

Mr P Carter, Carter Construction

(1) The Committee received a verbal presentation from Mr Carter on his business career and experience of employing young people. He explained that he had been in business for 30 years, registered in Kent and trading in London. All his business interests were based around the construction industry. He said that in the early days of establishing his business in London at the age of 24, he was dependent on the energies, of the young people around him and dependent at the time on the London Comprehensive system. Those young people that applied to work for him had had a dismal experience of the average London Comprehensive. He felt that they had poor motivation, poor time keeping and other challenges that had to be overcome when they started work. He was pleased to say that many of those who started working for him 20 years ago were still working for his companies today.

(2) Mr Carter said that backing young people in his businesses had led to both success and a lot of tears as a lot of young people let him down and were disappointing, their lack of literacy and numeracy skills he found appalling, many could not read a tape measure. He found the lack of ambition or ideas of what the young people wanted to do in life very disappointing too. They had not been given the right independent advice or guidance in their secondary schools. He would invest time and money in supporting them in acquiring skills in bricklaying and carpentry etc and after a few months they would say that "it wasn't for them" and it was back to the drawing board. He then had to start retraining new people.

(3) Mr Carter advised that in recent times, through the Government's Apprenticeship Training Programme he had taken on a lot of apprentices through Carillion, a work base training provider, he had initially seen the work they were doing in Sittingbourne, training young people in construction skills, as a Kent County Councillor. He had a success rate of 65% to 70% with those young people. He enjoyed the fact that Carillion took all of the bureaucracy out of the process including the health and safety checks and PAYE, they paid the apprentices and he sent Carillion a monthly cheque.

(4) Mr Carter became a County Councillor in 1997 and in a short time was elected Chairman of Education and Libraries when he set about, with his experience of what he felt was a failed Inner London education system to improve the education choices in Kent schools. He was initially appalled by what he saw in Kent schools 12 years ago; poor quality teaching and very little learning in the classroom.

(5) Mr Carter felt that there was now an enormous transformation. He declared that he was a Governor of Leigh College for 12 years. He was keen to give young people diversity and choice in the curriculum they pursued. He felt that Kent was fortunate that the Government had given Kent the flexibility

to run different courses one day a week through dropping the compulsory modern languages to give space in the curriculum to achieve this. This was on route with the Dutch model of vocational education in developing vocational choice for 14-16 year olds. There were now 5½ -6k pupils choosing bespoke vocational pathways in what they want to pursue in life, supported by the ambitions of the 'Towards 2010' document, to give the best careers guidance to young people. This was a huge journey, which included convincing Headteachers who had been previously sceptical.

(6) Mr Carter advised that there needed to be between 7000–8000 apprenticeships in both the public and private sectors although there was a struggle with 1700 places at present.

(7) Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments which included the following:

(8) In response to a question by Mr Wedgbury, Mr Carter said privatisation of the rail industry and the closure of the docks had left a massive void in apprenticeships that had not been filled. The goal of government for 20% of young people to be in work base apprenticeships was in tune with what he believed to be fit and appropriate. He felt that it was for all public agencies to set an example to do what they use to do particularly well. He gave the example of the Health economy, which he felt had a great opportunity to do this, questioning why there was a need to fill most of the social care homes and domiciliary carers positions from outside this country, when there was rising unemployment especially the rising youth unemployment. He advised that the number of overseas migrants to work in this country had gone up dramatically. In 2002 there were 4500 people from abroad registering for National Insurance Numbers. In 2009 there were 11250 people registering. He felt that they were filling jobs that were there in our indigenous economy that young people were not equipped for or did not want to engage in, which we had to do something about.

(9) In response to a question by Mr Collor, Mr Carter advised that it was the times of being told by young people "It's not for me Mr Carter" that inspired him to make sure that we gave young people the opportunity to explore their skill sets through having choice and diversity in their vocational curriculum programme at medium and lower level of vocational training skills. He added that he was keen that if pupils felt that after being on a course that the course was not for them that they could chop and change within reason. This allowed young people to learn what they might like to do post 16 years in the world of work. He said that careers advice should probably start in the latter year of Primary school, looking at what they like and enjoy doing.

(10) Mr Carter commented on the Skills Force Programme and the motivation of the young people broadening their horizons and making their aspirations fundamentally different. He felt that the good schools should be doing this at all levels of ability finding out the strengths of young people and sign posting them to succeed outside the world of education.

(11) In reply to a comment by Mr Desmoyer-Davis, Mr Carter said that he stood by his view that in a number of secondary schools in Kent the education was dire 12 years ago. There was no choice available, there was no diversity and there were a significant number of high schools, he gave the example of Ramsgate that had 1-1½ % of the cohort achieving 5 A* to C grades, which he deemed was not good enough. He felt that high schools now had structured lessons, offering diversity and choice. The Building Schools for the Future and the Academy Programme were bringing in an extra element, competition. He felt very proud of the achievements of the Headteachers and teachers now delivering a radically different option.

(12) In reply to a question by Mr Desmoyer-Davis, Mr Carter said that with pure vocational applied skills, a good school that was offering that range of vocational skills would mix the literacy and numeracy in the course, so that it was relevant. They should be able to write up reports on visits they had to a construction site.

Dr Hoult, Christchurch University, Canterbury

(13) Dr Hoult welcomed the opportunity to be involved at the start of KCC developing a new strategy. She then gave a presentation using PowerPoint and explained that Canterbury Christchurch University was mainly based in Canterbury, but also had a large campus network with sites in Medway, Tunbridge Wells, Broadstairs and Folkestone. There were 14k students, a large proportion of which were part-time. The University had strength in public services education, educating a lot of; teachers, FE Lecturers, Careers and Guidance professionals, the Health and Social Care Sector as well as the Business Faculty in Arts and Humanities.

(14) Dr Hoult suggested that there was a need to look at the bigger picture by looking at the sort of Kent there would be in 10-15 years time and the sort of environment the students who were 16-19 years old now would be growing up in to, and developing themselves. The central thing about that new society was that it could not be predicted. The nature of social change at present was so rapid that it was impossible to predict what sort of working environment and what sort of regional economy would be around in the next few decades. Technological changes, economic changes and society changes were so rapid. She said that the question was “How can we sensibly make any sort of planning or strategy based on what we do not know?” She said that she would argue that the best that could be done for the 16 year olds that we were working with was to develop a core knowledge base, transferable skills that could be useful in any professional context as well as strong shared values.

(15) Dr Hoult suggested to Members that there was a need to think about what kind of young people we wanted to produce given the rapid rate of change, she felt that there was a need for resilient and adaptable young people, who had a core confidence in how they interacted with the world that would allow them to adapt to different situations. It was also important to have young people that had the capacity to break out of cycles of the deprivation and low aspiration. There was a need to have high expectations of young

people, of young people that have high expectations of themselves and their peers and for young people to have a strong moral sense of community and leadership.

(16) Dr Hoult continued to say that as the economy made steps into recovery education needed to be a part of that. She stated that the regeneration in the South East could not happen without the education providers at all phases of the sector. There was a need to be thinking with the policy makers, business and young people looking at how they could build a strong base for the future. She explained that there had been a trend historically in the United Kingdom, particularly strong in Kent, for educational investment for young people not to be repaid because there was a migration out of Kent once young people had skills and a confidence to get into different types of employment. She advised that there was a need to look at, with the providers and employers about how to retain talented young people in Kent and how they were developed to have a shared responsibility in the geographical area.

(17) Dr Hoult suggested that with regards to the 16-19 year Strategy, it was not helpful to think of 16-19 year olds in isolation; but needed to be thought about in the wider 14 to 19 year olds context as well as the changes that were affecting Higher Education. Within Higher Education there were certain concerns on the 16 to 19 year old Strategy. The concerns were that the end result would be a bifurcation of qualifications of purely academic and purely vocational qualifications and the loss of the holistic, deep education that had taken a lot of time being built up in the country. She also felt that there was not an inspiring model from central government about a way to work in a rich way with employers at present. Dr Hoult felt that there was a real risk that could lead to the sidelining of; community and work experience in pursuit of; very narrow, very impoverished understanding outcome based attainment model of education. There was a need to think clearly as the strategy was worked on about the whole young person and the young person at the centre based in his or her community. She felt that simply asking employers and higher education "what do we want?" as if they were consumers, without thinking about that holistic education could be quite dangerous. She then referred to a letter from Lord Mandelson to all Vice Chancellors via the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) that announced a £1b budget cut over the next 3 years in Higher Education that would have a very severe impact on the teaching grant in higher education that would mean fewer places than there had been in the last 5 years. This meant that every institution was raising its entry requirements. Dr Hoult said that there had been a nice environment in higher education over the past 5 years with the impact of wider participation with lots of families that would not have thought about going onto higher education in the past were arriving in higher education. She felt that there was a real danger that some of them would be lost if we think about the twin emphasises on high achievers of gifted and talented and those at the other end of the spectrum not in employment, education and training, there was a middle group that could get lost somewhere in between.

(18) Dr Hoult explained that there were models in the sector that may apply to this advising that she was a co leader of the South East Coastal Communities Project. The Project was a £3m funded project by Higher Education Funding Council to develop a model of universities supporting their local communities directly. The Project spanned 9 Universities across the South East coastal towns and the Kent project was based in Swale. The core shared initiative was to develop the health and well being opportunities and aspirations of the people of Swale, so the 3 universities in Kent had been working on that for the last 18 months. This model was trying to develop an idea of higher education taking direct responsibility working with local authorities and policy makers for its local community, with health and well being its theme. Dr Hoult suggested that this model could be applied in an imaginative way, with the infrastructure, to apply to some of the challenges that the Committee were looking at.

(19) Canterbury Christ Church was a centre of excellence for careers guidance and Dr Hoult said that any policy that KCC developed the university could help embed in schools, further education and University sector through those student teachers who from next year would be the teachers in the system to buy in the approach and deliver it.

(20) Dr Hoult advised that she had led a Team on the 'Gateways Project'. They had won £91k from the Department of Innovation Universities and Skills (DIUS) to develop roots into the professions for young people from high schools in Kent. The 3 professional areas were health, social care and crime and policing. It was deliberate not to select pupils from Selective schools. The young people were given outrageously high expectations and were offered the chance to study at higher education level 1, which was equivalent to the first year undergraduate, alongside their post 16 education, which may have been 'A' Levels or vocational studies in one of those areas. They attended the University to study alongside their work in school. This project was done by working with Headteachers, representatives from the professions as well as higher education and was now embedded in the University. Dr Hoult felt that there was no reason why this could not be done on a bigger scale and in different types of industry beyond the public sector.

(21) Dr Hoult advised that work had just started work with Kent on the Community Action Pilot, which was developing opportunities for students in years 10 and 11 to work on community work and for it to be accredited with the university, this would be continuing for the next year. This bid was gain by Kent from the DCFS which was one of the only bids immediately rewarded.

(22) Dr Hoult made the following suggestions for the Committee to consider:

(23) For Kent to establish a 16-19 year old Strategy Group, to include; policy makers, Schools, Higher Education, Connexions and the Youth Support Services.

(24) One area of growth was the Business Development Fund and there was an opportunity to bid for Knowledge Transfer Partnership Funding, which was money from central government to allow Universities to work with

companies, which might be private sector or public sector institutions. Christ Church University had 2 with KCC already. This was where a company had a particular interest in developing a strategic development where university expertise would be welcome we would have a joint graduate to work on that strategy.

(25) There could be an opportunity to offer all 16 year olds in Kent the opportunity of experiencing Higher Education in a particular form beyond a wider participation type day visit.

(26) Dr Hoult felt that there was an opportunity to seize the objective; she felt that there was a need to urgently develop a model which would prepare students for the world of work and develop their understanding of our cultural heritage and a sense of community responsibility, as there was no model of this that she was aware of.

(27) The Chairman thanked Dr Hoult for attending the meeting.

John Casey – Mainstream Training

(28) Mr Casey gave a brief of his company advising that it specialised in drivers and warehouse people, employing about 300 people. He started the company in 1997. He said that he believe in employing young people. In the past six years, since my company started getting larger, he had employed about 16 young people. Only two of those 16 young people had stayed with his company. Mr Casey was pleased to say that one of the young people had completed the full modern apprenticeship which his company had supported straight from school. He felt that one of the biggest problems was young people's attitude; they needed the right attitude. He felt that young people that he had contact with came to him from school with the wrong attitude. In his experience their first taste of work was work experience, which he felt in its current format did not work.

(29) He explained that when a young person was given work experience in his company they were given specific duties. Mr Casey's company ran training courses for young people, Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) 16-19 years old groups, and worked quite closely with Mid Kent College, on a pre-employment course, a short sharp 10 day course with accredited certificates for adults of 19 year olds plus and one for younger people. The adult course had been extremely successful as many had gone on and found work. He explained that he set up a pre-employment course in forklift, truck training, constructing skills etc for younger people, which was due to start in January 2010, there were no takers. The course eventually started on Monday, 22 March, 22 young people applied for the course, 16 people confirmed, 12 people were ready for Monday morning and nine people attended. He expressed some exasperation on the final number on the course saying that it was a fully funded course, which included all the necessary safety equipment, as he believed that when they turned up for

employment they needed to have all the necessary equipment to convince the employer that “Yes I am here and I am ready for the world of work”.

(30) He then gave an example of the success of a young man who was 16 years old whose Mum wanted him to go onto sit his A levels. He worked for Mr Casey for the Summer period said that he was not sure what he wanted to do, as he was attracted to; the job security, the progression, the training and qualifications that Mr Casey’s company could offer him. He did not want just to be a tea boy, and the money. He knew that it was not going to be a top paid job. He was paid him £10,000 per year. After 18 months he was now on £15,500 per year and was a mid range administration assistant in the NVQ department. Mr Casey said that he had invested in him mostly because he had the right attitude, not because he had the right skills, although skills were important learning to read and write, if he did not the company had a Learn Direct department and that meant we could help him and we could train him.

(31) Mr Casey explained that he had asked this young employee why he thought that people of 16-19 were currently unemployed. He said that people of his age were influenced by what other people think they would turn down a job at McDonald’s in the hope that a more superior job would come up. A lot of school leavers went onto proper jobs from school which was a shock to the system. They do not understand what the real world was all about. They enter into the real world they have to start work at 8.00 am and finish at 5.00pm, which they do not do at school. Even during the work experience they were not used to the real world of work. “Money”, in his words, “a lot of 16 year olds would not get out of bed for less than £200.00 a week”, which was quite narrow minded considering the current climate and it would be their first proper job. They looked at the money aspect because they; want to learn to drive, wanted to go out with their partner, get a flat, pressures from their parents, and things like that. The young man had said that he felt people of his age could be lazy expecting the perfect job to be put on a plate, they just expected it to be out there and many did not know what to do with their lives. They were in this balance of do I go into the world of work or do I go onto higher education?

(32) Mr Casey felt that as an employer that their indecision swayed his judgement. He wanted to invest in young people but questions whether he wanted to spend his time and my money and his staff’s time on someone who was undecided. It took a long time to employ someone.

(33) The Chairman thanked Mr Casey and gave Members the opportunity to ask questions and make comments which included the following:

(34) In response to a question by Mr Burgess, Mr felt that his company was fortunate in that it was hooked into training for young people, with contracts for the Ministry of Defence both nationally and internationally, for the prisons on the Isle of Sheppey down to the Rochester Offenders Prison. He said that he received a letter from someone looking to place young people on apprenticeship programmes. He felt that as an employer he was not being told about apprenticeships or training, he was fortunate to know as he

delivered training, apprenticeships etc. He felt that employers did not know how long the training was for or if there was any support. He suggested to the Committee that its first task was to take on board what a young person wanted and secondly that someone could explain to him and to employers what an apprenticeship programme was.

(35) In response to a question by Mr Smith, Mr Casey advised that all schools could be visited by a roadshow to capture the interest of school leavers. He was aware of the big one at Detling Hill for employers, which was good as his company was represented there. He was convinced that there was a need to get local employers the opportunity to be involved so that they can receive the support and have questions answered such as "if I take a young person on, it is not just about the young person and the time that I lose him while he was doing his apprenticeship and his training, it was also taking another senior member of staff out of their job to coach and mentor that person, it was not just one cost" Mr Casey felt that this was why small employers were opposed to apprenticeships or not opposed so much as not attracted to it, because not just that they could not afford to lose the time, not just the young person who was not skilled and ready and able to earn them some money because that was what employers want and that they will lose a senior, in the mechanics industry, if you lose a senior mechanic, getting paid £22.00 an hour to stick him in there saying he has got to mentor him and double check his work and this has to be taken into account. Mr Casey saw those as the obstacles.

(36) In reply to a question by Mr Pascoe, Mr Casey advised that the first thing was to inform the young people on what it was like in the real world of employment, explaining to them that training/courses were not just to give them qualifications but was about where they were going to be working, what types of jobs, types of hours they would be working, the people they will be working with to give them an understanding of what to expect in the real world. He felt that they also needed interview techniques as it was difficult enough to get an interview and they needed to come prepared. He suggested that young people were not being prepared to go out there and make the most of their first chance and make a first impression. They did not know they should have to turn up in a shirt and tie, they also did not know they should be prompt and on time for an interview, bringing with them their certificates with them and to take pride in what they do and that will shine through, an employer would take that on board.

(37) In response to a question by Mr Ozog Mr Casey said that he would be prepared to look at the YTS Scheme as a businessman. He felt that it was about wanting and to get on the YTS Scheme and needing to progress. That would be the best thing to instil in the young person, the programme did not matter, whether it was YTS or apprenticeships, Mr Casey said that he believed it was about being motivated.

(38) In reply to a question by Mr Homewood, Mr Casey advised that many of the young people received NVQs when they finished their apprenticeships. His company was a large facilitator of NVQ's for the transport sector, working

with the company Dairycrest delivering 300 NVQ's for them nationally. He added that qualifications were important. He said that there was going to be less investment in adults courses next year although, there was more and more pressure on adults than young people at present as they had to pay their mortgages, look after their families etc. So they could come with an NVQ but as an employer, for him it was not about their qualifications, but more about what they had done, that they were hungry, had drive and passion and wanted and needed to succeed. He felt that an NVQ was good and it could be invested in but it was not the be all and end all.

(39) In answer to a question by Mr Walder, Mr Casey explained that he had some experience with work experience as he was also a qualified Health and Safety Inspector and in the early days, of his company he also doubled up as a Health and Safety Placement Officer for Schools through KCC carrying out health and safety visits for work experience placements to ensure that those students were not being abused. It was not because he did not believe that the placements were not good places to work, he was keen to know what they would be doing whilst they were there. He was aware that there was a lot of pressure on a very short time scale to get young people in placements so I know it was extremely difficult. More work was needed to get employers to buy into meaningful work experience.

(40) In answer to a comment by Mr Collor, Mr Casey interjected saying he valued the young people and that it was not just about paying them a sensible wage, they regularly transferred their roles within the company to other areas, all of his staff were multi-skilled, so they could feel that they could fit it in any one part of the company giving them job security within the company.

(41) The Chairman thanked Mr Casey for attending the meeting and for bringing to the Committee an active view of how it was for his company and how it was in the workplace.

Mr Martin Atkinson- HR Aylesford Newsprint

(42) The Chairman welcomed Mr Atkinson to the meeting and asked him to give a brief introduction. Mr Atkinson advised that he was the Human Resources Manager for Aylesford Newsprint, from the Reed Organisation. Reeds started making paper in 1922 and Aylesford Newsprint was still making paper on the site, with fewer paper machines and employed a lot less people than we once had although they produced a lot more paper than before. Aylesford Newsprint was formed in December 1993, a joint venture company between two forestry companies, STA which was a Swedish Company and Mondy, which was essentially a South African Company. Aylesford Newsprint employed 340 people and had a turn over around £140m a year. Of the 340 people employees, 22 were apprentices. In the UK there were currently 3 newsprint manufacturers, a company called Shotton who were the same size as Aylesford Newsprint, in North Wales, a new company called Parm, which was in Kings Lynn, a new investment in the UK by a German company. He added that unfortunately another newsprint company just went out of business last week, Bridgewater in Ellesmere Port. The paper industry was much

larger in Kent in years gone by but now there were 4 or 5 large paper mills in Kent but it was one of the main industries in Kent going back in the past. In the last 15 years we have taken on 75 apprentices. Two of those were taken on from other companies that unfortunately went bust, those trainees were mid way through their apprenticeships so they could complete. Of those 75, of the ones that have completed and not still in training 82% of those who had reached their completion time did successfully complete so we had an 18% drop out for various reasons during the training. Of the 82% who successfully completed their training, 62% of those were still employed by the company, which gave us an overall retention rate of 55%. The people who start with us on an apprenticeship were still with us 15 years later which he considered to be very successful. We take on apprentices in mainly engineering. The Company had taken on some business trainees over the years but they were mainly electrical and mechanical process engineers. They were scarce skills in the UK especially scarce skills in the world. The Company had taken on more than we needed, particularly for the drop out rate and was aware that after training people, they would leave and they may return to us when they have got some experience. So it was part of what the Company had to do in the community as well.

(43) Mr Atkinson said that 'attitude' was the Companies watch word for recruitment and it recruited for skill. As long as people have got the right attitude, the right skill, they were welcomed and would be trained for the skill that was required. He added that in terms of attitude, he was looking for people who were work ready because the jobs were practical jobs. He was looking for evidence of people with a practical aptitude. People who had done something in their school life, in their childhood, they may have made radios, fixed bikes, motorbikes or cars or whatever. He was also looking for self motivation, drive, enthusiasm, someone who may have done a paper round have put themselves out to gain some experience, and did not have everything done by their parents. He was looking for people who can get away from the Playstation's and televisions, to show some evidence that they could do something for themselves and that they could see things through to the end. An apprenticeship was not an easy option it was a tough route to take; it was four years of intensive work, intensive study learning from others, who had got to be motivated to be teachers. You had to have the right attitude as a young person or as an adult to learn from others. Commitment and team work was something that he looked for in school leavers He felt that there were problems with young people communication skills. Young people had to be able to ask questions and had to be able to listen, communication skills were key. He felt that in 10 or 20 minutes in an interview you know about their communication skills and so many school leavers unfortunately do not have any communications skills, they do not have any questions to ask.

(44) Mr Atkinson advised that all the apprentices end their apprenticeships with one of the following; NVQ2, NVQ3, a National Certificate, a Higher National Certificate, a Foundation Degree and all of their essential skills New trainees would have five GCSE's at C or above, particularly the Maths doing the higher paper. This was not set by the company but was inline with the colleges requirements for a National Certificate Course.

(45) The Company recruits 5 apprentices a year, This years recruitment was due to take place. An open evening for apprentice candidates and their parents would be held. Parents were important to this. In his experience, he found that schools were more interested in getting young people into higher education; parents were more interested in creating life chances, so the Company was trying to get to the parents, to get parents interested in apprenticeships to see if it was the right thing for their child. There would be about 120 people touring the mill. All of the existing apprentices would be present so that they can meet people who were going through the programme and to talk about what it was really like for them. There may be 80-100 applicants this year; they would go through all the usual tests etc, teamwork exercises, communication exercises to try to get to the person who was underneath. We would start those young people in September and they would be on a four year programme.

(46) The Company was also involvement, with local schools. He explained that when local schools were going for specialist status, it was linked with five schools in the area, helping with funding towards their specialist status. He said that he did not want to criticise any of those schools particularly as every one was busy but it felt like the Company paid some money to help achieve the specialist status and did not get a return out of it. Having said that he highlighted that some really good work with some other schools had been achieved such as Maplesden Noakes in Maidstone, in terms of work experience programmes, student exchange with foreign students and preparing students with careers advice, practice interviews etc. As a relatively large employer in the region it did try to engage but it too struggled with the resource to do those things.

(47) As a large industrial site, there were often requests for mill tours which helped people understand what the world of work was like. On average, within a week we would take two school parties around the mill, it took time but it allowed people to see inside a factory, it broadens their experience and it may be a possibility that they may come back for an apprenticeship or a job or even recycle their newspapers or magazines. He felt that funding was a minefield for any employer. The Company had dedicated training staff that were aware of the funding. Things change all the time, regimes change all the time. He did not know how smaller employers coped with understanding what was available. The training staff worked with Connexions, Business Partnerships, with schools, with colleges, with sector skills councils and with the new Academies.

(48) (43) Mr Atkinson felt that there was a need to network and establishing clarity on who to speak to. He felt that it was difficult to know who to go to for information and for accessing funding. He said that for the future he would like to see improvement in; the stability of qualifications as most people dealing with recruitment still understand O'Levels and A Levels but this was changing and there were different kinds of qualifications available. The questioned whether diplomas were here to stay. He advised that he was working with a consortium of employers in the Medway area and with some schools in

developing an Engineering Diploma. But questioned how much effort do they put into that? and would a change of Government mean the end of the diploma's?

(49) Mr Atkinson felt that there needed to be clarity about the support network that employers should be engaging with. He advised that he sat on the Board of the Sector Skills Council for Industry and the Academy for the Industry, which took up a lot of his time; there was also the Education Business Partnership, the Learning and Skills Council and Kent Tech before that. There was the Education Business Partnerships, and the local FE provision. He would welcome some co-ordination of these organisations. He concluded that the outcome of this was to have well rounded young people. Mr Atkinson said that it occurred to him that it could be difficult to understand the generations of young people that follow. The children born in the 2000's had different expectations; they understood things differently from when he was growing up. They were growing up with the internet as part of their lives; they receive their news not by a newspaper, but via mobile phone. He explained that Aylesford Newsprint had sent up an Apprentice Forum where their apprentices as a group gathered every month to talk about their issues so that they can help each other through the programme and inform the trainers about what they do on their programme because they look at things totally differently to those who were trying to manage them. He felt that the Forum was a very powerful thing for the future for the Company and for the young people to take responsibility for their own learning and development running their own programme and development for the future.

(50) The Chairman thanked Mr Atkinson for attending the meeting and gave Members the opportunity to ask questions and make comments which included the following:

(51) In reply to Mr Homewood, Mr Atkinson advised him that out of the 75 apprentices there had been 3 girls. There were girls employed in other positions coming into the lab, they did not come as apprentices, they came as graduates or as 18 year old school leavers, who then study a degree course. Mr Atkinson said that it was difficult to get girls to apply. He said that this year he had challenge his team to find some female apprentices but had yet to see if they had been successful. Within the industry there was a problem with the perception that it was a male dominated industry which he felt was true. The Company was owned by a Swedish Company. He said that the Swedish Managing Director and his experience in Sweden was that there was a balance of male and females and women do all of these jobs. He explained that at one of the SMA paper mills in Sweden, most of the managers were women, which you did not see in the UK. He said that the Company would like to see more females but unfortunately the three girls who had been on their apprenticeship programme, did not make it to the end and so the managers doing the recruitment and line managers were shy of recruiting females, but that was something that he very much want to do. He reminisced that the days of manual labour having a big strong man as a fitter in the industry were largely gone. There were no barriers in employing women.

(52) In response to a question by Mr Collor, Mr Atkinson advised that there were opportunities for candidates who do not have 5 GCSE at C or above they can be put them on programmes in advance of the course but sometimes they need an extra year to attain the first level so it was a whole further year of education. Then the Higher National Certificate was a further five years and the apprenticeship programme was a four year programme so there were practical difficulties. There was one student who went through all the tests and of the right standard, Mid Kent College said he was not, after appealing the decision he was put on the programme and he did complete in four years. It was possible.

(53) In response to a question, Mr Atkinson advised that he was not aware of the fee for apprenticeships as he should be but the way his company trained their apprentices was that they spent one whole year off the job in a college and that was quite expensive. The training alone cost £9,000; most of this was funded and recoverable. Then they do a national certificate and a higher national certificate on day release through the rest of their apprenticeship. This was £1,000 a course and there was some funding for that. There was a lot of other training along the way which was not funded but the apprenticeships as far as he was concerned were not badly funded. He did not have a problem with the way apprenticeships were funded currently. The Apprentices wages were paid by the company and that was not funded, suggested that this would be the most prohibitive aspect for small employers, although there were good examples of where employers have got together as a consortium and recruited apprentices. There were case studies of clusters of employers who had recruited apprentices and shared the costs. He felt this was something for the future.

(54) In response to a few questions, Mr Atkinson explained that with regard to life chances he recalled that he had qualified that by making a sweeping generalisation on what schools tended to focus on. In his opinion if someone had 5 GCSE's at C or above, the schools would want them to go on to higher education and university and he was looking to pull them away from that when they attended the evening to talk apprenticeships with Newsprint because this would set them up for life whereas after university they would get a job as a graduate. Schools did not seem to encourage people to go into apprenticeships in his experience. His Company had sent schools advertisements for their apprenticeships and found they were never posted on the notice boards, there was no encouragement, there was no literature given out. Getting to the parents was critical.

(55) In answer to the second question, Mr Atkinson concurred that when you see a young person for a job you wanted to know that they had got some idea of where they might go it was noticeable which schools were encouraging students to look further and to plan things out. When he interviewed he would be looking for people who had got some interest in what they were being offered and could say yes I am ambitious and I do want to get on. Although you do want people to settle on different levels, you do not want every

apprentice going through and thinking they could be sponsored to do a degree.

(56) In reply to the final question, Mr Atkinson said that he would encourage peer mentoring and position such as prefects in schools as people who have entered a peer mentoring programme had a different outlook, a different approach and may be more mature. Those were excellent things to be encouraged.

(57) In reply to a question, Mr Atkinson said that he did not in any way penalise apprentices for failing the courses.

(58) .

(59) In answer to a question, Mr Atkinson explained that there was an incentive for apprentices to do well. Apprentices would progress in salary terms as they achieved qualifications and as they progressed in their training. He advised that the apprentices were not asked to pay the course fees back. He said that his company did however ask for payment back on adult programmes. If an apprentice wanted to complete another course, and they were in a permanent job by that time, the company would ask them to sign up to an agreement if they do not complete then would have to pay a percentage back. This meant that if an apprentice left the company 3½ years into the programme that would have cost the company £100,000 or more and that was just a loss to the business.

(60) Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments, which included the following:

(61) In answer to a question by the Chairman, Mr Atkinson advised that the company's retention rate was quite good and every year when it sought an approval to take on as many apprentices as they wanted they had to prove that they were still getting the retention rate and the return from this. Seeing people coming through into engineering, supervisory jobs etc was really important.

(62) The Chairman thanked Mr Atkinson for taking the time to attend the meeting.

(63) The Chairman commented that the Committee has now received four separate types of presentation each one had added its own value and in many ways they mesh together. He agreed to produce a summary of the key points of information that the Committee had heard to date from a sample of; pupils and employers. At the next meeting of the POSC the Committee would have the opportunity to speak with 16-19 year old providers, and KCC Officers and Cabinet Member to gain an understanding of the work to be carried out to fulfil KCC's new role taking over the role of the Learning Skills Council.

(64) The Chairman advised that Members that at the next meeting the aim was to have a similar second half of the meeting to be held on 20 May when they would have the opportunity with the information that they had learnt from the students and the employers to hear from lead people to provide 16-19

year and to put these issues to the Mrs R Turner, Managing Director, Mrs S Hohler, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Mrs J Whittle, Deputy Lead Member for Children and Families and Mrs S Dunn, Head Of 14-24 Innovation Unit.

(65) RESOLVED that the questions and comments made by Members be noted.