

**West Lancashire Local Strategic Partnership**  
**Employment, Learning & Skills Thematic Group**

**Minutes of the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2010 meeting**

**West Lancashire Investment Centre**

**Attendance:**

Cllr Adrian Owens	Portfolio Holder Regeneration and Estates (Chairman)
Maureen Fazal	Exsel (Int) CIC (West Lancashire Community Recycling)
Chris Hartley	Skelmersdale and Ormskirk College
Greg Mitten	West Lancashire Council for Voluntary Service (WLCVS)
Greg Swift	WLCVS and Quarry Bank social enterprise
Philip A Russell	Lancashire County Developments Ltd (LCDL)
Phyllis Roberts	Lancashire Young Persons Service
Paula Huber	West Lancashire Borough Council (WLBC)

**1. Apologies**

Peter Scott, Skills Funding Agency, Pat Perkins, Skills for Health, Ann Boocock, Lancashire County Council.

Peter Scott has now retired from the Skills Funding Agency. The group expressed their thanks to Peter for his involvement with the group over recent years.

**2. Minutes of last meeting, 21<sup>st</sup> July 2010**

Agreed as a correct record.

**3. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

**4. LCC Update on Local Area Agreement**

PAR circulated a Regeneration & Renewal article titled 'Pickles scraps local area agreements' and confirmed that although the local area agreement programme will not continue, there will still be targets to meet and that these are likely to be set at a local level based on local needs. The Chairman commented on how fortunate West Lancashire was to have received Performance Reward Grant funding before this decision was made.

**5. LSP Performance Reward Grant – West Lancashire Challenge project**

The Chairman explained to the group that he felt the West Lancashire Challenge bid was a high quality bid that demonstrated good partnership working and although the process was still ongoing, it had already gone some way to identifying SMART targets, which should be stretch but achievable.

The Chairman also explained how the Council had been moving forward with the appointment of its two Apprenticeship posts that would support the Council's Economic Regeneration team's activity, including the West Lancashire Challenge project and thanked members of the group for circulating the information amongst their networks and contacts.

PH explained the adverts had generated a great deal of interest with twenty nine applications being received, short listing to take place later in the week, with interviews proposed for the following week.

GM commented how the projects outcomes and objectives sat naturally within the Skills and Worklessness Action Plan for the group to be able to review, monitor and make recommendations on future activity. GM reported how some activity had already commenced i.e. the rural finance element was going forward through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) to try to secure funding and progress had been made in recruiting the community engagement officer employed by WLCVS.

## **6. Skills and Worklessness Action Plan**

PH updated the group on Item 8 – Cabinet had agreed to Council officers pursuing the Concordat initiative, which is aimed at helping businesses to find out more about Council contracts thereby trying to support existing and new supply chain members for the benefit of the West Lancashire economy. This is an exciting new initiative and plans are in place (subject to funding) to undertake events and workshops to engage with businesses and provide as much hands on support as possible.

The Chairman added how, through the use of various funding mechanisms, WLBC would be looking to recruit a marketing resource in the near future to focus on this area of work and generate new business opportunities for the Investment Centre.

GS updated the group on Item 5 – meetings had been held with Lancashire County Council (LCC) and officers from the Planning and Development Division of WLBC (Ian Gill), which had resulted in LCC having a walk-round the Skelmersdale area with GS and Ian Gill. GS reported how LCC would be piloting a taxi service in the New Year to assess demand and take up levels, so a very positive step following a long journey of discussions between the various parties.

PAR updated the group on Item 11 –

NI 152 reduce worklessness – 14%, down by 0.1% (County average 13.5% up by 0.1%);

NI 153 reducing worklessness in the worst performing neighbourhoods - 32.4%, down by 0.1% (County average unchanged at 31.3%):

Best performing ward	Ashurst 26.6%
Worst performing ward	Digmoor 41.6%

Biggest change                      Tanhouse down 0.7% and Digmoor up 0.9%

NI 171 increase VAT registrations - as of Aug 2010 11.5% down 0.6% from Aug 2009

The overall picture in West Lancashire was improving, PAR added how it would be useful to track this going forward but this may prove impossible due to changes within the public sector.

PR reported on information relating to NEET target of 5.7%, explaining how difficult these are to manage and monitor, explaining that there are 1200 school leavers in Skelmersdale and half of these leave the area for Wigan and Sefton colleges, showing how difficult it is to measure. Of those remaining in the Borough, around 40 individuals are sick, pregnant or young parents and 60 are working with CXL and the majority of NEET's have lower than 5 GCSE's.

The NEET target is measured between 1<sup>st</sup> November and 31<sup>st</sup> January and a meeting was recently held with a number of partners including the Princes Trust, Gingerbread and course leaders for motorbike repairs and skiing/catering to discuss who is delivering what and how any gaps could be plugged. PR explained how they had a budget of £9k to plug any gaps, i.e. provide courses not already available. GS suggested a football referee course as a possible idea as this had proved very popular in previous years.

PR went on to explain how there are different tiers of NEETs. Tier 3 are able and looking for employment; Tier 2 are those with Youth Offending Team orders or are in care and need additional support (this group is the majority of the NEETs) and Tier 1 require intensive support. PR also commented on how good Skelmersdale and Ormskirk College are and that partners including other colleges are surprised with the amount of work undertaken with regards to NEETs. A 'New Year, New Start' event to take place in the Concourse with providers.

MF added that there are several Wigan college students on placements within her organisation working towards a dumper truck licence with SD Training, and commented on how keen and ready to work they are.

## **7. Economic Regeneration Manager Update**

PH updated the group on the RDPE Programme, reporting that under the Business Support measures a total of 134 enquiries had been received, resulting in 18 full applications. 11 applications had been approved and of these, 8 are from West Lancashire businesses. Two additional applications from West Lancashire have received an 'in principle' approval subject to further information. If approved, this would mean 85% of the take up has been by West Lancashire businesses. Under the Basic Services measure, 12 Expression of Interests are proceeding to full application stage, 5 of these are within West Lancashire (42%).

PH updated the group on the Mid Lancashire Future Jobs Fund programme, explaining that West Lancashire, through many of its partners around the table, had managed to secure 83 vacancies.

WLBC are looking to appoint 1 FJF placement to assist with tourism and marketing activity and there are potentially 4 other placements through the Council's Street Scene division later in the year.

PH provided the group with information relating to the Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board membership, including invitations to attend the marketing sub group, being informed on future marketing activity such as brand development and the recent opportunity to provide input into the 2011 Visitor Guide. A copy of the 'rosyview' publication was circulated, which included a full page spread on Cross Farm Holiday Cottages in Downholland, Ormskirk. *The LSP Executive are expecting a 6 monthly update on membership shortly, PH to circulate update to this group for information/comments.*

GS reported on CVS' experience of the FJF programme, explaining that Round 1 had been very successful securing 15 candidates with 5 employers. Round 2 had been a little more problematic with 22 candidates looking for placement opportunities. There were two main issues, the availability of individuals and the unsuitability/lack of individuals coming forward from Job Centre Plus (JCP). PR suggested GS liaise with Edge Hill University over possible candidates.

The discussion led on to the attendance of JCP at these meetings and how useful it would have been to talk through these issues. *PH agreed to investigate whether JCP could attend in the future, ideally a senior member perhaps with a 'sub regional' remit who could provide a good overview.*

## **8. Any Other Business**

MF reported on two successful funding bids, one for £2,500 for a bicycle recycling project, which they were working with LCC on and secondly funding for an upholstery initiative. MF also reported that the WL Social Enterprise Hub now had 43 registered businesses.

CH updated the group on their Implementation Strategy to move Train to Gain over to Apprentices, and that they were planning to move 50% across (this is over and above the Government's ask). CH also reported how difficult it was for the College to find apprenticeship placements within the private sector.

The Chairman reiterated the Council's commitment to employ two apprentices in the next few weeks and how he hoped this would encourage others to do the same.

GS informed the group of an upcoming training programme aimed at their members and others. The 'influencing and participation in policy making in West Lancashire' was a forthcoming course and encouraged group members

to get involved, course would involve 3 full days and 3 half days. More information available on their website <http://www.wlcvs.org/training.html>

GM reported how the WL Hub was held in high esteem by the Association of CVS', acknowledging this was a good model to use for Lancashire. GM also updated the group on an approach made by a nursing/medical care social enterprise and if this was to progress it could potentially create new jobs. *GM to investigate arranging a presentation from this organisation to a future meeting.*

PR invited members of the group to a transitional evening at WL Community High School, which would bring together schools, colleges and specialist schools to provide information for pupils and families from Year 7 upwards considering their future educational opportunities.

PAR briefly explained elements of the Work Programme, highlighting that there would be between 3 and 8 prime contractors and that a meeting was to be held in County Hall, Preston in December to find out how partners can work together to deliver this important programme for Lancashire. *PH to include Work Programme as an Agenda item for the next meeting.*

PH circulated an article from The Independent newspaper as it had a really great two page feature on potato growers in West Lancashire.

## **9. Next Meeting**

26<sup>th</sup> January 2011 at 10.00am, West Lancashire Investment Centre.