



STROUD DISTRICT LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

<http://lsp.stroud.gov.uk>

Meeting held on Friday 10th September 2021
Online meeting

Theme for this meeting: Employment

Present:

Carole Stubbs (Chair)	Job Centre Plus, Avon, Somerset and Gloucestershire District	Kathy O'Leary	Chief Executive, Stroud District Council
Russell Warner (Vice Chair)	Gloucestershire Area Lead, Federation of Small Businesses	Kelly Richardson	Marketing and Fundraising Manager, Lilian Faithfull Care
Anna Herbert	Chief Executive Officer, OPENhouse	Max Comfort	Director, Stroud Commonwealth
Cllr Catherine Braun	Deputy Leader of Council	Simon Bernstein	Chief Executive, Longfield
Chris Pockett	Head of Communications, Renishaw	Siobhan Baillie	MP for Stroud
Elizabeth Hall	CE, Citizens Advice Stroud & Cotswolds	Cllr Stephen Davies	Leader of the Opposition, Stroud District Council and Gloucestershire
Emily Gravestock	Head of Applications Strategy, UK Space Agency	Sue Bailey	Sue Bailey Consulting
Geoffrey Beckerleg	Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Stroud	Symon Ackroyd	Mayor of Dursley
Helen Edwards	NHS Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group	Tom Wickham- Bassett	SDYC Principal Member for Local Democracy

Apologies and absent:

Alison Robinson	Chief Officer, GAPTC	Kevin Hamblin	Group Chief Executive Principal, South Gloucestershire and Stroud College (SGS)
Alison Truphet	Executive Director, New Ventures Trust	Lily Haines	SDYC Chair
Ben Falconer	Communications Manager, SDC	Mark McShane	Head Teacher, Stroud High School
Ben Stone	SDYC Leader	Martin Hughes	CEO, Lilian Faithfull Care
Beth Whittaker	Stroud Business Women's Network	Mary Hutton	Accountable Officer, NHS Glos Clinical Learning Group

David Nairn	Director, Fluid Transfer	Paul Cruise	Gloucestershire Constabulary, Stroud Inspector
David Owen	CE, Gfirst Local Enterprise partnership	Rachel Brain	2030 Strategy Manager, Stroud District Council
David Tate	Director, Silverwood UK	Rob Fountain	CEO, Age UK Gloucestershire
Cllr Doina Cornell	Leader of Council	Sarah Scott	Commissioning Director Adults, Gloucestershire County Council
Dr Roma Walker	Stroud League of Friends	Steve Miles	Senior Youth Officer, SDC
Dr Stuart Wilson	Head Teacher, Marling School	Tim Clapp	Local Risk Manager Stroud and the Cotswolds, Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue
Eilis Cope	Director, Cope Sales and Marketing Ltd	Will Mansell	The Grace Network
Fred Barker	Director, Transition Stroud	William Frazer	Group Secretary Gloucestershire, National Farmers' Union
Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP	MP, The Cotswolds		

Guests and Support Officers

Adele Kendall	Head of HR, Ecotricity	Sarah Turner	LSP Co-ordinator, SDC
Hannah Barton	LSP Co-ordinator, SDC	Georgia Spooner	2030 Community Action Officer, Stroud District Council

1. Welcome, introductions, apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone, a number of apologies had been received and noted. The Chair also welcomed Hannah Barton from Stroud District Council who has taken over secretariat support for the LSP and thanked Sarah Turner for her support.

The LSP agreed that they were happy for their email addresses to be shared with the group, therefore moving forwards meeting invites can be sent for LSP meetings. Previously meeting invites have not been sent as email addresses could only be blind copied to group emails.

2. Employment at Ecotricity – Adele Kendall, Head of HR (presentation circulated)

Adele gave a presentation on recruitment and employment at Ecotricity, including the successes and challenges they are facing.

Pre-pandemic, Ecotricity were an office-based organisation and they had to mobilise very quickly to provide full capacity home-working. They have now moved to a hybrid working policy, which is seen as an expectation from potential job candidates now.

Ecotricity use a variety of methods to attract talent however there is a skills shortage locally for technical roles. Typically, they compete with organisations in Bristol for workforce, however the poorer transport links in Stroud mean candidates often choose roles in Bristol. The lack of public transport in Stroud also means Ecotricity's reach for entry-level roles is small due to access to and cost of public transport.

The Kickstart Scheme has been a brilliant news story for Ecotricity with 21 candidates joining, and 5 of the current cohort being offered permanent roles.

Siobhan Baillie MP asked what policies and processes could be put in place to support young people into employment, like the Kickstart initiative, that could potentially be taken back to Ministers. It was noted that some young people are not prepared for the workplace and require employability skills.

Discussion was had regarding Ecotricity being a 'fun' employer. They offer a relaxed office environment with collaborative technology options available and internal competitions. The Christmas party is a big event and there is also an annual 'Sunstock' festival for employees and their families. There are some challenges with being 'fun' whilst working from home but other employers could consider similar initiatives to engage staff.

It was also noted that there has been a big increase in staff turnover across organisations since the pandemic, therefore staff retention must be a focus moving forwards.

3. Employment at Renishaw – Chris Pockett, Head of Communications

Chris gave a presentation on employment at Renishaw, including current employee numbers globally and in the Stroud District. They are the largest private sector employer in Gloucestershire.

There are some challenges being faced, such as recruitment during the pandemic and certain roles being in high demand. However, Renishaw have also identified some solutions to these challenges including making greater use of recruitment agencies, using novel advertising channels, and upskilling existing employees.

Discussion was had regarding whether there are any wider skills issues to get young people into employment. Chris stated that Renishaw offer apprenticeship schemes not just in engineering but also in other business areas such as IT, and there is no shortage of applicants. They are also opening an education centre at their headquarters which will enable them to increase their support for STEM education at local schools.

Transport is less of an issue for Renishaw as they are just off junction 14 of the M5, however they have a similar issue to Ecotricity in that they are often competing for workforce with employers located in Bristol, and there are concerns about capacity at junction 14 which could make travel to its sites less appealing.

4. Stroud District employment overview – Carole Stubbs, Chair and Employer Adviser for Stroud, DWP (presentation circulated)

Carole provided an overview of employment in the Stroud District, and how the DWP are working with employers including investigating funding to support the shortage of lorry drivers and through the Kickstart Scheme.

A question was asked regarding supporting care leavers to find employment, and Carole noted that often care leavers don't, or don't want, to disclose this information, and therefore can't be identified for additional support. The DWP do run specific skills courses that can support care leavers.

It was also raised that there is a skills gap between current vacancies in the district and the candidates looking for work. Carole highlighted that the JobCentre are trying several initiatives to try and get those looking for work to attend their meetings and interviews. Some people have become used to spending time at home during the pandemic, and may be hesitant for a variety of reasons that could include vulnerability and mental health.

5. Partners' Updates

OPENHouse:

- OPENHouse support vulnerable people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. They have a 10-bed unit and a non-complex mental health unit.
- They are about to lose some very experienced staff to retirement, and are struggling to recruit replacements with appropriate experience. The interest in roles and the quality of applications is low.
- These issues began pre-pandemic and there seems to be a lack of people wanting to work in social care.
- They are trying to find innovative ways to fill the vacancies, and any advice would be gratefully received.

NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG):

- The CCG work with 71 GP practices across Gloucestershire, including 17 in the Stroud District.
- Practice staff have been delivering Covid-19 vaccinations across three centres in the district.
- The uptake in the district is the highest in the region, with 84% having had their first dose. Of those, 93% have had their second dose.
- They are awaiting guidance on the booster vaccine campaign and whether the vaccine will be rolled out to healthy young people aged 12-15. If this is announced, it will be delivered in schools.
- Flu vaccines will be delivered in GP practices this year, however they are awaiting guidance on whether they can be co-administered with the Covid-19 vaccine.
- GP practices are extremely busy and there is a backlog of demand.
- The CCG will be dissolving and from 1 April 2022 they will formally be an Integrated Care System (ICS). Dame Gill Morgan has been appointed as the Chair of the One Gloucestershire ICS.

Lilian Faithfull Care:

- Recruitment has been a hot topic with the Covid-19 vaccine mandate effecting care workers. They have lots of job opportunities in Stroud and Cheltenham currently, not just as carers but also as chefs, domestics and food service assistants.
- There is a challenge with public transport to Resthaven care home in Pitchcombe, although they do offer flexible working if potential candidates need to use public transport to get there.
- Uplands Day Care is growing and there is potential to offer work experience opportunities there.
- Resthaven recently won an environmental and wildlife competition for their gardens, and they are interested at looking into ecology and environmental studies there as they have a lot of land. If anyone has any contacts regarding this get in touch.
- They are also looking for Lilian Faithfull Care to be carbon neutral, starting with Resthaven care home. They already grow their own vegetables and have solar power.

Stroud District Council:

- Cllr Catherine Braun has taken on a new role as the Deputy Leader of Council.
- The Council have been working hard to put together a new Council Plan to follow on from the Recovery Strategy, and a draft plan is being discussed with input from stakeholders. The Council Plan focuses on three main priorities: environment and climate change, community resilience and wellbeing, and economy, recovery and regeneration.
- The Council are providing continued support to businesses and have distributed £46m in grants.
- There is a healthy rate of staff turnover at the Council with some people taking retirement recently. Social media has been used to advertise vacancies and there was recent success with an open evening for vacancies on the Housing Advice team.
- There is a hybrid way of working in place for Council staff which is flexible depending on business needs.

Longfield Community Hospice Care:

- Simon Bernstein has been in post as the Chief Executive for 22 months, 18 months of which has been during the pandemic.
- Anyone with a life-limiting diagnosis can refer themselves to Longfield.
- They had to close the hospice at Minchinhampton for some time during the pandemic, however continued the at-home service and offered online courses and counselling. They also worked with The Long Table to send out care packages.
- Following a lot of engagement work with stakeholders, Longfield have developed a new strategy. As part of this the hospice will now be described as a wellbeing centre.
- They employ 140-50 staff, mostly part-time, as well as many volunteers in 20 shops around the County. They echoed the employment difficulties in the care sector due to the Covid-19 vaccine mandate, and they would be interested to look at apprenticeships and the Kickstart Scheme.

- Many of their counsellors are volunteers, however some do not wish to return in person as they are clinically vulnerable.

Georgia Spooner – SDC 2030 Community Action Officer:

- Recently joined the Council.
- Will be building on existing networks and trying to extend into areas where the Council don't currently engage, to become a carbon neutral district by 2030.

Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) Gloucestershire Area:

- The FSB surveyed its members in June/July and found that businesses are continuing to remain optimistic. However, there are concerns about finding appropriately skilled staff and rising costs.
- On 9 September the FSB South West had a regional event on the issue entitled 'What is Net Zero and why is it important to my SME business?' This featured six South West-based speakers.
- They are supporting the Bristol Distinguished Address Series (BDAS) which is a series of online talks hosted by the UWE Bristol Business School. The autumn series starts on 15 September with speakers including the MD of Pfizer UK. These are all online and can be accessed for free.

Stroud Commonwealth:

- The Exchange are still on track to expand into Thrupp.
- Asked what support there is for people who want to be self-employed, entrepreneurs, or would like to set up their own business?
- The DWP have the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) for people who are unemployed.
- The FSB can also provide help but there is a fee-based membership scheme.
- The Growth Hub at Stroud College provides free advice.

Symon Ackroyd – Mayor of Dursley:

- There are only two buses from Dursley now, therefore public transport is an issue.

Chamber of Trade:

- On 24th August 2021, Stroud Chamber of Trade launched a new platform on their website/directory aimed at jobs and recruitment: <https://www.visitstroud.uk/jobs>
- The website represents a wide variety of sectors including travel, accommodation, events and attractions, as well as retail and services, from over 300 businesses in the Stroud District. This new facility allows local businesses to post their own job adverts.
- Their members are having difficulties with recruitment and it is hoped this service will grow to help support members find staff.

Citizens Advice Stroud District:

- Elizabeth Hall joined as CEO at the end of March.
- They have been providing all advice by phone and email which has its challenges, however they are now getting back to some face-to-face work.
- Some volunteers and clients are hesitant to come back face-to-face as they are clinically vulnerable.

- Employment queries skyrocketed throughout the pandemic and there was a large increase in debt enquiries and public transport issues.
- Citizens Advice have also had challenges with employment however they are optimistic. They are also interested in the Kickstart Scheme.

SDYC:

- The Youth Council have had some changes in the leadership team. Tom Wickham-Bassett is now the Principal Member for Local Democracy.
- They have been discussing SDC's draft Council Plan and how young people can be involved.
- The results of a consultation with a community rail partnership are coming out imminently and it is hoped this will lead to improvements to the rail service in the district.
- The Youth Council have a presence at careers fairs at Stratford Park and they have also had members trained as assessors for the Stroud Employment Charter, an initiative borne out of the LSP.

Renishaw:

- Thanked the group for the opportunity to update the LSP on Renishaw's employment position. If there are any further questions, please contact Chris directly via email.
- The Renishaw Charities Committee meets every two months to assess applications for grants from local charities and community groups. The next meeting is 19 October 2021 and more information can be found at <https://www.renishaw.com/charity>

Please send any requests for future agenda items or suggestions for future meeting themes to Hannah Barton, hannahbarton@stroud.gov.uk

Future meeting dates

2021

Friday 3rd December - Venue TBC

2022

Friday 4th March

Friday 10th June

Friday 9th September

Friday 2nd December

The meetings are 9:00am for a 9:15am start, with meeting end by 11:30am.