

**Economic and Skills Development Partnership**  
**Tuesday, 26 January 2021**  
**9.00 - 10.35 am**  
**Online Only - Microsoft Teams**



**Present:** Bob Collis, Chair of the ESDP  
 Councillor Bob Wade, Small Business Champion  
 Simon Cridland, Bracknell Forest Council  
 Simon Fryer, Fryer Commercial  
 Stuart Jefferies, Bracknell Forest Council  
 Nick Kirby, Pegasus  
 Nancy Lalor, Learning to Work  
 Chris Mansfield, Bracknell Forest Council  
 Kashif Nawaz, Bracknell Forest Council  
 Natasha Sedgwick, Thames Valley Berkshire Business Hub  
 Peter Smith, Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce

**In attendance:** Abi Hawkins, Activate Learning  
 Susan Beasley, Job Centre Plus  
 Craig Smith, Activate Learning  
 Dawn Thompson, ECITB  
 Ian Wakeling, CEG  
 Lynda Perry, Mckay Securities  
 Malcolm Tullett, Risk and Safety Plus  
 Councillor Mary Temperton  
 Michelle Forster  
 Teresa Morton, DWP  
 Nikki Burns, FSB Thames Valley  
 Rebecca Iley, Activate Learning  
 Richard Morgan, Mckay Securities  
 Sean Griffin, Bracknell BID  
 Councillor Tricia Brown

**Action Points**

Minute	Item
33	<p><b>Welcome and Autumn event summary</b></p> <p>The ESDP had held its Autumn event in October 2020 for 45 delegates and had presentations from Councillor Marc Brunel-Walker and Andrew Hunter of Bracknell Forest Council, Paul Britton of Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce, Mark Yeadon of Public Perspectives and James Sunderland MP.</p>
34	<p><b>Action Points from Last Meeting</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2020 were approved as a correct record.</p> <p>It was noted that Sean Griffin had started as the new BID manager in November 2020, and Sean agreed to provide an update on the BID at a future ESDP meeting.</p>

	<p>Chris Mansfield updated partners that just under £13m in COVID business grants had been allocated in Bracknell Forest up to last week, and the process continues</p>
35	<p><b>Kickstart Scheme: Activate Learning</b></p> <p>Rebecca Iley, Head of Operations at Activate Learning presented on the Government's Kickstart scheme.</p> <p>Kickstart had been launched by the Government to support young people aged 16-24 who were unemployed due to the pandemic to prevent long term unemployment. The scheme gave 6-month placements in businesses, and the Government would pay for 25 hours per week at the national minimum wage. Kickstart placements had to be over and above the business's existing workforce, and businesses could choose to supplement the government funding by paying additional wages to attract higher level candidates.</p> <p>Each individual placement was allocated £1500 to support the individual's development while on the programme, to help their employment prospects after the scheme finished.</p> <p>The Kickstart scheme was due to run through 2021, and December 2021 was the last possible start date for a placement.</p> <p>As the scheme had originally required organisations to have 30 available placements to qualify for Kickstart, colleges such as Activate Learning had operated as 'gateways' between Kickstart and individual businesses. Although this was no longer an eligibility requirement, Rebecca explained why using Activate Learning would still benefit businesses and their placements.</p> <p>For placements through Activate Learning, the college claimed £750 of the £1500 grant to provide weekly skills and development training on subjects such as employability, customer services and resilience to give the individual confidence in finding future work. All training was currently being provided virtually, and Rebecca commented that Active Learning were looking to make training available to Kickstart employees outside of the gateway.</p> <p>A job coach had been recruited through Activate Learning to support the placements, by holding fortnightly meetings with each employee to support them in creating work portfolios and gathering references.</p> <p>It was noted that there were currently 102 placements through the Activate Learning gateway on behalf of 20 employers. The applications were currently paused for two weeks while the Department of Work and Pensions caught up with applications. Businesses were encouraged to apply as soon as possible if they were considering a Kickstart placement, as the process could take a long time.</p> <p>In response to questions, the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kickstart employees through Activate Learning would spend four days on their work placement and one day on training.</li> <li>• Abi Hawkins introduced herself as the contact for Kickstart placements through Activate Learning</li> <li>• Kickstart placements had to be advertised through work coaches at Job</li> </ul>

	<p>Centre Plus', and applicants would have to be claiming Universal Credit in order to be eligible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The interview process would be held virtually and would be supplemented by a recorded video submitted from the applicant.</li> <li>• Employers were able to claim the whole £1500, however this would be audited to ensure the full cost was used for the employee's benefit.</li> <li>• It was possible to transition placements into apprenticeships if the placement was going well at the end of the 6-month period.</li> </ul> <p>Rebecca and Abi invited any contacts or questions from businesses to be sent to the team email account: <a href="mailto:Kickstart@activatelearning.ac.uk">Kickstart@activatelearning.ac.uk</a></p>
36	<p><b>The impact of the pandemic on the commercial property market</b></p> <p>Richard Morgan, Asset Manager at Mckay Securities, presented on the South East office and industrial markets post-COVID.</p> <p>Mckay Securities had 35 assets around the South East and London. Richard noted that while the market had been very difficult for retail and leisure businesses, industrial premises had been very busy.</p> <p>Richard commented on the lower transactional volumes during the pandemic, and it was hoped that this would increase in line with the vaccine roll out and clarity over Brexit.</p> <p>In regards to the change on culture around the use of offices, Richard commented that he felt that professionals would always use an office space although the way they use it may change. It was noted that Mckay Securities' office in Bracknell had a front door for each business, wide corridors to allow for social distancing and a centre manager to oversee any issues.</p> <p>In summary, Richard predicted that the demand for office space would steadily increase with an increasing focus on quality, and the demand in the logistic and industrial markets would continue to increase.</p> <p>In response to questions, the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There had not been any providers offering 5G in the BID area yet.</li> <li>• Partners agreed that it was likely that businesses would start to use their buildings in different ways, and it was anticipated that with fewer employees in the building and an increase in home working, there would be less pressure on parking.</li> <li>• It was noted that data centre operators were now competing with the wider logistics market to secure space with sufficient connectivity and cooling facilities.</li> <li>• Richard Morgan and Simon Fryer both requested to connect with Berkshire Growth Hub to discuss promotion of office space through their website.</li> </ul>
37	<p><b>ESDP Action Plan 2020-2022</b></p> <p>Bob Collis presented the ESDP 2-Year Action Plan which had been extended to next April. The overarching objectives of the Plan were to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a co-ordinated business voice</li> <li>• Develop support programmes and initiatives</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represent the local business community</li> <li>• Support Bracknell Forest businesses and the Local Authority</li> <li>• Provide advice and support for the BID</li> <li>• Develop strong working relationships</li> </ul> <p>Partnership members discussed the Action Plan as it stood, and arising from discussion the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council was currently in discussion with an electric vehicle charging provider who would provide infrastructure for electric vehicle charging once an agreement was reached. The same provider was also working in a neighbouring authority. It was noted that the Local Authority did not receive any revenue from electric vehicle charging points, and it was important for businesses to support any charging points on their premises.</li> <li>• Activate Learning provided a Skill Support for the Workforce training programme which supported employed people in the workforce.</li> <li>• Businesses were encouraged to contact Berkshire Growth Hub for any support on business related matters, including Brexit support.</li> <li>• It was noted that the Partnership subgroups would be re-established in the coming weeks to meet online.</li> </ul>
38	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>Bob agreed to invited James Sunderland MP to a future meeting to engage with Bracknell businesses.</p>
39	<p><b>Dates of Future Meetings</b></p> <p>20 April 2021 20 July 2021 19 October 2021</p>