

Firms take Skills Pledge at network meeting

by Lauren Margrave

A BREAKFAST meeting at Guildford Cathedral's Refectory on Tuesday saw six local companies make The Skills Pledge.

The networking event, organised by Surrey Chambers of Commerce was held as part of the Government's skills policies to encourage employers to invest more in skills training for their workforce.

Sponsored by the Surrey Learning and Skills Council, the event attracted 104 businesses to hear speeches from Lord Tony Young, Jonathan Shaw MP and Dan May, director of Ramsac.

The Skills Pledge is a voluntary public commitment from employers to encourage and support their employees to improve their skills and gain qualifications. Skills include

literacy, numeracy and working towards relevant and valuable qualifications.

The purpose is to ensure all members of staff are skilled, competent and able to make a full contribution to the successes of the organisation.

By making the Skills Pledge, employers promise to train their staff to at least NVQ Level 2 – the equivalent of five GCSEs.

Among the six Surrey-based companies that made the pledge were Surrey Fire & Rescue, and Ramsac Ltd.

Russell Parsons, chief fire officer at Surrey Fire & Rescue, said: "The development of our staff is all important to us. We know and understand that providing our employees with the training and skills that they need is essential.

"We take our commitment to the skills pledge seriously and feel certain that it will

make a difference to the future success of the Surrey Fire Service."

Dan May, operations director of outsourced IT services company Ramsac, added: "We have long believed in the benefits of robust training for our team. Not only does it increase motivation and improve staff retention, keeping our staff levels up-to-date and relevant enables us to provide better service to our clients.

"Developing our team has helped us build a future facing business. We are therefore delighted to be publicly declaring our commitment by making the Skills Pledge."

Other companies that took the pledge at the cathedral this week include Eagle Radio 96.4, Barcelona restaurant and the music venue the Boilerroom, Countryliner Group and Surrey Chambers.

Minister for Skills and



Seen from left: Jonathan Shaw MP, Dan May from Ramsac, Roger Belcher from Countryliner, Jayne Dickinson from East Surrey College, Dominique Czopor from the Boilerroom, Paul Marcus from Eagle Radio, Russell Pearson from Surrey Fire & Rescue and Lord Tony Young.

Apprenticeships, Lord Young said: "By making the skills pledge, firms send an important signal that they value their people.

"It's never been more important for employers in the South East to develop the skills of their workforce, as those that utilise the potential of every

employee, will be well placed to weather tough economic times, and to make the most of future opportunities for growth.

"That's why this Government will continue to support employers with increasingly flexible skills and training support, enabling

every firm to access the training they need, when and where they need it. By 2010/11 we'll be spending some £5 billion a year on skills."