

Action for Wiltshire Programme Board

25 May 2011 3pm – 5pm



Meeting Notes

Attended:

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| Andrew Kerr (AK) | Wiltshire Council (Chair) |
| Cllr Jane Scott (JS) | Wiltshire Council |
| Steve Stone (SS) | Wiltshire Strategic Economic Partnership |
| Philippa Read (PR) | Community First |
| Mike Williams (MW) | Wessex Association of Chambers of Commerce |
| Phil Harrison (PH) | Jobcentre Plus |
| Rt. Ven John Wraw | Wiltshire Assembly |
| Alistair Cunningham (AC) | Wiltshire Council, Economy & Enterprise |
| Niki Lewis (NL) | Wiltshire Council, Communities, Libraries, Heritage & Arts |
| Haylea Fryer (HF) | Wiltshire Council, Economy & Enterprise |
| Vincent Albano (VB) | Wiltshire Council, Economy & Enterprise |
| Ed Bovingdon (EB) | Wiltshire Council, Economy & Enterprise (Secretariat) |

2. Notes from last meeting (11 February 2011)

The meeting notes were agreed as an accurate account of the last meeting. Verbal updates were received on the action points arising (most picked up as agenda items for the present meeting).

3. Matters Arising

Local Enterprise Partnership

AC updated the Board on the latest progress in establishing a Wiltshire LEP. At a meeting between SS, AC, Steve Richards (SWRDA) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills it emerged that the proposal fully fulfilled the criteria. The only concern was the scale of the Wiltshire bid. It was suggested that Wiltshire should consider working with Swindon to form a LEP. SS and AC asserted strong objection to the idea because the Wiltshire proposal received strong support from local stakeholders most notably the local business community, whilst the previous Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire submission did not.

Government is due to meet with Swindon Borough Council to discuss if there is any interest in working with Wiltshire on a LEP proposal. MW stated he had been invited by Swindon Chamber of Commerce to discuss LEPs.

The Board strongly disagreed with the Government decision. A LEP proposal of a similar scale to Wiltshire by Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly was approved, giving credence to the belief that the negative decision with the Wiltshire proposal was inconsistent. In addition, Wiltshire's largely rural economy differs from Swindon's urban economy, which would create two agendas within the LEP.

Action: JS & SS to write to Mark Prisk, Minister of State for Business and Enterprise as well as local MPs in opposition to a Wiltshire-Swindon LEP.

Action: MW to feedback from meeting with Swindon Chamber of Commerce.

NEETs and the Employability Agenda for Young People

AC updated the Board on the transition arrangements being developed by the Council to transfer from the Connexions Service to the new Integrated Youth Service. AC also informed the Board that he and HF had met with Mal Munday, Head of Service for the Integrated Youth Service on the 17 May to establish clarity over the strategic positioning of the NEETs agenda. It was agreed that the Employment & Skills Board on which both AC and Carolyn Godfrey sit, would provide the overall strategic direction and governance framework as it's purpose is to integrate the Education, Employment and Skills agendas in Wiltshire but that it was an issue that still required strategic focus from the Children and Young People's Trust Board in relation to the 16-18 year old element and up to 24 in the case of 'vulnerable' young people for which they maintain a statutory responsibility. AC explained that Mal is working on the production of a strategic positioning and 'way forward' paper with input from HF.

It was also noted that Carolyn Godfrey had been invited by AK to join the Action for Wiltshire Board going forward.

Action for Wiltshire – Wiltshire Assembly Session (9 June)

HF informed the Board that Action for Wiltshire has a presentation slot on the agenda at the 9 June Wiltshire Assembly meeting. JS and AK will present the achievements under phase 1 and announce the launch of phase 2. A short highlights DVD is being produced covering some of the Phase 1 achievements.

HF provided the Board with a demonstration of the Action for Wiltshire web test page. The Board was strongly in favour of including some 'good news' stories and case studies of the beneficiaries of Action for Wiltshire with a mix of both businesses and individuals. AK suggested that a policy of transparency should be adopted. However, minutes, project plans and briefs should only go live once they have been approved. It was agreed that contact details should be given for the programme office rather than individual project 'owners'. SS suggested the use of a map to outline where the projects are taking place. HF stated that largely the programme operates countywide but it will be possible to detail the geographically targeted support in an interactive feature on the website. JS recommended encouraging other websites such as DWP, Wessex Chambers and Jobcentre Plus to place links to the proposed Action for Wiltshire web page. The Board agreed that a publicity campaign will be needed to generate some interest and understanding about Action for Wiltshire.

Action: HF & MC to complete the population of the web page ready for 'go live' and launch at the Wiltshire Assembly event on the 9 June.

4. Impact of the Recession Update

AC confirmed that the Area Action Force was mobilised to deal with the closure of the Virgin site in Trowbridge. Virgin has now responded to JCPs offer of support and agreed to meet with the Area Action Force but a date is to be confirmed. JS recommended contacting the press to announce the meeting and to keep the pressure on Virgin.

AC presented the latest findings from the Recession Impact Analysis. The key headline was that Wiltshire has dealt with the downturn slightly worse than the UK and the South West, which has weathered the recession better than the country overall. 2011 has seen a temporary recovery but it is not set to last. Companies are taking on new employees but on a much smaller scale than pre-recession. More detailed analysis is due to be released shortly as the data has not been broken down to remove any anomalies, for

instance military movements. Further analysis could impact upon the Action for Wiltshire schematic. PH commented that there are plans to transfer those on incapacity benefit and employment support allowance onto job seekers allowance. This will cause a sudden rise in the 'unemployment count', which will need to be unpicked in future data analysis.

Discussion then moved onto how to target the unemployed with the most significant barriers such as disabilities. The consensus was that strategy should be over the long term and aim to provide support for the businesses which employ the disabled. JS suggested more needs to be made of the existing resource the Council has in place within Adult Social Care to address this as there is an established dedicated team (Wiltshire Employment Support Team).

Action: AC to issue a press notice ref. the forthcoming meeting with Virgin.

Action: AC/HF to issue refined Recession Impact Analysis once latest data has been analysed.

Action: HF to liaise with Wiltshire Employment Support Team.

5. Update on Implementation

Project Briefs & Initiatives Underway/Starting Shortly

HF provided an introduction/overview of each of the dozen or so Project Briefs that had been circulated to Board members ahead of the meeting. AC provided a verbal update on both the ERDF Incubation Environments and Business Support Model projects that are being developed via stakeholder and partner engagement. AC announced that these would come to the Board in full at the next meeting.

Gantt Chart

Item deferred owing to lack of time.

Action: MC to distribute the GANTT along with the meeting notes.

Building the sustainability of the Wiltshire Advice Line

HF updated the Board on the CAB's efforts to develop the sustainability of the Wiltshire Advice Line including a forthcoming Consumer Direct bid that may create 40 jobs, initial conversations with Swindon CAB, and a meeting with John Rogers, Head of Customer Access at Wiltshire Council to gauge interest and appetite for a secondment/volunteering scheme to enable staff with the right skill set to gain valuable training and experience by being released to support the Wiltshire Advice Line. It was agreed by the Board that this had the potential to earn greater gains beyond the immediate continuation of the Advice Line, in the realm of improved customer service and support, improved intelligence about our common customer base etc. It was resolved that John Rogers would consider his interest and broker discussion around this with other services in the Council who shared the customer base and had staff with the skill set required. John will be convening a wider meeting in June to scope out the opportunity for working together and the practicalities of this.

AC informed the Board that there is sufficient under-spend in the Phase 1 budget to enable further assistance to the Wiltshire Advice Line but not at the same level HF suggested that having talked to Sarah Cardy she understands the service could be maintained with just the 4 Advisers if they were hosted by the local hub teams alongside the volunteers rather than in Trowbridge with a supervisor. This way the majority of the

staff would be spared redundancy in September and the competency and experience they have built up over the last couple of years would be put to use to train any further volunteers/secondee. The Board was in full support of the proposal to continue to fund the 4 advisers until April 2012 when their jobs would become sustainable through the Consumer Direct project if the CAB's bid was successful. The Board was in full support of the proposal to develop a volunteer/secondee arrangement between the Council and the CAB for the purposes of providing support to the Wiltshire Advice Line between now and April 2012. The Board supported the proposal to encourage other Public Services Board partners to consider whether they can also help in this way.

Budget

AC provided a summary position on the expenditure to date in Phase 1, highlighting an area of under-spend in relation to Merfyn Williams' elements of the Wiltshire Potential Programme. Specifically against NEET Mentoring and the Graduate Road shows. AC raised that Merfyn had put forward a suggestion about how this under-spend could be re-invested having recently evaluated the impact of the 'Get Prepared' programme.

Action: AC & AK to discuss re-utilisation of under-spend outside of the meeting.

6. Green Deal

Vincent Albano (Senior Climate Change Officer) introduced the Green Deal, outlining Government plans to scale up the framework to enable universal access to energy efficiency measures. Installation will be paid upfront by a loan but costs will be recouped through savings in energy bills. The recommendation is for Wiltshire Council to take the lead by investing capital to lever in finance from the private sector and to use local installers. It could also be scaled up to include renewable energy. This approach would yield the greatest level of local economic benefit and demonstrates localism with tangible benefits. There is potential to work with Severn Wye Energy and adjoining Local Authorities have approached regarding the potential for a consortium bid.

Some reservation was expressed regarding the 5-8 year payback on the loan. SS suggested SMEs and individuals would be thinking in the short term and might hesitate in investing in view of the disruption caused during the installation. The Board valued the plans but agreed further research would be needed once more information from Government is available. There was agreement in principle that Wiltshire Council should become a provider but a full risk appraisal would be required to inform that decision.

7. AOB

HF raised the 'Supporting Youth Employment' paper recently released by Government and mentioned that a couple of Employment Support Programme proposals were in development with partners and that these in addition to the Business Support Model and EDRF Incubation Environments project briefs will be covered in greater detail at the next meeting.

Next meeting: Currently scheduled for 3 August but September was proposed in view of the summer holidays.

Action: MC to re-schedule the next Board meeting for September.