

SKILLS Sub-Group

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Tasked with – working up proposals for how skills shortfalls should be addressed in the economic strategy and the link between roles of education and business further enhanced.

Key Discussion Points (1)

Need

- Recognition that **without the right capacity and skills in the workforce, growth may be limited and the benefits of growth not retained locally** as local supply chains, businesses and local people cannot gain access to the opportunities that developments, inward investment and wider growth can bring.

Opportunities

- There is opportunity to **use the large infrastructure developments as a catalyst to increase/accelerate the development of our workforce** and gain competencies and capabilities that can lead to wider growth.
- Opportunity through the Economic Strategy to **highlight to national Government how significant investment in skills will be to enable Suffolk to contribute to the national agenda** and ensure that growth is welcomed in Suffolk.
- if Suffolk does well it has a positive impact on the surrounding counties and the region which in turn **brings more inward investment**

Key Discussion Points (2)

Current Labour Market

- **Higher number of unemployed and those economically inactive but looking for work than in recent previous years (around 13,000 and 18,000 respectively)** so important to find the means to tap into the potential that already exists in the working age population as well as by training new entrants and encouraging inward migration where needed.
- Some relatively **high levels of vacancies/job postings and only likely to see increased demand over next 5-10 years** with high levels of infrastructure development and inward investment (e.g SZC and FPE)

Barriers

- **Limited adult skills funding to support the training of those already in the workforce.** National investment in adult skills has reduced over recent years and allocations to Suffolk are not based on need and therefore no consideration of increased training needs of developments (based on historical allocations). Current ESFA funding does not have a mechanism to easily move funds between providers who are under-performing to those who need more to do more. The money simply goes back to Treasury and is lost.
- Some good examples and ways of working in Suffolk that bring employers and education together to identify and respond to the skills needs of the county (e.g. sector skills groups, curriculum development forums) but this only the case for a small proportion of Suffolk businesses. **Education unable to supply what is required without engagement from employers.**
 - Smaller SMEs most unlikely to be engaging – unsure of where to start
 - Some SMEs only engaging for little impact – i.e. 1-2 apprenticeships every 2-3 years
 - With no investment or involvement in training, some businesses reliant on recruiting ‘ready-made’

Initial Proposals

- Ensure business voice (via Business Board) is represented within the development and delivery of current and ongoing work (e.g. Skills Bootcamps, Devolution, LSIP and Careers Hub) – see Bootcamp Survey circulated separately.
- Develop some **consistent messaging** that the education and skills system (Colleges, University, Other Providers) is **open to work with all businesses**.
 - To highlight how the system works, encourage and promote the forming of direct connections to our institutions and provide examples of the added value of doing so (for businesses of different sizes and of different types of provision).



Promote and Inform

Take action to enhance the messaging being received by the Suffolk business community to build up greater knowledge and confidence within businesses as to how, why and when to engage with the skills system



Simplify, Centralise and Automate

Enhance the means by which employers find information and navigate through the skills offer in the county



Target/Focused Action

Identify specific sectors / business clusters with high skills shortfalls and limited employer involvement for more targeted/focused action

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Promote and Inform

SUFFOLK
ECONOMY

