

Report to: Regeneration Panel

Date: 21 January 2009

Subject: Progress Report on Implementation of the 'What makes Wigan Work?' – Strategy for Reducing Worklessness

Report of: Executive Director of Environmental Services

Contact officer: Kevin Walsh 01942 828954

Purpose / summary: To inform Members of progress in implementing the 'what makes Wigan work?' strategy. The report also updates Members on how the strategy is being adapted to respond to the current financial crisis.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: No alternative options were considered.

Recommendation / decision: That Members note the report.

The decision will be made as a result of this report and will be published within 48 hours.

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

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 21/01/09			

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 2 January 2009

1.0 Background:

1.1 In September 2008, Wigan economic partnership (part of the local strategic partnership) and the Board of Wigan borough partnership (the name of the local strategic partnership in Wigan) approved and adopted the 'what makes Wigan work?' strategy. The strategy seeks to address 3 key issues:

- High levels of worklessness;
- Low skill levels;
- Low levels of enterprise.

1.2 The strategy provides a framework for all partners and stakeholders in Wigan to work together in addressing these key issues and consists of 3 documents:

- An evidence base that identifies the key priority groups and areas;
- An action plan that identifies activity and interventions;
- A commissioning framework that will identify suitable organisations to deliver activity and interventions.

1.3 The development of the strategy was significantly informed through an extensive consultation process involving partners and stakeholders (including the third sector). These documents were circulated previously to panel Members on 17 September 2008 and can be accessed on the web link www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/BusinessRegeneration/RegenerationInitiatives/Worklessness.

1.4 The action plan of the strategy forms the basis of the delivery plan for the achievement of the worklessness indicators within the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

2.0 Progress to Date:

2.1 Following the approval of the strategy, Wigan Council's economic regeneration office (acting as the accountable body for the local strategic partnership) commenced the process of commissioning activity and interventions identified in the agreed action plan. To date, the following interventions have been agreed:

2.2 Open Commissions

- Evaluation Framework
- Social Enterprise Development

2.3 Selective Commissions

- Outreach Engagement Co-ordinator
- Employer Engagement Co-ordinator
- Skills Shop
- Bickershaw Family Employment Initiative
- Marketing and Communication Plan
- Responsive Information Advice and Guidance
- People with Learning Disabilities

2.4 NRF/PRG Continuations

- Vocational Training – Short Courses
- Mental Health - Incapacity Benefit
- Fix It
- PULSE Network
- Business Start-up Support
- Princes Trust Programme

2.5 The following interventions are outstanding and reports will be going to Wigan economic partnership on the 15 January 2009 for consideration:

2.6 Open Commissions

- Outreach Engagement (Client Engagement)
- Outreach Engagement (Small Grants)
- Child care/Dependent care Feasibility Study

2.7 Selective Commissions

- Community Engagement: Delivery (Client Engagement)
- People with Physical Disabilities
- Local Employment Agreements
- Looked after Children and Childcare
- Public Sector Apprenticeship Programme
- Schools Enterprise

2.8 A third commissioning round will be announced on the 30 January 2009 were the following open and selective commissions will be progressed:

- Employer Engagement/Job Brokerage
- Volunteer Programme/Placement Opportunities
- Enterprise Sector/Sector Development
- Building Trading Capacity – Small Medium Enterprises and Third Sector Organisations
- Economic Climate 'Impact on Wigan'

2.9 The current economic downturn has been reflected in the action plan with a change in focus. Key interventions have been brought forward in response to the downturn including the establishment of an emergency fund to assist individuals in the borough facing redundancy. Specifically, this intervention will allow Council staff to work directly with individuals facing redundancy and to offer training and re-skilling opportunities and also to assist with job search activity.

2.10 There are ongoing negotiations with the North West Development Agency (NWDA) to co-commission business start up activity from 1 April 2009. This activity is assuming greater importance in the current economic climate.

2.11 Further work will take place over the coming months to develop and implement activity that will focus on increasing skill levels. This activity will be informed by the Adult skills strategy currently in development.

3.0 Alternative options considered and reason for the recommended option:

3.1 No alternative options have been considered as the details form part of the worklessness strategy previously approved and circulated.

4.0 Conclusions:

4.1 The current economic downturn has surprised everybody in terms of severity and speed. The action plan and commissioning framework of the worklessness strategy have the flexibility and responsiveness to react to the current economic climate. To better understand the potential implications for Wigan, further research work will be undertaken to better understand how we can best react to the economic downturn. An open commission will be announced through the third commissioning round of the worklessness strategy.

Martin Kimber
Director of Environmental Services
PR/ER/KW/LC/33.0P
2 January 2009