

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE - STUDENT JOURNEY

MINUTES of a meeting of the Select Committee - Student Journey held in the Pendragon, Invicta House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 28 June 2011.

PRESENT: Mr K Smith (Chairman), Mr I S Chittenden, Mr P J Homewood, Mr R J Lees, Mr S C Manion, Mr M J Northey and Mrs C J Waters

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P Hobbs, Mr R Lavender and Mr R Manuell

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr G Romagnuolo (Policy Overview Research Officer) and Mrs C A Singh (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Interview with Richard Lavender, Young Chamber Co-ordinator, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce *(Item 2)*

1. Mr Lavender tabled a comprehensive paper, (attached as Appendix 1), with the answers to questions that were forwarded to him in preparation of the meeting.
2. The Chairman asked Mr Lavender if he would highlight some of the points in his answers which included the following:-

To what extent, in your view, do students' academic qualifications demonstrate students' employability?

- Business Studies in schools are different to aptitude required in business.
 - 70%-80% of the students were not prepared about business.
 - Often Students realised that they have the wrong qualifications to apply for the jobs they wanted
 - Need to get businesses into schools at the time the students are discussing their options
3. The Young Chambers had visited Grammar schools and primary schools to explain its role.
 4. Mr Lavender explained that he had helped to set up a company in a Grammar school. They had a Board of Directors which he sat on. When the students had a problem he was able to get a local business representative to come into the school to assist them. He gave the example of Tower School, Ashford where the students wanted to set up a shop. He invited a manager from the local outlet centre to the school, who took the students through the process of setting up the business. He then invited a representative from a local bank to them financial advice.
 5. He gave another example of Invicta Grammar School for Girls, Maidstone, who had set up a wrapping paper business but were in financial difficulties with a deal to supply Harrods under the name "Young Chamber". He advised them that they could

not use that business name unless they joined. Mr Lavender worked to get the school back into the Young Chamber through a menu of cutting their costs. This was then hands off mentoring. The students arranged the funds for the business. The Head teacher has advised them that they would have to raise the funds themselves this year for the “Young Chamber” membership of £2000. They were now holding fund raisers.

6. Mr Lavender advised that the “Young Chamber” was putting on a business Lunch on 8 July at 1-2 pm and many businesses had been invited and would welcome a representative from the Select Committee. Mr Manion agreed to attend.

7. Mr Lavender also spoke on the issue of keeping the graduates in the county. There should be home grown talent. He explained that Kent graduates rarely looked at businesses in Kent for their career path and were ignorant of what businesses were in their local areas. They tended to get information from London, where large business/banks headquarters were. He explained that he held a careers week where there were many local businesses represented including construction. He said that not one person stopped at the construction industry stall. He had to ask for the attention of the Forum and ask the construction stall to give 25 jobs that were possible in that industry including Human Resources (HR) payroll etc.

8. Mr Lavender expressed his passion for what he did. He said that he had been asked to many meetings often without the opportunity to speak. He felt that there was a great difference in pace in the way establishments worked especially from the perspective of a school and a business.

Employability Passport – Does it Work?

9. Mr Lavender felt that this would be easier with the Young Chambers. If a student had work experience in a business they would find out about the business. Businesses say they want someone to knock on their door to ask for a job. He considered that there was no point putting a student that wanted to be a mechanic in an office photocopying all day, it would be a waste of his time.

What is the way forward?

10. Mr Lavender felt that the Wolf report was a good report and factual. If is to implemented it needed to be now, it was important.

11. Mr Lavender felt that people who made a living teaching business but few had been in business and had today’s knowledge of business just commercial enterprise. Now that the government no longer funded training which was £2000 and £2500 projects from commerce.

12. He felt that students were not a product they were the employees of the future. Students that he had met did not know that they could work for themselves.

13. In response to a question Mr Lavender advised that he gets involved with all of Kent’s schools but only two with businesses.

How can KCC help?

14. Mr Lavender said that he would like to see some uniformity a basic standard. Ask students where the problems were. He stressed that he was amazed by the

unemployability of students. They did not know how to contact businesses. The knowledge on the street was lacking.

Do you see any new businesses?

15. Mr Lavender said that he did. He knew of a school that invited a business to the school and after the meeting offered 2 students apprenticeships. He then gave the example of a young man who bought electronic gear and set up a company called CeX and was now a member of the Chamber of Commerce. Mr Lavender took him to schools to speak with the students to show what could be achieved.

16. The Chairman asked for examples/case studies from Mr Lavender of young people who had achieved setting up their own business so that they could be used in their final report.

How can the Select Committee help to breakdown the barrier between the schools and the business world?

17. Mr Lavender advised that this was going to be more difficult as schools transferred to Academy status. He suggested that if there was backing the schools should be advised that this was a requirement to ensure the employability of students, which was paramount. He felt that schools viewed view the Chamber of Commerce as commercialisation.

18. He commented that some schools paid £7000 to hold an Enterprise day, when for £2500 they could have a years membership from the Chamber of Commerce that would set up this and more.

19. Mr Lavender tabled information given to the schools on the Young Chamber (See attached).

20. A view was sought from the Work experience student who felt that what he had heard was useful and essential for students to know. He said that he had set up a business selling chocolate in school. It was against the school policy and he was stopped. He suggested that reducing tax levels for business with apprenticeships may be an incentive.

21. It was suggested that although there was a conflict with the school values he should have been sign posted to how he could set up his business legitimately.

22. Mr Lavender was thanked by the chairman and Committee for attending the meeting.

Enc: additional papers referred to in paragraphs 1 and 20

2. Interview with Peter Hobbs, Chief Executive, Channel Chamber of Commerce
(Item 3)

1. Mr Hobbs advised that he left P& O in 1987 as their Marketing Manager, having spent more than two decades in the cross Channel Industry. He subsequently operated his own marketing consultancy for 7 years and then enjoyed a 3 year spell

with the Health Education Authority, managing their Workplace Health unit and launching a nationwide Health Awards Scheme.

2. He then joined the Training & Enterprise Council for South London (SOLOTEC) in 1997 as Senior Development Manager and worked closely with private and public sector partners in the recruitment drive for the Millennium Dome. He joined Channel Chamber as Chief Executive in March 2000.

3. The Chamber is independent and non political and its core business is supporting the East Kent business community. Recruitment and skills were key within his agenda. He had experience of the government's Future Jobs Fund, engaging 69 unemployed young people of 18-24 years old in East Kent with 6 months employment. He advised that few if any programmes involved 6 months employment; the majority were for a few days or weeks. The students were employed in the chamber offices in Dover, Ramsgate and Folkestone.

4. This was a unique opportunity for those who had not worked, in some cases for 6 years. At the end of the 6 months the chamber was aiming to make everyone job ready.

5. Mr Hobbs stated that he had learnt a great deal about the student's backgrounds and capabilities. 120 interviewed had been to recruit the final 69. There were no more than 10 students in this age group from grammar schools who were unemployed.

6. He explained that it was the programme's aim to get everyone employment ready. Due to the close and sustainable relationships the Chamber enjoys with local business it was able to introduce local employers to the students and arrange many work placement opportunities. He was delighted with the results so far and mentioned that 10 young people recently left the programme and Job Centre Plus had announced that 9 of them had not signed on for Job Seekers allowance after one month of leaving the programme.

7. Mr Hobbs advised that during the interviews few young people could articulate their any career ambitions or what vision they had for their future. They had few monitory ambitions. 15% of those that he had interviewed expressed a desire to enter the animal care sector. Following further enquiries it seemed that they were asked by a Careers Advisor - what do you like doing? Since they had mentioned a fondness for animals/pets, they were encouraged to book on a course on animal care without any real hope of securing a job in this sector.

8. In response to a question, Mr Hobbs voiced his opinions that FE colleges and schools were dedicated to educational qualifications to the detriment of any practical workplace skills.

9. Mr Hobbs explained that Kent and East Kent in particular was dominated by micro employers. They recruited many young people annually and regularly reported their concerns to the chamber about this lack of skills. He felt that many young people did not have the resources/tools or the appropriate attitudes to secure a job. He gave the comparison of a young person he met recently from New Zealand who had been taking jobs in local restaurants, cafes and bars to obtain the necessary range of skills and experience for her to become an assistant hotel manager. She did

not possess a university degree but felt that she could demonstrate her capabilities for a management post through her practical experiences within the industry. He felt that few of the young people he had met in East Kent were likely to consider this approach and yet many small employers were constantly seeking recruits like the young New Zealander.

10. Mr Hobbs reminisced about the local Education Business partnership network in Kent which was responsible for district wide work experience in schools. His local EBP also managed a group of volunteer business mentors, which did a great deal to help some of the more 'challenged students'. A great deal of work was managed for little money. The EBP worked closely with local businesses to understand what the challenges were.

11. He was concerned about the future and in particular the risk of losing volunteering and help from the local community. He felt that it served the greater need of the local community where meetings were held to discuss the common goals that embraced health, crime prevention and employment and skills, talking to schools, police etc to make improvements locally.

12. The Chairman advised that Kent Works has passed on to Connexions and asked how we get back to that golden age of EBP.

13. Mr Hobbs advised that as a chamber of commerce and an employer, there were a whole range of organisations who were trying to make contact with him on a regular basis; These included several schools, colleges, universities, work providers and broadly, disadvantaged people. In fact there could be up to 16 different organisations trying to get hold of any individual employer all 'selling' the idea of recruiting a young person. It seems imperative that these organisations be encouraged to collaborate in order that business can better understand the benefits that are available.

What is the glue?

14. Mr Hobbs considered that the district-wide communities have an important role. And there was a need for more collaboration particularly in the education sector. He gave an example of universities, colleges, training providers and schools, all appointing individual 'employer liaison' personnel each selling their individual needs to the same employers.

How do you feed back your successes?

15. The Jobs Future Fund programme had been a real opportunity to make young people work ready.

16. Mr Hobbs advised the Select Committee of a recent interview with a young person. The young person's handwriting was extremely poor, like that of a 5 year old with separate letters, no joined up writing. He discovered that the Job Centre Plus had written the CV for the young person. Employers did not want to be deceived in this way. Most small employer simply wanted to hear that the young person was keen and willing to work for them, that they were punctual and wanted to learn about the work and skills involved..

17. Mr Hobbs gave the following examples:

- 15-20 young people were told two weeks in advance about a visit to TESCO, on the morning of the visit 5 telephoned him saying they were sick, and only one turned up. The group's daily time keeping was very poor. He felt that this stemmed partly from secondary schools not having any sanctions on their time keeping.
- 5 pupils (14yrs) from Folkestone Academy were given the opportunity to engage with older people and use their IT skills. One girl after being in the office for 6 hours said that she did not like it there. . At 4pm, when she was about to leave she announced she would not be coming back as her mother had got her another placement at a local primary school. Mr Hobbs said that he phoned the school and they advised that the mother had rung the school and that she would be going to the local primary school. He felt this said a lot about our society letting a child dictate where she wanted to be without any acknowledgement to the employer.

18. Mr Lees mentioned that when he was at school at Key Stage 4 there was numeracy test and each child was given a certificate which they could take to an employer. The county could operate a similar endorsement.

19. Referring to the EBP system, Mr Hobbs explained that this had been a national network with many tiers. It had worked well at a local level with relatively low costs.

20. The Chairman said that the Select Committee had to describe a solution – The Locality Board agenda could be used to pull everyone together, with education as the single most important topic.

21. In response to what he felt about a Careers Mentoring Scheme, Mr Hobbs responded by explaining that most jobs in small/micro businesses were fairly basic but presented opportunities for young people to start on the road to work.. Schools need to better understand what their local employers want from young people..

22. A view was sought from the Work Experience student present. He considered that it should be compulsory after finishing GCSEs to have work experience. He was advised by Mr Hobbs that you could not force employers to take students. No one had sold the idea of apprenticeships to employers. In his opinion the Apprenticeship Scheme was also a potential disaster and had not been marketed effectively to employers. He considered that the employers had to be sold the benefits of apprenticeships. Schools were not currently involved with the Apprenticeship Scheme.

23. The Chairman reminded the Select Committee that KCC had a commissioning role. In some areas it was working well.

24. Mr Hobbs suggested that the Select Committee looked outside Kent for examples of how this could be achieved. The Chambers in other northern counties were successfully delivering the Apprenticeship Scheme on a large scale..

25. The Chairman and Select Committee thanked Mr Hobbs for attending the meeting.

26. The Committee thanked Roy Manuell for attending and agreed that it would be useful to have a student in attendance at future meetings as his comments had been helpful.

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THE STUDENT JOURNEY SELECT COMMITTEE

Hearing 5

Tuesday 28th June 2011

Witness Guide for Members

Below are suggested themes and questions. They have been provided in advance to the witnesses to allow them to prepare for the types of issues that Members may be interested to explore. All Members are welcome to ask these questions or pose additional ones to the witnesses via the Committee Chairman.

Themes and Questions

Richard Lavender, Young Chamber Coordinator, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce.

- Please outline the roles and responsibilities that your post involves, and please provide an account of the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce.
I am a Director of Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and work as a Consultant responsible for Young Chamber in the Ashford, Canterbury, Maidstone and West Kent Chamber area. Kent Invicta is the largest and most pro-active Chamber in Kent. Representing over 1200 businesses. We have been the sole provider of Young Chamber throughout Kent, and have a close relationship with the National Young Chamber organisation.
- To what extent, in your view, do students' academic qualifications demonstrate students' employability?
I am saddened to say that the word EMPLOYABILITY is not considered by the Education Department in many schools. Where it is taken seriously it has proved to be very successful. School/College Academic Business Studies differs considerably from practical business studies required in today's labour market, in my view.
- How far do learning and skills providers in Kent meet local labour market needs and the expectations of growth industries in Kent?
It is strange to reflect that most students are expected to leave the County for employment when leaving full time education. My view is we should be looking at the needs of the Business in Kent and retaining our youth for the future.

There is a need for Local Authorities, businesses and business organisations together with Educators to regularly sit down and discuss future developments and potentials more openly with each other, thus providing educators with a forecast of future needs. Developers, Engineers and Retail are expected to make use of a "one type" model.

- To what extent, in your view, does the business world play a part in preparing young people for work?

Sadly, very little, I have worked over the years on several projects to encourage businesses to become involved in the future of their employees education, together with the necessary curriculum needs, but it appears when we do get into dialogue with both parties they move at totally different speeds and progress breaks down, with businesses considering they are used as a tick box and no further contributions are wanted by educators from them. It is felt by businesses that educators do not really want us interfering with their well used models. However there is evidence that K College really do want to enter into dialogue with business and this is very good news.

- What contribution can the Young Chamber of Commerce make to enhance the employability of young people in Kent? Are there challenges in this process?

Young Chamber has been very successful in the past when it was partly Government funded, but since funding has been stopped schools have been reluctant to commit resources.

Young Chamber offers a variety of services supplied by local businesses on a volunteer basis through the Chamber Young Coordinator, who is paid by the Chamber from funds raised in the schools that have joined the project.

Students get a clear understanding what is required of them from the business world together with the necessary employability skills needed in today's modern businesses.

From the menu of services schools have an opportunity to select as many or as few as they feel necessary to fit into their business curriculum.

These can include:-

- ***CV writing, with actual employers providing input to current needs.***
- ***Interview techniques again with local employer input.***
- ***1st Day at Work and Behaviour in the Workplace presented by local employers.***
- ***We can set up a Business Board of Directors at the School Young Chamber for students to understand the hierarchy of business and from this board process various projects through the student members. These can as diverse as buying a cow for the school farm at Homewood, to opening a shop at Towers School and running a complete business empire of many projects as found at Invicta Grammar School for Girls***

- **Assist in arranging Careers Days and Enterprise Weeks with local businesses responding to the challenge of student presentations.**
 - **Our greatest asset is a 24/7 Young Chamber Interactive website whereby all school students can log and get mentoring, personal experiences and look into a wide range of careers presented by actual businesses. There is also a facility to whereby progress can be recorded and downloaded to be submitted as part of a curriculum exam. Although this is a private individual student web site, the lead teacher can monitor all accounts for irregularities.**
- Please discuss the effectiveness of current partnerships between local employers, educators and other organisations in preparing young people for the world of work.
I feel that we are just beginning to get the message across regarding the importance of these partnerships, especially between business and education. However there are many organisations offering a wide range of services and I feel that these are fragmented, have become very commercialised with some providers having lost contact with the reality of the workplace. This is not a general statement, but has been noted in certain cases.
- What initiatives – if any – should be implemented both by learning and skills providers and by business to enhance the employability of young people in Kent?
Firstly, I feel that business must be in the forefront of any new initiative and the business must be united under one banner. Businesses need to be consulted on requirements, and the constant method changes that take place in day to day business. Lastly a provider needs to deliver a consistent level of information and accessibility to the business world. This in my view can and should be delivered by an organisation such as the British Chamber of Commerce. I have mentioned many times the introduction of an “Employability Passport”, whereby the initiative is with individual students as well as educators to gain access to employers and businesses to prepare themselves for future employment.
- In your opinion, to what extent does local information, advice and guidance enable young people in Kent to make informed choices about their future education and employment?
Local information and reality to the local business needs is essential when students are making subject choices for future careers, and I feel that there has been a confusing mixture of information which in my opinion does not cater for the whole range of student abilities or aspirations. Before options are taken a greater access to structured careers must be available to students. To many times you see a

number of handouts in the schools on professional subjects, but very little on careers in more diverse areas of work.

My experience tells me that students are not aware that there are eight different careers within the construction industry for example and it is not all about digging holes in the ground. The same goes for retail, the behind the scenes activities are a mystery to the majority.

Lastly who gives advice on students who wish to become self employed. This sometimes is the only route to full employment. The Chamber offers Business Start up advice sponsored by Local Authorities, but have we considered this as an option in the curriculum at schools.

- Please inform the Select Committee of any policy changes at national level that have relevance in this review and that can impact on the educational and employment opportunities and choices of young people in Kent.
I feel that the Wolf report is a step in the right direction, but will it ever be delivered.

With the introduction of more Academy's will this diminish the influence of County Council and Local Authority influence in education, whereby losing the ability to bring focused and constructive up to date careers advice to students.

- Are there any other issues, with relevance to the review, which you would like to raise with the Committee?

I would just wish to say that I have appreciated the opportunity to express my point of view on behalf of the business community and especially as a deliverer of Young Chamber in Kent.

The business community has a lot to offer and is ready and willing to support any initiatives that bring together Education and Business for the benefit of the student, i.e. our future employees.

As my parting shot I would like to see a more professional approach to student work experience whereby we can align the student more closely with his chosen future career and not making tea and photocopying in an alien environment.

Thank You

**Richard Lavender
Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce.
Young Chamber Coordinator.**



YOUNG
CHAMBER

Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce Education and Business Working Together

Can we, the Chamber of Commerce, supply your Education Business needs as a "One stop Shop".

Every School needs to give students a good all round business knowledge and although the academic side of this needs to be carried out by the school, the practical and everyday aspects of business can be supplied by business organisations.

The Chamber of Commerce is a business membership organisation that can give your school a direct link to the business world and bring the business world directly into your school.

Each school has different needs, and the Chamber, via our Schools Business Programme can provide a tailored solution. From interview techniques to running your own business projects within the school, the Chamber can provide many services to suit your needs.

The local Chamber is available to you through out your membership during office hours, however the Young Chamber Interactive web site is available to your students 24/7 and every student is a member, This web site was developed with the National Diploma in mind and has direct links back to your local Chamber of Commerce

A full time Young Chamber coordinator, (a businessperson), can be available to attend your school/college to meet with students every two weeks. This visit would normally coincide with the young Chamber board meetings to discuss, help, and advise on a number of business needs.

We regularly survey our business membership to monitor the continual changes in employment needs, and these changes are fed back into our business education system. Education and business are working together to give our future employees the head start they need in a competitive business world.

To enable us to offer the appropriate service to your school/college Annex A gives a full breakdown of costs associated with the relevant service

We are happy to discuss our business programme to suit your needs, thus giving you the opportunity of using an "Education Business One Stop Shop"

Your local Chamber of Commerce is business membership led and can deliver the business need to suit your school.

Talk to us before you commit the coming year's business budget to costly "one off" events. Your local business needs to get involved.

Call, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

Tel 01233 503838 and request someone to come and talk to you regarding our "One Stop Business" package, without obligation.

Your Local Young Chamber Coordinator is :-



Richard M Lavender Tel 01233 535803 or 01233720251 Mob 07864 807535
Email [Richard@kentinvictachamber.co.uk]

Young Chamber Costs through your local Chamber per annum commencing Jan 2011

Chamber Deliverables

Subject	Costs
Registration Licence Fee & Administration, (minimum requirement for YC)	
Visit YC in school/college and set up YC Interactive web site for all students.	
Interview Techniques :- Discussion on how to enjoy and get the best out of your interview. This will include students interviewing business members followed by students being interviewed by the business members. Ends with wash up and how the students felt.	
CV Writing :- What is a CV and how should it be constructed. Practical lessons on writing a fictitious CV, followed by their own CV and discussions on how it went.	
1st Day At Work :- What is your first day at work like? what to expect?, what should be avoided? what should you know? This discussion will be supported by a young member of business with a senior business person.	
Behaviour in the Workplace :- What sort of behaviour is expected from you at the work place? What should I be looking out for, pit falls, practical jokes, the new boy/girl.	
Careers Day :- A day where businesses come into the school/college and give an insight into a large number of careers that are available. This is normally held in two formats whichever the school/college prefers. Option 1, tables are laid out in the hall or large classroom and students are free to walk around and visit whatever stand that feel would interest them Option 2, a number of classrooms are made available for businesses to give 30 minute presentations throughout the day. Student's pre book to presentations they wish to attend. This last option normally proves the best option.	
Business Hierarchy :- We help you set up a Board of Directors to take the responsibility of the various offices required to run a business. This gives students a responsible role in running a company within the school. The Young Chamber Coordinator will sit on the board and advise on the protocol necessary for its success. This has been the most rewarding aspect for many schools. This will include, Agenda's, Minutes and Action Plans	
Direct Business Access:- Through the Young Chamber Interactive website you can email your local Chamber of Commerce and we will arrange a specific business interface for you.	
Enterprise Week:- All schools have an Enterprise week, we will assist you with making this a success by having businessman or entrepreneur to open the week and then a number of businesses to visit during the week to assist and comment on the student's week's progress. We will then arrange a judging panel on the final day.	
School Business Projects:- We will assist students thinking, in setting up business projects within the school under the Young Chamber banner. This will include submitting business cases together with cash flow forecasts and developing the projects to a conclusion.	
Total Costing	

Should you require all the above we can offer you a complete Young Chamber Package which will include your Licence Fee and fortnightly visits to your Board Meetings plus £50.00 worth of Young Chamber merchandise for :-

£