

**MINUTES: Business Advisory Group**

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2011**

**34/38 Beverley Road, Hull**



**PRESENT**

|                         |                                   |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Barry Schofield         | Tutty's Office Interiors (Chair)  |
| Keith Warner            | Warner Health                     |
| Phil Ward               | Page Consulting                   |
| Carol Goodaire          | FSB                               |
| Ian Laing               | Total Training Solutions GB North |
| Lee Davison             | YHATA                             |
| Jeff Scott              | Home Inspector Services           |
| Peter Latham Warde      | PLW Consultancy                   |
| Jeff Clarkson           | Clarkson Business Strategy        |
| Susan Dobbs             | Premier Class Education           |
| Claire Crowther         | Your New Horizon                  |
| Sallyann Garrard-Hughes | Business Link Yorkshire           |
| Steve Tomlinson         | Hull CC                           |
| Richard Stevens         | Hull CC                           |
| Martin Hewitson         | Job Centre Plus                   |
| Jenny Smithey           | Kingston Recruitment              |
| Antony Towle            | ONE HULL Business Forum           |

**Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

482. Apologies were received from John Illingworth, Paul Fielder, John Roberts, Tony Anson, Tim Evison, Paul Fielder, Andy Lawrence, Jason McDaid, Janice Collins, Kathryn Shillito, Mark Willett, and John Britton.

**Agenda Item 2: Minutes**

483. The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2011 were agreed as a true and correct record.

**Agenda Item 3: Matters Arising**

484. It was noted that pt. 469 of the previous minutes, newly appointed members of Council had yet to be invited to a future meeting of the BAG as the primary focus was to look in to the findings of the Barriers to Business Survey in order to demonstrate the value of the outcomes from the survey. Councillor Steven Bayes, Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration & Employment, was being considered for a meeting later on in the year.
485. It was noted that pt. 470 of the previous minutes, future questionnaires to members would be planned following the Business Forum Review.

486. It was noted that pt. 478 of the previous minutes, the Forum would be looking in to the scrapping of the Connexions and would liaise with appropriate partners.
487. It was noted that pt. 479 of the previous minutes, Humberside Police Authority would be invited again to a future BAG meeting. This should occur prior to the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners in May 2012.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Richard Stevens & Steve Tomlinson – Hull City Council Update**

488. The Chair welcomed Richard Stevens and Steve Tomlinson of Hull City Council, and invited them to discuss skills levels required from businesses in light of funding cuts.
489. Steve Tomlinson stated that there had been significant changes in the learning landscape as budgets were being cut and services such as Connexions closing. He added that Hull City Council, and East Riding of Yorkshire County Council were committed to providing ongoing services to young people aged 14-19. As such it would continue to fund work experience programmes and a low level Connexions service.
490. It was noted that Hull City Council was looking for new ways to provide work based learning, which complemented both education establishments and businesses. It was noted that the Local Authority were looking for feedback from businesses on any new ideas they had.
491. It was highlighted that the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) had also been withdrawn which has left many young learners without funding support to engage with education. This would therefore have an impact on a number of learners carrying on their studies and raise NEET.
492. It was commented that business feedback was sought on the potential to offer learners an incentive to stay in further education as existing funding was withdrawn. This was generally accepted and was noted as an action point for the Forum to carry forward.
493. It was also highlighted that recent news of tuition fees increasing to just under £9,000 per year was a concern but the impact could not be ascertained until later on in the year.
494. Mr Tomlinson commented on the changes to funding arrangements with much of school funding now being placed in the hands of the school directly. As many maintained schools transfer status to Academy, Trust, Free school etc arrangements, the influence the local authority has on education in the city is significantly diminished. It was added that Hull City Council was trying to engage with educational establishments around the area of 'employability' but it was proving to be a challenge as it was not an area of primary focus for the establishments at this time and school curriculum is still in a period of change.
495. It was noted that whilst there was an overwhelming positive response from local businesses wishing to be involved with employability programmes they were finding it difficult to progress as education establishments were potentially decreasing their involvement in vocational programmes due to the introduction of the English Baccalaureate.

496. It was commented that the lack of focus on work related learning provision in the new curriculum was a real concern for employers. It was stated that this area of curriculum may only be available within the 20% of the curriculum dedicated to numerous subjects outside the English Baccalaureate, yet it was considered to be very important. Further comments expressed how the level of employability should be increased to help increase the future availability of employment opportunities for school leavers.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Recruitment Sector Perspective**

497. The Chair welcomed Jenny Smithey, Recruitment Manager, Kingston Recruitment and invited her to discuss the issues surrounding employment from the recruitment sector perspective.
498. Jenny Smithey provided a brief overview of the current job market in Hull. It was noted that some industries, such as manufacturing had commenced recruitment once more. However, service industries were still behind, although they had started to recover.
499. Mrs Smithey highlighted that businesses had changed their priorities for employing new staff. Many were employing more experienced people instead of trainees as they did not have resources to train staff to the required level. It was noted that Jobcentre Plus had an initiative that allowed businesses to employ senior and a junior members of staff at a subsidised rate with the aim of sharing training between employees.
500. It was commented that Graduates failed to stay in Hull once they had graduated from University. It was widely accepted a primary reason for this was a severe lack of graduate based roles in the City.
501. It was noted that the University of Hull's Business School was working with local businesses to promote the city as a location for graduates to work It was commented that the key to this would be to raise business awareness of the value of a higher skill level.
502. It was also commented that there had been an increase in the level of adult apprenticeships being taken as businesses were keen to continue training their staff.

#### **Agenda Item 6: Job Centre Plus Update**

503. The Chair welcomed Martin Hewitson, Employment Engagement Manager, Jobcentre Plus, and invited him to provide an update on the current employment status in the city.
504. Martin Hewitson provided a brief overview of the employment status. It was highlighted that the level of unemployment in Hull was still increasing and it was expected to rise further as Hull City Council cut jobs.
505. It was also noted that the trend for long term unemployment was still increasing with over 40,000 people still unemployed. It was highlighted that a higher percentage of the unemployed were seeking Incapacity Benefit (IB) rather than Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). It was also highlighted that the Welfare to Work programme had yet to have a recorded impact on figures.

506. It was noted that more initiatives were being created to help improve employability of the unemployed, especially in the target age range of 18-24. Most initiatives were based around work experience of between 2 and 8 weeks and were designed to increase skills through working as it was recognised that people with a low skill level found it hard to secure employment.

**Agenda Item 7: Any Other Business**

507. There was no other business.

**Agenda Item 7: Dates of next meeting**

508. Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2011 at 2.30 pm