

Report to: Regeneration Panel

Date: 18 March 2009

Subject: Wigan Economic Partnership Meeting
Minutes from the Meeting held on 15 January 2009

Report of: Executive Director of Environmental Services

Contact officer: Naomi Sherwood 01942 828961

Purpose / summary: To inform and update Members on the work and key decisions made within the Wigan Economic Partnership (WEP) (part of the LSP structure).

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: N/A

Recommendation / decision: Members note the contents of the report.

Key Decision: This report does not involve a key decision. The decision made as a result of this report will be published within **48 hours** and cannot be actioned until **seven working days** have elapsed, i.e. before 27 March 2009.

Risks / Implications:

Financial:	N/A
Staffing:	N/A
Policy:	N/A
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	N/A
Wards affected:	N/A

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?

No

If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution? **No**

Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget? **No**

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **No**

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:	X		X
Discussion leading to a decision		Discussion	
Monitoring		Decision	
Sharing for corporate understanding		Information	

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
Regeneration 18/03/09			

There are no Background Papers to this Report within the meaning of Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Proper Officer Martin Kimber

Date 26 February 2009

**Wigan Economic Partnership Meeting
Thursday 15 January 2009 at 8.30am
Platt Bridge Community Enterprise Zone**

Minutes

Present

Miranda Allan (Chair)	Allan Environmental Solution Ltd and Wigan Chamber Council
Diane Brennan	Jackson Stephen LLP
Susan Gambles	Economic Regeneration Office (ERO), Wigan Council
Anne Gent	Job Centre Plus
Cath Hurst	Wigan and Leigh College
Alan Johnson	Wigan Economic Partnership / Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust
Cllr Molyneux	Wigan Council
Pam Stewart	Borough Wide Community Network
John Winnard	Wm Santus & Co Ltd

In Attendance

Naomi Sherwood	Economic Regeneration Office (ERO), Wigan Council
Kevin Walsh	Economic Regeneration Office (ERO), Wigan Council

Apologies

Sue Astbury	Children and Young People Services (CYPS), Wigan Council
Marie Gillott	Job Centre Plus
Joe Scalon	Totesport

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 Miranda Allen welcomed all to the meeting and pointed out the £21 million of Working Neighbourhood Funding (WNF) is a huge opportunity to make a difference on the Boroughs incapacity benefit register and to counter any effects of a recession.
- 1.2 Miranda Allen recognised the need to ensure time is spent more efficiently with papers being sent out in order for comments and questions to be raised in advance of the meeting. This will ensure questions can be addressed fully at the meetings.

Miranda Allen also thanked, for their time, the worklessness working group and evaluators of round 1 and 2 commissions.

2.0 Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 None were declared. Members were reminded of the need for transparency with declarations of interest.

3.0 Award of Round 2 Commissions (Kevin Walsh)

3.1 Item 3a – Community Engagement Delivery (Small Grants)

- 3.2 There was a disappointing level of response with only 1 tender submitted to deliver a small community grant scheme for community groups to tackle worklessness.
- 3.3 The tender underwent the formal procurement process for tenders. It was opened in the presence of Cllr Paul Prescott and a gateway check was then undertaken to ensure all information requested in the brief had been supplied. It was then independently evaluated by Ian Riding and Lynne Calvert from the Primary Care Trust, Terry Dickinson from the Learning and Skills Council and Patricia Evans from Wigan Council. A threshold of 20 points was set for tenders to be called to interview.
- 3.4 The tender submitted was from the community foundation for Greater Manchester. It passed the evaluation threshold with a score of 21.48. However all interviewers felt from the interview that the organisation would not be proactive in reaching hard to reach community groups.
- 3.5 The worklessness working group recommends the economic partnership rejects and re-advertises this tender. If this proposal is accepted it would leave a gap in provision and delay in community groups accessing money. One option in the interim would be for Wigan Council to operate a temporary programme for 3 months. Wigan Council were reluctant to do this but recognised the need for community groups to be able to access money was paramount.
- 3.6 It had been hoped that local organisations would have tendered for this commission so work will also be under taken to enable local organisations are in a position to submit a tender. The policy officer for partnership / voluntary sector in chief executives department at Wigan Council was identified as a possible option to deliver the temporary programme.
- 3.7 Members agreed to accept the recommendation of the worklessness working group and to establish a temporary programme for 3 months and re-issue the tender. Members approved delegated authority to the local authority.
- 3.8 A discussion took place as to whether the weighting in the evaluation needs to be addressed as the tender had met the threshold. Kevin Walsh said this would always be an issue and the interview process identifies those bids.

3.9 Item 3b – Development of a Crèche Facility: Feasibility Study

- 3.10 Two tenders were received, ERS Research and Consultancy and EKOS Limited. The evaluation of tenders and the interview confirmed ERS Research and Consultancy as the strongest candidate.
- 3.11 The meeting approved the recommendation of the worklessness working group to award the commission to ERS Research and Consultancy.

4.0 Round 3 Open and Competitive Commissions

4.1 There are 5 commissions which will be issued on 30 January 2009 on the worklessness website.

4.2 Economic Climate

4.3 Wigan Borough has seen a 30% increased in unemployment in the last 12 months but the only significant redundancy has been at Asda. With 50,000 commuting out of the borough to work and 20,000 commuting in this suggests Wigan is being hit by redundancies outside of the borough.

4.4 This commission will look to understand the unique situation in Wigan, highlight the growth sectors for the other side of the recession and shape future working neighbourhood fund commissions.

4.5 Members also thought it was worth including within this commission traditional areas people travel to and establishing the future skills needs of these areas. It was confirmed this would be included in the commission and was also part of the consultation process for strategic sites.

4.6 The meeting was informed of the need for commissions to be advertised to a wider audience and through member organisations websites. Members were asked to forward details of relevant colleagues that can help facilitate this.

4.7 Employer Engagement / Job Brokerage

4.8 This would fund a customised employer brokerage programme to enable people to access jobs and also provide in job support for 6 months. Any organisation will be able to refer into this programme and the employer engagement post will ensure there is no duplication of activity with job centre plus.

4.9 Volunteer Programme / Placement Opportunities

4.10 This commission would open up more placements and volunteering opportunities for people. The benefits implications when volunteering was recognised. Members recognised the implications for charities as there is a substantial cost for them to take on volunteers for example public liability insurance which can prevent their ability to take on volunteers. It was agreed this would be built into the commission.

4.11 Enterprise Sector / Sector Development

4.12 This commission looks to build on the success of the food network and allow for interaction, collaboration and knowledge amongst the business sector. In addition to the sectors identified in the papers for the meeting, health and social care would also be included.

4.13 Building Trading Capacity – Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and Third Sector

4.14 This commission looks to enable and give local businesses the best opportunity

to successfully compete for public sector contracts in a fair way. Members discussed the need to ensure the contracts are fully funded and organisations are able to get full cost recovery as otherwise it makes these contracts untenable for small local businesses. Kevin Walsh confirmed this will be feed into the commission.

4.15 Members asked if there were any protocols available that includes the selection criterion of local sourcing. It was agreed that guidance on procurement rules would be brought to the next meeting.

4.16 Members approved all Round 3 Open and Competitive Commissions.

5.0 Item 5 – Round 3 Selective Commissions

5.1 Selective commissions by-pass the open and competitive process and work with pre-selected organisations. There are several reasons either because the organisation is unique and only they are able to deliver the activity or they are already delivering the activity. Tenders are required to complete the project specification form, provide a full cost breakdown and undergo an appraisal.

5.2 Community Engagement: Delivery (Client Engagement)

5.3 This commission will appoint an organisation to deliver and run the traffic light system and provide support for third sector organisations to be commissioned to deliver client engagement work. This commission links to complementary support programme 'building trading support'.

5.4 People with Disabilities

5.5 This commission builds on and extends supported employment teams existing provision to increase capacity for helping people with a disability into work. It will also provide one-to-one support once people are in employment. The commission has a budget of £335,000.

5.6 Local Employment Agreements

5.7 This commission will employ a person to co-ordinate the development of local employment agreements and work with developers to ensure local employment conditions are built into development contracts.

5.8 Public Sector Apprenticeship Programme

5.9 The commission proposes the creation of an apprenticeship programme between Wigan Council, primary care trust and Wigan and Leigh housing. The programme would proactively recruit within deprived areas and from difficult client groups and also provide pastoral support. The apprenticeship programme has been developed by Wigan and Leigh housing. The commission has a budget of £250,000.

5.10 Schools Enterprise

5.11 This commission will expand the Wigan education partnerships existing

'classroom in companies' programme which is a work related learning programme delivered in primary and secondary schools. The commission has a budget of £360,000.

5.12 Business Start-up Support

- 5.13 This commission is requesting £250,000 to match fund the north west development agency's (NWDA) £250,000 business start up programme in Wigan to create a £500,000 programme. The £250,000 working neighbourhood fund (WNF) money would double the outputs proposed by the north west development agency's programme giving a combined total of 200 new business starts. The programme will provide a universal service across the borough.
- 5.14 This would allow Wigan to control how the north west development agency's programme is delivered within the borough instead of having a programme imposed upon the borough.
- 5.15 The meeting discussed the need for new small units in the borough suitable for new start businesses. It was confirmed to the meeting that incubator units was being looked at and once markets has moved into economic regeneration the approach to empty shops will be looked at in more detail.
- 5.16 Members were informed that figures back from the credit crunch show small start up businesses are being more affected then established businesses. Members were asked if they felt access to finance was an issue that should be looked at by working neighbourhood funding. Diane Brennan felt it should be something to be looked at and highlighted the example of the rosebud scheme in Lancashire.
- 5.17 Members agreed access to finance was an area of activity to pursue and Diane Brennan agreed to offer support in the development of this brief.
- 5.18 Members approved all Round 3 Selective Commissions.

6.0 Round 4 Commissions

- 6.1 Kevin Walsh went through the list of round 4 commissions to inform members of activity that would be coming forward. Members had no further questions in relation to these commissions.

7.0 Round 1 Commission – Wigan Skills Shop

- 7.1 This commission has previously been approved by the economic partnership and now the costings are being brought forward; these are quite significant.
- 7.2 The skills shop builds upon the successful retail skills shop and Leigh skills shop, both of which have been very successful in moving people into employment.
- 7.3 Premises have been identified in the grand arcade with very advantageous rates and terms having been secured from Modus. The skills shop will be open at the weekend and late night Thursday. All council staff will have new

contracts negotiated to include this but it will also depend on the other partners to man the shop.

- 7.4 The total value of the commission is £800,000 with cost per job in line with benchmarks. The aim is for a 1 April 2009 opening.
- 7.5 Members questioned if the targets were realistic. Kevin Walsh confirmed they were based upon those achieved within the Leigh skills shop.
- 7.6 A discussion took place as fully concerns were raised that with partners already being paid to deliver this activity, it stops being additional. Members were reassured additionality would be provided as skills shops were seen as independent from job centre plus as they were not associated with benefits and people seemed to be happier to access help there. Additionally is also achieved through front line practitioners sitting next to each other.
- 7.7 It was confirmed the skills shop would be evaluated through the evaluation commission already approved.
- 7.8 Members asked if it would be possible to provide quarterly breakdown of projects and how they were achieving against targets. It was confirmed this would be supplied at future meeting but had not done so yet it was too early into the delivery of activity.
- 7.9 Members approved the recommendation of the worklessness working group approved the Wigan skills shop commission.

8.0 Any Other Business and Close

- 8.1 It was confirmed John Winnard had been accepted as a member of the Regeneration Panel and will attend the meeting on 21 January 2009.
- 8.2 Members were thanked for attending the meeting and the efficient manner in which the meeting had been conducted. This is how all future meetings will be conducted with papers circulated in time for members to raise questions before the meeting and all working neighbourhood fund items would be first on the agenda to ensure the partnership is quorate.
- 8.3 Members asked if the volumes of papers for the meeting were necessary. Members agreed not to print off copies of the papers; these will be provided at the meeting. It was also agreed only summary of projects were required.

9.0 Date of Next Meeting

Friday 27 March 2009 at Platt Bridge Community Zone.

Martin Kimber
Director of Environmental Services
RC/NS/LC
26 February 2009