

£1m scheme to boost economy

A NUMBER of new schemes are being developed to provide to support for North Hampshire businesses following a financial boost from the Government.

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council has been allocated £1m from the Shared Prosperity Fund.

As part of the scheme, the Government has identified three main priorities – communities and place, supporting local business and people and skills.

The council's cabinet has agreed an outline plan for a number of new initiatives over the next three years and this will now be reviewed by the Government before the funding is released.

As part of plans to boost economic recovery in the borough and building on a scheme launched in February 2022, new grants would encourage businesses to recruit more apprentices.

This will support skills development and help businesses to find new employees.

To support businesses' recovery from the pandemic and boost local skills, a scheme is planned to provide funding for small and medium-sized businesses to invest in workforce development by providing training to existing and new employees.

There will also be incentives for businesses to provide work experience for residents who have been unemployed for a period of time.

Get a Great Start at work

How West Berkshire Training Consortium can improve your employment opportunities

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THERE are many directions you can take in the world of work but the West Berkshire Training Consortium (WBTC) seeks to make the process easier.

Opportunities go beyond apprenticeships with a "variety of programmes" catered to a "wide range of people", whether it be through work experience and confidence building for learners or "bespoke" training for businesses.

Among its programmes it runs mathematics and English for those aged 19 and over, 'Multiply' to enhance confidence in maths and a successful 'Great Start' programme, which has been operating since 2013, offering individuals courses, placements and learning experiences.

Interim executive director Claire Richards said: "The beauty of the programme is about building employability and work experience skills in different areas.

"It is aimed at young people who do not know what they want to do.

"They are not ready for an apprenticeship as they just don't know what sector they want to work in."

As a result of the 'Great Start' programme, learners have said that they've "gained more confidence, have developed conversations skills, have achieved English and maths which they have struggled with previously".

These learners have either gained employment, an apprenticeship or have a "better understanding of what they need to do and where they need to go".

Learners can also undertake traineeships within 'Great Start'. This is for those individuals who have their maths and English qualifications but need "employability and work experience" to enable them to progress on to employment or an apprenticeship.

Learners can gain also an 'employability qualification' which supports them with topics such as CV writing, interviews, presentation skills and teamwork.

Its work experience opportunities aim to give learners an insight into the "world of work" in sectors that interest them in a bid to allow them to make informed



WBTC interim executive director Claire Richards

decisions about their future pathway.

The main aim for WBTC is employability and it offers maths and English 'functional skills' for those who did not get their desired grades in school.

Claire said: "The staff in the 'Great Start' team do an amazing job, they really do care about the learners and give so much support."

"The difference they make to learners and their

achievements is second to none, with some learners achieving things they thought were impossible."

WBTC also offers maths and English for those who are 19+ and do not have a maths or English qualification. This can be fully funded and is delivered remotely by a tutor at a variety of times.

Claire said: "Maths and English can be a real stopping point for people's progression.

"It's more than often down to confidence, but with our support we have had many great achievements."

Some people may get a promotion because of their achievements, some people can apply for different jobs and some people consider other education opportunities as a result of achieving which they didn't think was possible such as progression onto degrees.

She continued: "We get lots of lovely feedback from learners who are just so happy at achieving something which may have been a barrier in life."

Among the feedback WBTC received, learners said: "I'm so happy with this and you don't understand how much it means to me.

"I cannot thank you enough

for what you've done for me and how much you've helped my life get better. Thank you so much".

WBTC is now involved in the 'Multiply' programme which looks specifically at building confidence in maths.

It says this is an option for those who don't have a level 2 qualification in the subject and don't feel confident in completing one.

The aim is to build confidence and enable learners to improve their ability and understand maths for daily life, home and work uses.

Claire continued: "This can be used as the first steps to obtaining a qualification, for upskilling, supporting family members, managing budgets or improving employment opportunities, to name a few of the benefits."

WBTC plans to offer sessions to employers and run 'drop-in' sessions for those interested.

WBTC also offers 'bespoke training' to meet the needs of businesses and has delivered courses in areas such as customer service and leadership.

For more information on any training opportunities at WBTC, email rachel@wbtc-uk.com or call (01635) 35975.

Steve is hospitals finance chief

HAMPSHIRE Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (HHFT) has appointed Steve West as its chief financial officer.

The appointment comes after an extensive and rigorous recruitment process which focused on professional excellence and compatibility with the trust's values of compassion, accountability, respect and encouragement – all within a context of an inclusive workplace.

On making the appointment, HHFT chief executive Alex Whitfield said: "Steve was an outstanding candidate in a highly competitive field.

"I have no doubt that his diverse and broad range of experience, spanning multiple sectors and geographies, will be invaluable to HHFT in the coming years.

"He joins the trust at an exciting and challenging time, as we look to take advantage of the many opportunities created by recent advancements in technology and clinical practice, whilst navigating a challenging financial environment in which difficult choices are unavoidable.

"I am thrilled to have someone of Steve's calibre joining our team and am very much looking forward to working with him as we look to turn our seven-year strategy into a reality."

Mr West said: "Having been born and raised in the area – and a Hampshire resident for my entire adult life – I am very proud to be joining HHFT at such an important time.

"I know that the NHS is facing an incredible financial



Steve West

challenge, with money certain to be tight in the coming years.

"However, it is a challenge I am looking forward to tackling.

"My goal as incoming CFO is to support the HHFT management team as they look to deliver its seven-year strategy and place the trust on a sustainable financial footing.

"I cannot wait to get started."

Mr West joins HHFT after spending more than a decade

with Babcock International Group. Most recently he supported its land defence division as finance director – a role that includes supporting training, fleet management and equipment maintenance for the British Army.

Prior to this, he qualified as an accountant at KPMG, having graduated from the University of Durham.

Married with a three-year-old son, he is also a qualified coach from Henley Business School.

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