thing we employers can do to help education in the Banbury area improve?"

- Employers should take every opportunity for liaison with teachers / pupils through work experience, Young Enterprise etc.
- Employers should provide help with more availability and structure of placement opportunities for students.
- Employers can offer to discuss with educationalists their (employers') requirements and (guide educationalists) how to help.
- Employers should make available any documentation and / or incidents of new and unusual difficulties encountered during a financial year so as to help schools keep up to date with current business trends locally and more broadly.
- Employers can help to work more closely with schools, especially in the essential work of preparing students in their final year for the world of work.
- Employers should increase their focus on and interact more with schools and students to increase awareness of the world of commerce.

Question 2: "What is the ONE thing education can do to help employers in the Banbury area improve their businesses?"

- Education should take more trouble to understand employers' skill needs.
- Education should improve pupils' grasp of the "3 R's" in particular through better scrutiny of the cost-effectiveness of budgets for this purpose at primary level.
- Education should learn to better accept help and constructive criticism from employers regarding the skills and knowledge required for the world of work.
- Schools should find and incorporate a system of collecting and evaluating data from companies in relation to their curricula.
- Schools should establish workshops on specific as well as generic skills invite employers in to lead the workshops.
- Education should work to facilitate the above by giving more time and access to companies.