

MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE
21 JULY 2015
POST -16 OPTIONS FOR CONTINUED LEARNING IN MILTON KEYNES
REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are in paragraph 22

INTRODUCTION

1 A meeting of the Select Committee was held on Tuesday 21 July 2015 to discuss the options available to young people in Milton Keynes who wished to continue their learning beyond the age of 16 through apprenticeships, or into professional areas related to teaching and medicine. Those present were joined by a representative of the Youth Cabinet for the discussion.

2 The Committee heard from Lindsey Styles, Director of the Chief Executive's Office at Milton Keynes College, Professor Mary Malcolm and Dr Paul Sant, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Associate Dean (UCMK) respectively of the University of Bedfordshire, and Mr Andy Squires Director of the Denbigh Teaching School Alliance. Representatives of the University Hospital Initiative were unable to attend but sent a presentation. The specific questions speakers were asked to address were as follows:

1. How can we best guide local pupil choices at age 16 so that they don't enter courses that might not be of real value - for example, are there higher level technician qualifications that may be a better career investment than a generalist university course?
2. How can we make Milton Keynes more attractive to people from elsewhere looking for courses of study?
3. What can we do to improve MK's acute shortage of teachers and medical practitioners (especially GPs) in the knowledge that locally trained people are more likely to seek their first training contracts / jobs in the area where they have trained?
4. What are your longer term development plans in Milton Keynes?
5. Is there anything that speakers feel the Council can do - or stop doing - that will help your current activities or forward planning?

MILTON KEYNES COLLEGE

3 Established in 1984, the College – based in Bletchley, Leadenhall and Central Milton Keynes - provides education to learners at all levels except postgraduate. The curriculum comprises courses for 14 to 16 year olds and a broad range of qualifications with over 3,000 16 to 18 year old full-time students studying A-Levels, vocational courses and apprenticeships. In the current year a further 20,000 students are attending further and higher education courses for professional and development training, or on offender learning courses. In addition to campus-based learning, there are Skills for Life qualifications and employability programmes providing for 3,000 students in local community learning centres. With more than 1,100 members of staff, the College is also one of the largest employers in Milton Keynes.

4 A level courses are offered in the following pathways: Legal, Social Sciences, Criminology, Business, and the Literary Professions. Alternative access courses to Higher Education are offered in Business Studies, Health Sciences, Social Sciences and Teacher Education. Apprenticeship programmes (*see also paragraph 6 below*) are available in Accounting, Barbering, Business & Administration, Trowel Occupations, Wood Occupations, Children & Young People, Customer Service, Electrical Installation, Engineering Industries, Health & Social Care, Hospitality & Catering, Logistics, Software Web & Telecoms, Teaching & Learning, Team Leading & Management, Vehicle Maintenance & Repair and Warehousing & Storage.

5 At the higher education level the College offers a foundation degree in Psychology & Criminal Behaviour which is validated by the University of Bedfordshire; HNDs in Computing & Systems Development, Electrical & Electronic Engineering, Graphic Design, Mechanical Engineering, Photography, Public Services and Sport; and HNCs in Computing & Systems Development, Electrical & Electronic Engineering, and Mechanical Engineering. A 2 year part-time course leading to a PGCE – also validated by Bedfordshire - provides core professional training in teaching for students who would like to work in the area of Life Long Learning.

6 The College was aware of the results from the 2014 Milton Keynes Business Survey which highlighted a number of skills shortages within the borough, as follows:

- 20% of firms reported difficulties filling vacancies in associate professional and technical occupations and 19% in skilled trades occupations.
- 32% reported that the main cause of hard to fill vacancies was the low number of applicants with the required specific skills.
- 21% pointed to a general lack of skills in the available workforce and 20% to the poor quality of applicants generally.
- 23% of all organisations have skills gaps in their existing workforce rising to 34% in the construction sector.

- While 75% of organisations were aware of the government sponsored apprenticeship programme only 12 % currently employed apprenticeships (rising to 39% among firms with over 50 employees) although 26 % would consider doing so
- 35% of those currently employing, or prepared to consider employing, apprentices saw it as an opportunity to train an individual to their firms' specific needs.
- conversely 21% of those not employing apprentices, and / or not prepared to consider doing so, believed that they would not have the necessary skills or could not find suitable candidates.

7 For reasons such as these the College's apprenticeship programmes are deliberately tailored to meet an individual employer's specific needs. This is to ensure that apprentices gain the right skills to meet the requirements of an organisation and to offer a solution to succession planning, company growth and future skills development. Connecting education and industry in this way is an essential part of the College's commitment to develop employability skills for all its students. It aims to engage with businesses much earlier, so they can meet future employees as soon as they start their studies and take a leading role in helping to provide them with the skills that they will need.

UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE (UCMK)

8 The University of Bedfordshire has over 24,000 students attending campuses in Bedford, Luton, Aylesbury and Milton Keynes (UCMK based in Saxon Court). It has a highly successful international recruitment programme and excellent graduate employment rates. 20,000 days per year of formal engagement are scheduled with local employers and organisations across its four campuses. Bedfordshire offers foundation, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees through full time, part time and distance learning. At UCMK in particular it offers foundation degrees in Business Management, Early Years Studies, Graphic Design and Sport Science. Undergraduate degrees are offered in Applied Early Years Studies, Applied Education Studies, Computer Systems Engineering, Data Science, Electronic Engineering, Telecommunications & Network Engineering and Psychology & Criminal Behaviour. Masters' degrees are available in Electronic Engineering, Embedded Systems Engineering, Logistics & Supply Chain Management and Telecommunications Management.

9 Bedfordshire also offers a number of routes into teaching including both conventional BA and PGCE courses, School Direct (with 8 secondary and 2 primary schools (but none in Milton Keynes) and an Assessment Only (AO) route providing a pathway for those who have considerable experience working in schools and/or educational settings, but who do not possess Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Similarly the University offers pre-registration courses in Nursing and Midwifery and a number of post-registration healthcare courses.

10 Dr Paul Sant has been seconded from the University's Institute of Research into Applicable Computing to run UCMK on a day to day basis. There he is particularly concerned with MK:Smart, where he is the Activity Leader for Enterprise. Additionally UCMK hosts the MK Data Hub, the key component that will curate all data in MK:Smart.

11 The most recent graduate market statistics for England (January – March 2015) show that the employment rate for working age graduates (87.5%) is the highest since the last quarter of 2007. Non-graduate employment rates have also almost recovered to pre-recession rates. Conversely postgraduate employment rates – although improving – have recovered less well. Graduate earnings have decreased from *circa* 55% to 45% higher than non-graduate earnings between 2006 and 2015. The postgraduate earnings premium over graduate has remained stable over the same period at around 20%.

12 UCMK and Bedfordshire are particularly attuned to the balance between national graduate needs and individual graduate aspirations. As at 2010 (the most recent data) the percentage of graduates within occupations with the largest projected share of new jobs in the UK economy was – up to 2020:

- Managers and senior officials 46%
- Professional occupations 81%
- Associate professional and technical 54%
- Caring, leisure and other services 20%

DENBIGH TEACHING SCHOOL ALLIANCE

13 The Denbigh Teaching School Alliance was formed in 2011 as part of the first wave of National Teaching Schools. The Alliance provides high quality staff development and school support across all subject areas and at every level of experience, from support staff to Initial Teacher Training, through to Senior Leadership Level. In September 2014 the Enigma Maths Hub was launched to develop teaching and learning in maths across both Milton Keynes and the wider region. To improve teacher training provision within Milton Keynes, the Tommy Flowers SCITT (School-centred initial teacher training) has been developed and will accept its first cohort of trainees in September 2015.

14 Although the Government insists that there is not a teacher recruitment crisis the evidence suggests otherwise. Over the next 5 years we will need to teach an additional 500,000 students requiring an additional 25,000 teachers. But since 2011 undergraduate applications have dropped by over 14,000 and in the last year alone 50,000 teachers left the profession. Students finish their degrees in up to £60,000 of debt for a starting salary of just over £22,000.

15 There are well-evidenced difficulties in recruiting teachers in Milton Keynes both as NQTs and at more senior levels. Possible explanations include:

- the city's extremely rapid growth

- its reputation – the “Milton Keynes” factor
- house prices
- no credible university heritage
- piecemeal teacher training
- lack of student accommodation
- less than auspicious historic school and local authority reputations
- students from Milton Keynes who study elsewhere and stay there

16 The city and borough need both to retain their own students here, and to attract others from elsewhere who, having trained here, will stay put. Actual and potential selling points include:

- a vibrant lifestyle viz one of the largest shopping centres in Europe, Championship football, the Theatre, 4,500 acres of parkland, proximity to London
- financial incentives to train and teach in Milton Keynes including bursaries and/or “forgiveness” of student debt
- financial support for continued professional development including masters’ degrees
- reduced cost housing
- a borough-wide free travel and leisure card

MILTON KEYNES UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

17 Milton Keynes Hospital, with the University of Buckingham, opened the United Kingdom’s first independent Medical University in January of this year offering MB and ChB degrees of 4.5 years’ duration following a University of Leicester curriculum. There are currently 68 students divided equally between the UK and overseas, all of whom have completed secondary education to an equivalent or better grade of entry to United Kingdom medical schools. The Hospital hopes to increase its undergraduate intake to 100 students by 2018. It will become the main training hospital, supported by GP practices, for Bedford, Stoke Mandeville and St Andrew’s Psychiatric Hospital in Northampton. All of the recruitment, curriculum & training and student welfare processes of the course are subject to the approval of the General Medical Council.

18 2,957 doctors were hired by the NHS from overseas in 2014 in a growing recruitment crisis. Milton Keynes is not immune – 21 recently recruited doctors at the Hospital include 6 from overseas. A report in April from The King’s Fund - *Workforce planning in the NHS* - argues that shortages and other critical pressures within the NHS could jeopardise plans to deliver new models of care. The report

analyses recent trends and pressures in three key areas of the NHS finding that each is under serious pressure:

- **primary care** – well-documented pressures on general practice have led to fewer training posts being filled and more GPs planning to retire early, resulting in a growing shortfall in the number of GPs
- **mental health** – the number of inpatient nurses has fallen sharply by 15 per cent over the past five years, resulting in a significant rise in the use of agency staff and a two-thirds increase in requests for temporary mental health nurses since the beginning of 2013/14
- **community nurses** – while the number of health visitors has increased by nearly a quarter over the past five years, the number of senior district nurses has fallen by 30 per cent and there are now 16 per cent fewer community matrons.

19 Aware of these pressures the Hospital will be complementing its undergraduate course with postgraduate Surgical and Medical Schools starting in 2016. The Surgical School will be run in conjunction with the University of Buckingham and the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh and comprise a 3 year course with (initially) 6 trainees. The Medical School will be set up with the University of Buckingham only and follow a curriculum mapped to the requirements of Membership of the Royal College of Physicians. A 2 year course – with 12 trainees – will lead to an MMed (Master of Medicine) degree. Together the undergraduate and postgraduate schools will support the future recruitment and retention of clinical staff and significantly increase the medical doctor presence in Milton Keynes. The Hospital will benefit from a £6 million state of the art academic facility with a non-NHS funding stream of £8 million for undergraduates and £1.5 million for postgraduates. The city will benefit from a growing corps of professional medical staff whom it is hoped – subject to government visa policy - will continue to work locally having trained here.

20 Longer term developments include the establishment with local industry of a medical science park in Buckingham and the introduction of courses for allied health professions including nursing and radiography.

POINTS RAISED IN DISCUSSION

21 The following points were made in the discussion that followed these presentations:

- 1 In the early years of Milton Keynes immediate access to a house at an affordable rent was a key incentive to come to the city.
- 2 Forgiveness of a proportion of student debt could play a similar role as is the case in – for example – the United States and Norway.
- 3 The presentations had suggested that there was a silo mentality among the participating institutions leading to a duplication of provision.
- 4 There was a concern about the standards at some institutions, and about their management.
- 5 While collaboration between education and industry appeared to be improving it was unclear why so many firms still pointed to skills shortages.
- 6 The issue of Milton Keynes uncertain reputation could not be side stepped – the forthcoming 50th anniversary celebrations and the concurrent European Capital of Culture bid would provide an opportunity for a national demonstration of resident pride in the city.
- 7 One week of work experience was too little – it needed to be longer, and better prepared.

RECOMMENDATIONS

22 The following recommendations (in bold type) are made, on which the participating institutions were consulted although it is emphasised that they bear no final responsibility for them. In agreeing them the Committee had regard to key findings from the Council's most recent refresh of its Local Economic Assessment (March 2013), that the future direction of the local economy needed to place an emphasis on knowledge based industries including high value manufacturing, and that an important task in coming years would be to sustain growth.

- 1 The Council is currently reviewing its Core Strategy and Local Plan up to 2033. These will include assumptions about the rate of future growth and the service and engineering infrastructure necessary to underpin the city's development. Future planning will have to take into account the implicit tension between providing more people for the current economy and a potential decline in workforce numbers in the light of SMART enabled future.

The Council – through the Local Economic Assessment – should publish, and regularly update, estimates of its anticipated professional and technical person power needs to 2035 based on current and prospective economic structures.

- 2 The Committee was struck by the institutionally based plans of contributors to its meeting, which might not necessarily be related to the city's need to

prepare for and to sustain future growth. Similarly many current employers are thought to have a short term approach which might not take into account the speed of technological development.

The Council should organise a biennial workshop involving industry, the public sector and educational providers to review and integrate its growth development, consequent person power needs and the plans of education and other providers to meet these needs.

- 3 The Amazing-*MK* brand has not been able to overcome a national perception, however unfair, of Milton Keynes' lack of a specific "offer" for potential new students and graduates. It assumes also people living here, whereas another option is for students and others to continue living in London while travelling 35 minutes by train to Milton Keynes.

The Council should work with all relevant bodies who seek to attract and retain students, visitors and businesses to the city with a view to building on existing initiatives such as the European Capital of Culture, as well as stimulating coordinated investment in a more charismatic and exciting vision of ourselves which takes into account the opportunities we can offer students and newly qualified graduates.

- 4 In many other cities such a vision is related to the local university *e.g.* Bristol, Leeds Sheffield *etc.* Milton Keynes has five universities working within it – Bedfordshire, Buckingham, Cranfield, Leicester and the OU – but none of its own. A key consideration is that any local university must have an established record of the highest quality.

The Council should urgently progress discussions with the University of Bedfordshire with a view to ascertaining the extent to which the University's long term commitment to Milton Keynes can be integrated with the city's future vision, having regard to how much larger Milton Keynes is going to become compared with Bedfordshire's other component campuses.

- 5 The Committee discussed incentives to attract students to Milton Keynes and to retain graduates once trained. Three were identified – purpose built student accommodation, forgiveness of student debt and easy access to first homes for young professionals and technicians.

(1) **The Council should encourage the Milton Keynes Development Board to seek developer interest in a student accommodation building to serve UCMK, College, and University Hospital trainees as well as OU residential students.**

- (2) **The Council should work with relevant public and private sector employers in areas of professional and technical staff shortage to explore the option of paying off a proportion of student debt, in exchange for a commitment to work in Milton Keynes for not less than five years in a qualifying position.**
- (3) **The Council, with other relevant public and private sector employers should negotiate with local developers to explore the option of reserving a proportion of starter homes for trained staff in areas of professional and technical shortage where it would lend the necessary deposit over a five year period and guarantee a mortgage for the same amount, in exchange for a commitment to work in Milton Keynes for not less than five years in a qualifying position.**

6 Neither Cranfield University nor the Open University were contributors to the meeting. But the Committee was aware of the long history both have in respect of Milton Keynes and their expertise in areas of interest to the city such as high precision engineering and knowledge-based industries.

The Council should built on its relationships with Cranfield and the OU and seek to involve them as fully as possible in the city's economic development and the physical and human infrastructure that is required to support it.

END