

28th JULY 2011

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

COMMUNITY ACTION IN WASHINGTON – PROGRESS REVIEW

Progress Report on 2011/12 Workplan: Employment Priority

1 Why has it come to Committee?

- 1.1 The report provides an update of progress against agreed actions in the current year's (2011/12) Work Plan (**Annex 1**).

2 Background

- 2.1 Building on Area Committee's key priority of helping local people access employment opportunities from 2010/11 workplan, the focus for 2011/12 is on young people Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs). Job prospects, including lifelong learning, and apprenticeships for young people linked to culture, inclusion and heritage have also been identified.
- 2.2 At the last Area Committee held in June the Employment Task and Finish Group was established building on the previous year's programme. That Task and Finish Group met in June and this report presents an update and progress report on activities, and proposals for further work to deliver against this priority

3 Progress

3.1 NEET Support and Co-ordination

- 3.1.1 Members will recall the commissioning of a research and audit project utilising SWITCH resource, to provide the Committee with robust evidence which identifies gaps, encourages a partnership approach and promotes available opportunities for NEET young people, boosting engagement and reducing NEET figures in Washington. The results of that research are attached in a report as **Annex 2**.
- 3.1.2 The initial findings of the study evidences that demand for training/apprenticeships and employment far outstrips provision, young people on the unemployment register are active in their search for employment but lack of opportunities is hampering their progress, many young people are participating in training opportunities without access to employers and the labour market, so are ill prepared for the working environment, transport remains an issue for young people accessing training provision in Sunderland, changes to EMA and the introduction of a new bursary scheme will influence take up of training opportunities, recent cut backs and loss of programmes and new Government proposals will impact on support and opportunities available to young people, there is limited access to employers and there is a real need for more employer involvement.
- 3.1.3 The findings of this study together with the results and recommendations from the Employer's Demand Survey (detailed in paragraph 3.2) will inform a proposed 'Call for Projects' to support NEET young people in Washington. Members are requested

to approve an allocation of up to £100,000 for the commissioning of activity through the Call for Project Protocol and the draft Project Brief attached as **Annex 3**.

- 3.1.4 In line with the Call for Projects Protocol, local Statutory and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups are invited to submit a SIB funding application within a given timeframe, explaining how they will deliver the project outlined in the project brief. All applications received are appraised through the SIB Governance process and the results will be presented to the next Area Committee, with a recommendation to approve the strongest application(s).

3.2 Employer's Demand Survey

- 3.2.1 This report provides an update on the production of a report outlining the skills needs and employment demand for employers in the Washington area. The survey is part of a city-wide piece of work, but has been extended to cover a larger sample size of Washington-based employers and also to include specific questions around opportunities for young people seeking to enter the labour market in Washington. The survey and subsequent report is being delivered by research company Trends Business Research (TBR). Washington Area Committee has contributed £10,000 towards this piece of work.

- 3.2.2 The survey comprised of predominantly telephone interviews lasting 15 minutes, supplemented by a select number of in-depth face to face interviews with key employers and stakeholders. The target for Washington was to achieve 120 telephone interviews and around 150 have actually taken place. In terms of the in-depth interviews, the researchers are confident that they have consulted relevant employers, including Nissan, and captured the key issues. The survey has now ended and the data is being analysed. The findings will be presented initially against a number of key themes, including skills shortages; skills gaps; employment of people from disadvantaged groups (including young people); business development aspirations and the challenges that may hinder them; training provision and the ability/desire to tailor courses in the future; predicted skills issues in the future.

The first draft of the report is expected to be complete during week commencing 1 August 2011. The final report will be tabled at the Area Committee Meeting on 29 September 2011 and the findings will be used to inform future strategic spend by Washington Area Committee to support employment and training prospects for young people, particularly NEETs.

- 3.2.3 A request has been made to Washington Area Committee for SIB funding to hold a Breakfast Meeting for Washington employers and key stakeholders. If approved, this meeting will be used to engage with representatives from local employers, present the findings and agree a way forward to address the issues identified. The meeting will also consider the work being carried out by the NEET Activity Co-ordinator in terms of employment and training opportunities for young people aged 16-18 in the area. It is proposed that the Breakfast Meeting will be held at the George Washington Hotel on Wednesday, 10 August 2011 from 8.00 to 10.30 am.

3.3 Heritage and Education Project

- 3.3.1 The Heritage and Education Project which was approved at the last Area Committee has commenced recruitment to a 12 month post and an apprenticeship. The

recruitment attracted a massive response with more than 100 applicants. It is anticipated the project will commence 1st August 2011.

3.4 Update on Washington Managed Workspace for Washington Area Committee

- 3.4.1 The Business Case was submitted at the end of May 2011. There have been some queries raised at appraisal stage over the timetable for delivery of the project being too long and also demonstration of value for money due to the complexity of a land acquisition, design and build project. Work has therefore been undertaken on reducing the timescale for delivery for funding and it is hoped that there will be an extension to the end of November for submission of further documentation to satisfy the value for money queries.
- 3.4.2 Tender documents are being prepared and it is hopeful these will be released on the 18 July 2011 to start the process of identifying a suitable site and developer for the scheme. If all goes to plan, construction will commence in April 2012, with the new managed workspace opening in April 2013. For any further information please contact Berni Whitaker, Enterprise Manager on 0191 305 1205
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3.5 Job Linkage Service in Washington

- 3.5.1 The Job Linkage Service operates out of 2 venues in Washington, the Galleries and the Washington Millennium Centre. Previously supported through the Working Neighbourhoods Fund, the service has delivered comprehensive employability services to residents of Washington – **Annex 5** provides feedback and statistics on performance and users of the service.
- 3.5.2 The Job Linkage services will be retained in Washington at the current sites until March 2012 through Coalfields Regeneration Trust funding, independently sourced by Sunderland North Community Business Centre (SNCBC), and City of Sunderland funding. Whilst there are changes to who the project can now work with, the project will continue to support its current caseload but will be unlikely to work with clients who are new Job Seekers Allowance clients (JSA) or new clients 'not in receipt of benefits'.

Recommendations:

Members are requested

- To note the report, presented on behalf of the Employment Task and Finish Group
- To note the recommendations from the NEET Co-ordination Report attached as **Annex 2**.
- To approve an allocation of up to £100,000 for the commissioning of activity through the Call for Project Protocol to support NEETs in Washington as presented in paragraph 3.1.3
- To consider the proposed Project Brief attached as **Annex 3** and agree project outcomes to be included in that brief.

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