



County Durham
Economic Partnership

MINUTES

Meeting	County Durham Economic Partnership Board
Date of Meeting	Monday 13 th May 2013
Time	13.00 – 15.00
Venue	South West Durham Training Ltd, Newton Aycliffe

Attendees:

Brian Tanner	Chair
Kaye Rideout	Avanta
Karen Kenmare	Avanta
Paul Henderson	Ingeus
Jack Richardson	Jobcentre Plus
Sue Parkinson	Chair of the Business, Enterprise & Skills Group
Cllr Neil Foster	Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Regeneration
Simon Hanson	Federation of Small Businesses
Brian Manning	ESH Group
Steward Watkins	Business Durham
Geraldine Wilcox	Derwentside Homes
Barbara Gubbins	County Durham Community Federation
Ray Hudson	Durham University
Ian Thompson	Director of Regeneration and Economic Development
Sarah Robson	Chair of Housing Forum
John Tindale	Economic Development, DCC
Andy Palmer	Strategy, Programmes & Performance, DCC

1. Welcome

Brian Tanner welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Cllr Eddie Tomlinson	Chair of Rural Working Group
Christine Yule	Durham Business Group
Ivor Stolliday	Chair of Visit County Durham Board

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were **agreed** as a true record.

4. Matters Arising

Item 6 & 7 – Keith Bartlett and Jack Richardson to meet to discuss potential for collaboration on wage subsidy and work programme opportunities - This is ongoing. Andy Palmer and Melanie Sensicle are due to meet to discuss European Funding opportunities.

Simon Hanson offered FSB communication routes to support messages to wider members – Simon had not heard from either Melanie or Keith in relation to this. Tarryn to chase this.

Stephen Howell to check procurement procedures and opportunities with Cultural Services – Stephen was not present at the meeting therefore no update was reported. Tarryn to chase this.

BES Group to pick up strategic picture on supply chain opportunities linked to major events and report back to the Board – This is on the Agenda for the next BES meeting, therefore Sue will report back at the next Board.

FSB to support on consideration of commercial opportunities – There has been no communication with Melanie in relation to this

5. Chairs Remarks

- Brian informed the Board that the economic news over the last period was not great, but GDP figures were good with a small growth figure for the first quarter. The manufacturing sector is smaller than it was at the start of 2013.
- Welcomed the release of the North East Independent Economic Review, its positive approach and the need for the CDEP to support the subsequent strategies in relation to the county.
- The County Durham Partnership have proposed a 'Positioning County Durham' report which will signify a joined up message for the County, will make the most of planned major events and articulate the position to change perception both nationally and internationally of the county. The report included an action to encourage Visit County Durham and the Cultural Partnership to work with relevant CDEP Working Groups at an early stage of projects so they can be supported in addressing the additional economic opportunities in relation to events.

Action: Positioning County Durham Report to be circulated to the Board

6. Tackling Unemployment through Partnership and Supporting the Work Programme

Jack Richardson gave a presentation to the Board in relation to tackling unemployment through Partnership, this was a joint presentation with Paul Henderson from Ingeus and Kaye Rideout from Avanta.

Challenges facing Job Centre Plus

- Jobs are now being advertised online
- There is a trend for government Departments to undertake more digital advertising
- In relation to the introduction of Universal Credit – all support services need to be as joined up as possible
- Money is now being paid monthly instead of every 2 weeks. Therefore there is need for training in budgeting skills

Ingeus & Avanta Work Programme Contractors

Paul explained that as part of the Work Programme people still sign on at the job centre but work with both Ingeus and Avanta for help with training needs etc.

Challenges:

- Sustainability – agency work/short term jobs/redundancies
- Need to work with people rapidly to make sure their motivation is maintained
- Link up with other partnerships and make improvements to partnership working

Discussion:

How can we work together to improve outcomes for unemployed customers in County Durham? Brian enquired how the three organisations, and particularly Ingeus and Avanta, work together.

The following points were raised:

- Work of Ingeus and Avanta is not geographically separated and there is some degree of competition required between them.
- Need for clients to have constant and consistent support from all partners
- Benefit of a case lead and each client to have tailored and appropriate support
- Important linkages to the Rural Growth Network Funding supported through DEFRA. Could undertake joint activity with the JCP Flexible Support Fund
- Need to understand as partners the value of the Work Programme. JCP explained that DWP are reviewing national figures and the proportions of customers returning after the end of the 2 year programme
- Role of employers and changing aspirations in relation to training
- Mismatch between skills and customer expectation
- Making the most of the opportunity presented through the Learning Working Earning Programme which was launched in March 2013 and has £350,000 to specifically support young people into employment
- Problem of wage incentives and getting the right balance of support for the individual and the employer. There is a need for support to be fairly significant to attract employers to consider recruiting people who have been on such employment support programmes
- Need to promote tailored support provided by JCP and ensure that we work effectively with all employers, particularly large employers like Hitachi

Actions:

- **Sue Parkinson to share details of the Rural Growth Network Funding and its activity**
- **Business Durham and JCP/Ingeus/Avanta to make appropriate contact and discuss the required support for employers**
- **Barbara Gubbins to circulate details about the Learning Working Earning Programme**

7. Investment Planning and EU Funding

Andy Palmer gave a presentation to the Board in relation to the developing opportunities with potential investment for the County, including:

- 2014-20 Programme Summary
- Transition Regions
- UK Proposed 'Growth Programme'
- Types of projects
- Next steps and opportunities for involvement

With regard to potential European projects ICT Broadband has never been able to use European funding, however Phil Jackman (Head of ICT, DCC) is to come to the next Board meeting to discuss this.

We need to have a pipeline of projects worked up sufficiently to take advantage of funding opportunities that become available. It was felt that the need was for good schemes and that as a partnership we should oversee a portfolio of schemes and have an effective pipeline of priority projects. Andy mentioned the Investment Plan for the NELEP which is due to be completed in draft form by end of September. It is expected that the LEP will have a completed strategy by January 2014 and will need to include quality proposals in the submission to Government. NELEP have set up 3 task and vision groups to develop the strategy and investment plan.

Sue Parkinson is on the project pipeline group. Through the BES Sue has set up a task and finish group to discuss and develop partnership priority projects but felt that may need to widen this group to ensure it has the right people attending.

Action: Sue Parkinson to extend the membership of the Investment Planning Task and Finish Group. Partners to be involved as required and depending on the scope of projects developed.

8. NEIER, Leadership Board & Combined Authority

The North East LEP, with the support of Government and Lord Adonis (Chair of the North East Independent Economic Review), commissioned a critical review of the North East economy to identify opportunities and barriers to boost employment and productivity. This review has enabled us to understand the NELEP economy more clearly, identify where future growth opportunities could come from and prioritise actions to make these opportunities a reality.

Ian Thompson gave a brief update in relation to the Lord Adonis report. The Report indicates that there are five key priorities to achieve its aims:

- Champion “North East International”, promoting the region at home and abroad as a magnet for trade, talent, tourism and inward investment.
- A doubling in the number of youth apprenticeships to tackle low skills and high youth unemployment, alongside higher school standards and an increase in the proportion going on to higher education.
- A North East Innovation Board charged with developing strong “innovation and growth clusters”, stimulating universities and their graduates, existing companies and public institutions to create and finance new high growth enterprises and jobs.
- Big improvements in transport infrastructure and services to overcome the relative national and international isolation of the North East and to improve connections within the North East so that people can get to and from work more easily and cheaply.
- The creation of stronger public institutions, including the location of key national institutions – such as the new British Business Bank – in the North East.

Amongst the proposals to be acted upon by the NELEP was the creation of a North East Combined Authority. This is to be an agreement between all seven Local Authorities and should be in place by March 2014. Proposals for this need to be submitted to Government in July and will highlight new ways of working and key areas which are linked to investment which will include; skills, transport, inward investment, trade, innovation, tourism and housing. Partners will be kept informed of developments concerning the Combined Authority.

9. CDEP Review

An update report and supporting documents have now been circulated to the Board. Chairs of the Working Groups have met and given their hugely valued input. Brian thanked the Chairs for their time spent in relation to this.

The next stage will involve refining the functions of the Partnership and recommendations for a more focused CDEP form and structure. Board Members will be involved as appropriate and another report will be presented at the next Board in July.

Action: The Board approved the recommendations and endorsed the secretariat’s progression to the next stage of the Review.

10. Working Group Chairs/VCS Update

VCS

Barbara Gubbins gave an update. She mentioned that Durham Rural Community Council are currently working on a programme in relation to European Funding. A survey has been carried out in relation to tracking the impact of spending cuts on the North East's third sector – Voluntary Organisations Network North East (Vonne). Over all it shows a grim picture for voluntary sector funding and VCS at the moment, indicating that over the last 12 months:

59% of voluntary organisations have seen a decrease in funding

56% are using reserves

23% have no reserves

Business Enterprise & Skills

Sue mentioned that the BES had changed its format to have a focus at each meeting. The last meeting focused on developing retailers in the region. A Task & Finish Group has been set up in relation to this. Sarah Slaven is leading on a task group for Education & Enterprise which was a focus from a previous meeting. Andrew Hodgson from NELEP will be attending the BES meeting in July. Melanie Sensicle is attending the next BES to give an understanding of how Artichoke choose their suppliers for Lumiere and if local suppliers were given consideration.

Housing Forum

Sarah informed the Board that the Housing Forum had taken place earlier in the day. It had a focus on Altogether Healthier. Karen Croucher, a Researcher for York University, attended the Forum to give a presentation on Housing for an ageing society. There was an update from the Older Persons Task Group and from HCA. It was noted that, since the introduction of Welfare Reform, Housing Solutions queries had risen by 100%. With the benefit cap introduction it is estimated that 200 families across the County could be affected from July. Some families could lose up to £145 per week. There is good work ongoing from the Learning Disability Task Group. It was suggested that a future agenda item should include an assessment of the impact welfare reform is having on businesses across the County.

11. Any Other Business

Stewart Watkins mentioned that the Hitachi project is moving ahead at pace. A Procurement Manager has been recruited locally and a HR Manager has also been recruited.

12. Date and Time of next meeting

29th July 2013, 1pm Location TBC

4th November 2013, 1pm Location TBC