

12 September, 2013

Working Smarter Programme - Supporting business to thrive and supporting local people to work

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr A Andrew – Deputy Leader, Regeneration and Transportation

Executive Summary:

Good progress has been made in better understanding customer needs and responding to them to give a more efficient service. Staff have been supported in thinking differently and are more empowered to respond to customer needs and some of the results are having an impact not only in Walsall but across the Black Country as we see greater integration in service delivery through City Deal and Local Economic Partnership led work on the Growth Deal.

As previous funding sources are exhausted, principally Working Neighbourhoods Fund, the resources available to the Council, and its partners, to respond to the needs of business and people seeking work is reducing. However, the role of the teams within Regeneration has always been to work with partners, shape existing provision to best meet local needs and to maximise the draw down of external funding, reducing the impact of budget reductions on customers.

In addition the implementation of the Working Smarter programme has shown that getting people into work is part of the demand from a wide range of customers across Council services. Revenues and Benefits officers are now able to provide a range of support to job and training seekers as we respond to what our customers need and stop delivering a narrow prescribed service. This is the right thing for the customer but it also means that the call on public sector services will, over time, reduce as people become more self reliant.

Likewise the improvement approach has brought an understanding that supporting business is not the responsibility only of Regeneration. Business rates and regulatory activities such as food safety and planning have long acknowledged how their activity relates to economic prosperity. However, working smarter has made more explicit this understanding; that taking the business perspective can still achieve council objectives whilst also achieving better outcomes for customers.

Whilst resources are not everything and other mainstream resources can be brought to bear as the impact of more people in work and in better work is understood across all service areas, it is undeniable that dedicated resources are critical. Increasingly as council mainstream resources are reduced the Council will need to ensure that its priorities are reflected in bids for such as the Single Growth

Pot, European funding and other external funding opportunities, mainly to be controlled by the LEP. In addition sub-regional working will be required to make the most of scarce resources across the sub-region with expertise to co-ordinate activity and make bids for funding.

Reason for scrutiny:

Scrutiny requested an update on the five strands of the corporate improvement programme.

Recommendations:

That the report be noted.

Background papers:

None.

Resource and legal considerations:

None directly from this report. However, a facilitator is required for the improvement work to progress. More focus on the improvement work may in the short term have a detrimental impact on progress against current priorities, which may then need additional resources.

Citizen impact:

None directly from this report.

Environmental impact:

None directly from this report.

Performance management:

This will depend on actions decided by the panel, however, the recommendation is only for the report to be noted therefore there will be no identifiable effect.

Equality Implications:

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out? ~~Yes~~/No
If yes, summarise the key findings here.

Consultation:

Regeneration Services
Lead facilitator for Jobs for the Money, Home, Job review.

Contact Officer:

Michael Tichford, Assistant Director Regeneration
 01922 650944  tichfordm@walsall.gov.uk

1. Report

- 1.1 The review work has been in two parts. Support for business has been focused on services provided by the Regeneration Directorate and support for those looking for work has largely been through the 'Help me with my Money, Home, Job' review, supported by Regeneration.
- 1.2 In order to organise the work in support of businesses five themes were identified:
- Getting local people into jobs - What we are learning from customer demand, starting at the multi agency one stop shops, about value work and barriers/assistance to Walsall residents gaining employment.
 - Business visits - What are we learning about the demands of businesses across Walsall and across sectors and how we can deliver better. This includes visits to strategic companies to learn what fast growing companies need to grow.
 - Town and district centre businesses - What are we learning about the demands of town and district centre businesses and how we can deliver better.
 - Sites, premises and infrastructure - What is required to bring sites to market and the sites, premises and infrastructure requirement of businesses. Investigate the role of agents, developers and land owners in generating development demand.
 - Bringing forward difficult development sites - What are the barriers to bringing forward difficult sites, using as an example:
- 1.3 There have been some challenges in the review, faced to some extent by all the reviews but more pronounced when dealing with some businesses. The first has been that Council's are not the places businesses tend to come to first for support. We deliver a range of services to businesses, often regulatory or requiring the collection of money, but it is not a statutory duty on the local authority to support businesses.
- 1.4 Council's do have a responsibility for the economic growth of their area but it is not prescribed as to how this is achieved and the services provided vary from council to council. The localisation of business rates from April 2013 has given a further financial imperative to local authorities to do what they can to support businesses. Under this regime councils' funding from government assumes a growth in business rates of 3% a year. If this is not achieved the burden of this, up to a set limit, has to be borne by the local authority.
- 1.5 The Business Link service used to have a presence in local areas but is now a telephone and internet based service, as with a lot of central government service, to reduce costs, and there is effectively no local face to face service. The private sector plays a major role in business support through financial and other institutions.
- 1.6 The reason for giving this background is to emphasise that in this review, unlike some, customer demand does not tend to come to the Council requesting assistance. In order to understand our business customers we need to go out to

them and we need to use the intelligence that we gather through our mainly regulatory services in a different way. For instance, if a business is finding it difficult to pay its business rates it is a sign that it needs support. The team at Walsall Council is very good at passing these on to Regeneration but this is not universally case, with regulatory services seeing their purpose to control activity by businesses and not to support it. This is changing as the improvement process progresses and it is not only the consumer and resident who are seen as the customer in applying regulation but also the business that is supplying the service.

- 1.7 Likewise, the Council is not seen as the first port of call for those looking to gain work or upgrade their skills. In the public sector Job Centre Plus is the primary service provision, backed up by many initiatives, notable the Work Programme. Likewise, other public and private training providers, notwithstanding WACC in Walsall, are seen as the main places to go for training.

2 Getting People into Jobs

- 2.1 All of the review work is currently in the finding out and experimenting stages of the systems thinking review improvement cycle. Most progress so far in applying systems thinking approach has been made in the review element of getting local people into jobs. Whilst, as mentioned, the Council tends not to be the first port of call for those seeking work many of the customers who come to the First Stop Shop seeking help with benefits, council tax or housing have an employment or skills issue as part of their overall demand.

- 2.2 The work and learning in Money, Home, Job, alongside the Employment and Skills team, identified the following barriers to employment in Walsall:

- Lack of job readiness
- Shortage of quality work experience placements
- Skills gaps
- Limited access to computers / telephones
- Fear of entering employment
- Lack of funding for job specific training
- Job support is generic and not specific to a customers needs
- Customers are not helped in the way they want to be helped
- A feeling of work doesn't pay due to minimum wage, zero hours contracts etc
- Employers not recruiting due to lack of experience in the workplace
- Cost of travel, unwillingness to seek work outside of Walsall
- Lack of confidence, debt issues, poor accommodation, homelessness

- 2.3 In order to address the issues identified the team have been working with customers on a daily basis to help them with practical issues such as:

- Setting up email accounts and preparing CVs
- Listening to the customer and understanding their circumstances
- Help with locating internet and telephone access points
- General job searching and online applications
- Identifying training and apprenticeship opportunities
- Support with Job Centre Plus and Work Programme provider issues
- Booking Advice and Guidance sessions with the One Stop Employment Shops, Job Change and Prospects

- Arranging quality work experience placements with Walsall Council
 - Set up a fund for job specific training not offered in mainstream provision
 - Working closely with the four One Stop Employment Shops (Steps To Work), Learning Lab (Caldmore Accord), Job Change, Job Centre Plus, Work Programme providers in Walsall plus training providers we want to integrate our work into the wider system to avoid waste and duplication.
- 2.4 To build further employment support capability into Money, Home, Job a resource from Steps To Work has been secured for an initial six month period to help the team learn more and increase our capacity to help customers into employment. Staff in the Money, Home Job review were either benefits, revenues or housing officers so the focus of recent work has been to equip these front line staff with the new tools and information to provide practical help for clients looking for work. Job Centre Plus are also enthusiastic about the work we are doing and want to work closely with us while we are learning how best to help Walsall residents in the way they want to be helped into work.
- 2.5 It should be noted that with the exhaustion of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund resource the Council no longer contracts for the provision of broad based employment support through the four multi-agency one stop shops. These have been kept open, using other sources of funding but are not able to deliver the same range of services as they previously did.

3 Working with Young People

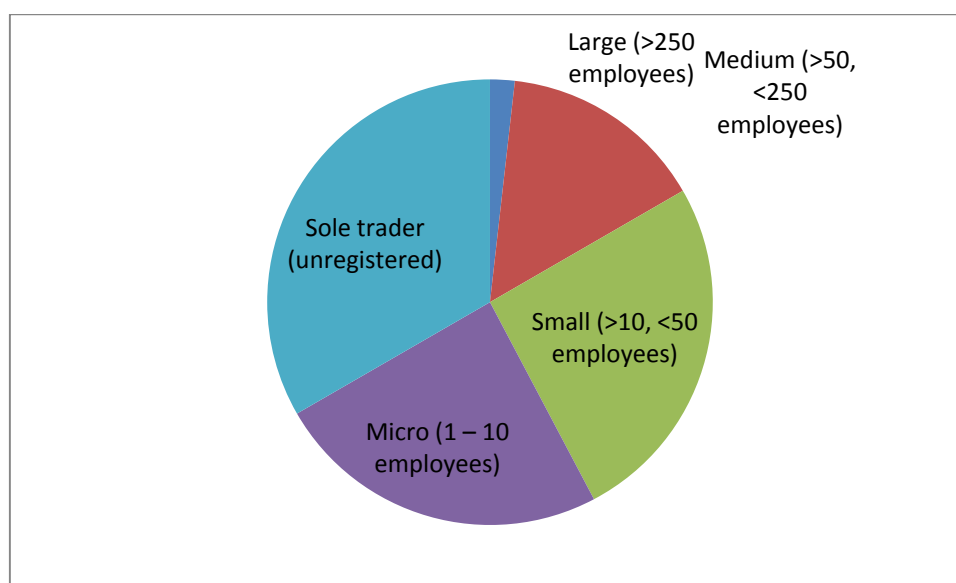
- 3.1 Walsall Works was designed to tackle the youth unemployment issue in Walsall. To date it has supported 201 young people into apprenticeships and 198 into pre-apprenticeships. In the past year from the period April 2012 to July 2013, there has been a reduction in Jobseekers claimants from approx 3500 to 2570. There appears to be a direct correlation between Walsall Works and the reduction as the rate of reduction is much faster than the other three Black Country boroughs.
- 3.2 Nearly 300 young people also been supported into other positive outcomes in Walsall i.e. non subsidised apprenticeships, employment and further education and outside the borough. This demonstrates that the Walsall Works team have been adopting the systems thinking principle of doing what the customer needs rather than simply offering a one size fits all service. However, in terms of the businesses employing a young person it has been more difficult to develop a broader relationship to understand their needs as a business better. This has mainly been due to the emphasis placed on achieving places for young people from whom two lessons emerge – be clear who your customer(s) is and how targets can be a challenge to doing the right thing.
- 3.3 The document at Appendix 1 shows the wider range of support activity to assist people into work. Appendix 2 shows the ‘Journey to Work’ for Walsall residents in terms of the support available to them at each stage from being very remote from the jobs market to securing a job.
- 3.4 The Employment & Skills Team within Regeneration was established to deliver a strategic and tactical role and not to be front line delivery. The majority of work has been around partnership working across the Black Country and locally,

target action planning, mapping / gapping, understanding provision, designing provision to meet needs and accessing funding streams. Prior to this the work was mainly focussed on performance management of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund. Where funding has been used to directly support those into work it has been through the delivery of contracts such as that for the four Multi-Agency One Stop Shops. This approach, whilst growing a certain expertise within the Council did not bring a sustainable resource to directly tackle unemployment issues for our customers.

4 Understanding Business

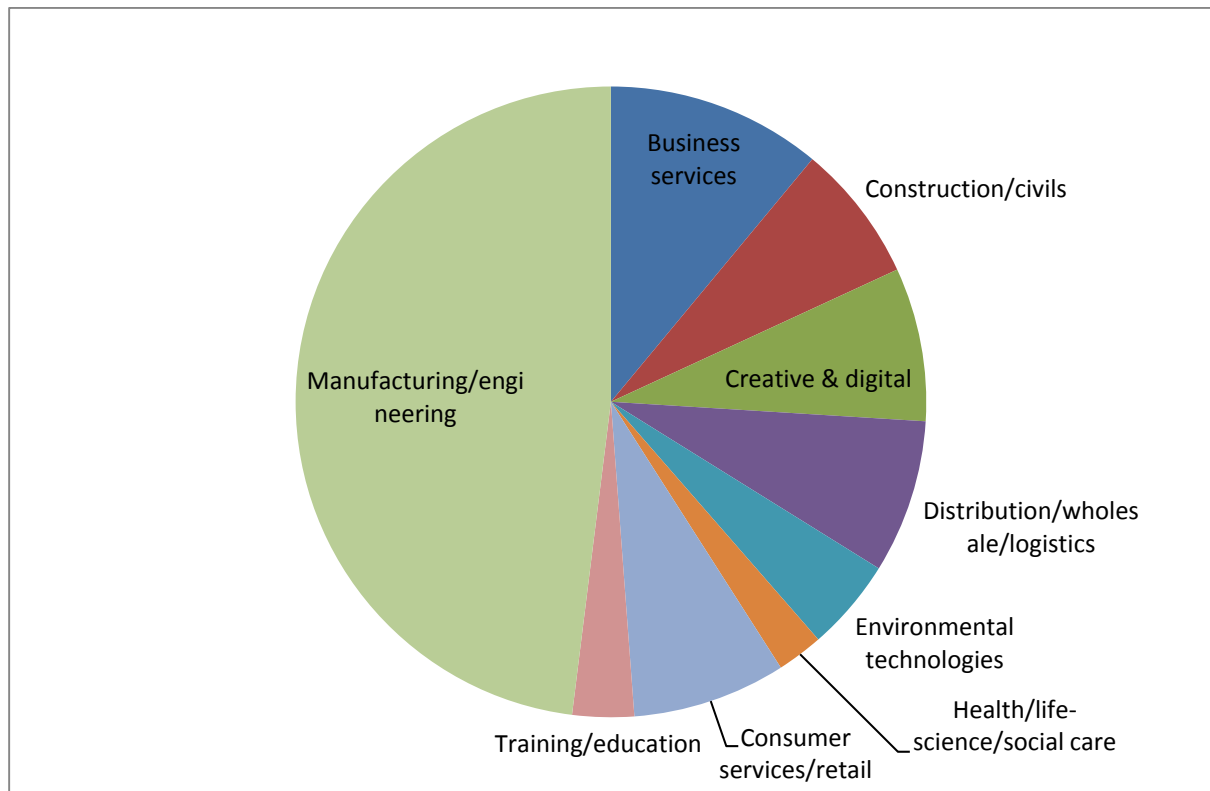
- 4.1 Regeneration currently has one officer dedicated to supporting start ups and small to medium sized enterprises, a new team (two in post, one to be recruited) supporting large businesses and inward investment. An additional officer supports a wide range of businesses, particularly on grant opportunities but is currently seconded part time to the Black Country Consortium. The town and districts centres team of three (Walsall town centre manager post is vacant) work primarily with retail and other businesses within centres but also support other employers in the local areas. Other officers within Regeneration have contact with businesses but are focused on a particular service, for instance planning, or are involved primarily in projects, such as the Old Square development in Walsall town centre.
- 4.2 Data on business visits across the service is available but what is provided here is a selection on which more analysis has been done. In a 12 month period from July 2012 – June 2013, officers in Development & Delivery recorded 127 enquiries from businesses, with 200 separate demands. Those businesses broken down by size fall into the following categories:

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| Large (>250 employees) | 3 |
| Medium (>50, <250 employees) | 25 |
| Small (>10, <50 employees) | 43 |
| Micro (1 – 10 employees) | 41 |
| Sole trader (unregistered) | 56 |

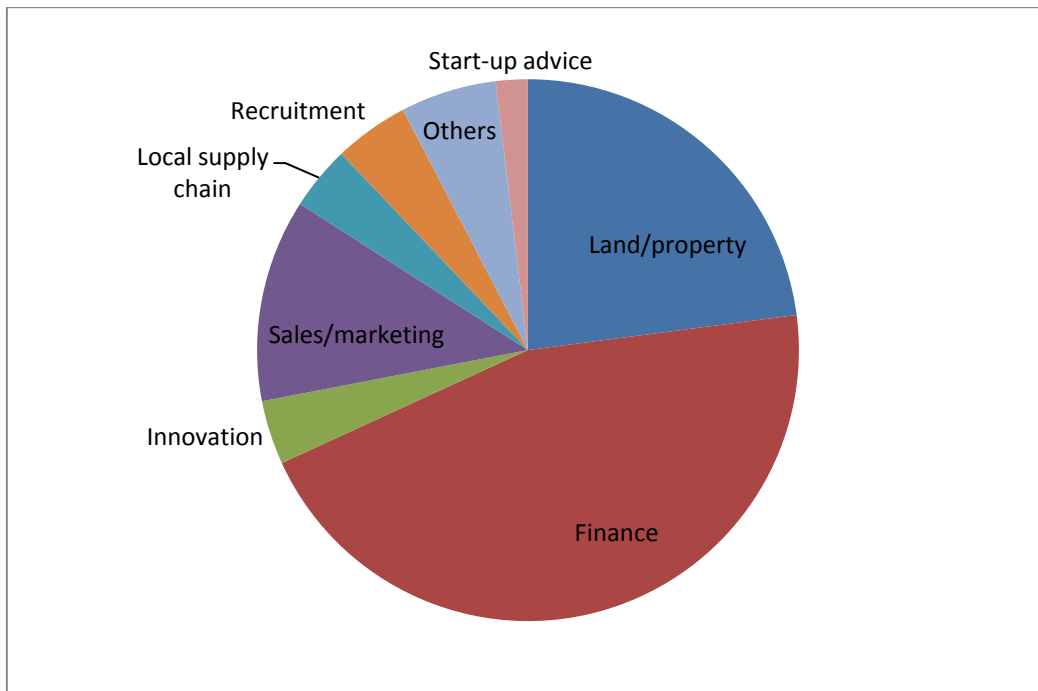


- 4.3 By sector:

| | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| Business services | 14 |
| Construction/civils | 9 |
| Creative & digital | 10 |
| Distribution/wholesale/logistics | 10 |
| Environmental technologies | 6 |
| Health/life-science/social care | 3 |
| Consumer services/retail | 10 |
| Training/education | 4 |
| Manufacturing/engineering | 61 |



| | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|----|
| Land/property | Refurb/extend | 3 |
| | New build | 7 |
| | Relocate | 26 |
| Finance | Grant | 70 |
| | Debt | 0 |
| | Equity | 1 |
| Cost reduction | Tax | 1 |
| | Energy/fuel | 1 |
| Innovation | | 6 |
| Sales/marketing | New leads | 15 |
| | Tenders | 1 |
| | Public procurement | 3 |
| Local supply chain | | 6 |
| Recruitment | | 7 |
| Others | Legal advice | 1 |
| | Training | 3 |
| | Environmental | 1 |
| | CSR | 1 |
| | Rates | 1 |
| Start-up advice | | 3 |



- 4.4 The finance is required for a number of reasons, the vast majority of which is to fund either works to refurbish or extend premises or to purchase new plant and machinery. Other uses are for start-up costs, working capital, marketing (websites, attending trade shows etc), to acquire other businesses or in some instances to purchase freehold property.

5 Local supply chain

- 5.1 As can be seen from the figures above, businesses very rarely (6 out of 200 enquiries) ask about support finding local suppliers or support around tendering (7 out of 200 enquiries).
- 5.2 This is most probably because it is so simple to find local suppliers using the internet, either through dedicated business directories such as www.kellysearch.co.uk and many similar sites, www.finditinwalsall.co.uk or – far more likely – simply through search engines.
- 5.3 The reasons for the lack of demand for support around procurement are more difficult to identify – most likely it is because the sample is self-selecting: businesses that are large enough to tender for public contracts already have the expertise and do not require support, and conversely businesses that need the support do not have the appropriate capabilities or capacity to bid for public contracts.
- 5.4 Another reason is that any tenders that are advertised by Walsall Council will list contact details from the responsible department, usually in procurement. Therefore any businesses that require assistance will not approach officers in Development & Delivery.
- 5.5 It is worth bearing in mind that the business survey undertaken for Walsall's Local Economic Assessment in 2010 (the last time such a survey was carried

out) showed that the value of orders from Black Country customers is far lower than other UK orders, but represented a far higher proportion of the total number of orders. Therefore, it is counter-productive to encourage Walsall firms to concentrate on the local market and an approach to encourage and support them to enter other regional or UK markets will be far more beneficial to business growth and therefore employment.

- 5.6 It is also worth noting the experience of the Think Walsall initiative that ran from 2009 – 2011 funded by Working Neighbourhoods Fund. Whilst it achieved some successes in terms of supporting Walsall businesses to win contracts, these were achieved by a very small number of very large contracts. The team engaged with several large construction companies including Kier, Wilmott Dixon, John Sisk & Sons, ISG and Wates over several Council and public sector construction projects and the overwhelming experience was that large contractors did not want to use Walsall suppliers or subcontractors because they lacked the capacity, quality (i.e. accreditations and experience) and did not compete on price.
- 5.7 Perhaps as an illustration of this last point, over the 12 months to June 2013, 7 investors approached the team for support on identifying local suppliers or contractors who could be invited to quote for their contract packages. Another 59 Walsall businesses were directly supported to enter into procurement opportunities across a wide range of sources and markets (local, national and international). However, only nine Walsall businesses were successful at winning 10 contracts arising from those opportunities, to a value of £204,000.

6 Addressing the barriers

- 6.1 The Black Country Growing Opportunities Local Development grant fund has been established in response to the issue of poor quality and low capacity within Black Country SMEs. It is a small capital and revenue grant that can be used to review services and implement change. There are other funded business support programmes such as the SME Fast Track programme and Growth Accelerator. Capital grant funding has been drawn down from rounds 3 and 4 of the Regional Growth Fund that businesses have applied for in order to develop capacity and efficiency. There remains a gap in the provision of small-scale equity (under £50,000) for businesses looking to grow, that also offers an opportunity for the investor to offer guidance and expertise. The Black Country LEP is currently exploring opportunities to fill this gap.

7 Other Review Strands

- 7.1 One of the key strands of activity in the sites and premises work has been the development of the Black Country Enterprise Zone. The development of closer relationships with landowners has enabled sites to be brought forward and funding has been secured to undertake site investigations to better understand likely barriers to development. At the same time a Zone wide financial model is being prepared to agree and define Black Country LEP investment priorities to target public sector intervention into key sites. The Zone is being marketed widely to potential investors supported by work undertaken by Black Country Investment and through materials such as the BC EZ brochure, highlighting the key benefits on offer.

- 7.2 The key Old Square redevelopment in Walsall town centre will see the delivery of a new Primark and Co-Op store on the site of the former Tesco building. Development is due to commence in early 2014 with completion and opening planned for early 2015. The opening of the retail development will also coincide with the delivery of a new, permanent home for Walsall Market. Feasibility work has already started on this project and a planning application is proposed to be submitted in April 2014.
- 7.3 In the same area of the town centre, Norton & Profitt are progressing their plans for a new £12million retail scheme in Digbeth. A planning approval was granted in May 2013 and the Council are continuing to work with the developers to see the scheme realised, creating up to 200 new jobs.
- 7.4 The town and district centres team have long adopted the approach suggested by the systems thinking method. They have sought to develop long term relationships with town centre businesses in order to better understand their needs. On the basis of this knowledge they systematically seek to deliver solutions on behalf of their customers. Where their approach has differed from a systems thinking approach is that whilst they equip themselves to address similar issues in the future the system itself is not systematically changed. In other words, more often than not, the same issues arise for later customers and the same routine has to be gone through in order to address why the problem occurred in the first place or to get the right answer for the customer. There are notable exceptions to this and an example of this is the current uncoordinated approach to works carried out in any given area. Even within directorates works are often not co-ordinated so the team led bringing together all the staff delivering work programmes in the year in Darlaston district centre to bring greater clarity to users of the centre, to better co-ordinate work and produce efficiencies. But also to add value to each others work to get a greater beneficial outcome. This latter outcome gets to the core of the improvement approach as staff start to see their role in terms of how the customer sees it and not simply from their functional service perspective. From this staff can start to see their contribution to a wider purpose, to improve an area, than they may have previously when their focus was on a particular project or piece of maintenance work etc.
- 7.5 Due to competing demands the work on the planning system has not progressed as much as in some other areas due to an increase in planning application numbers and staffing issues which have necessitated a restructure. In addition those development and delivery staff involved in working more to understand business needs and work along side planners on development sites have largely been fully occupied on major project work such as the City Deal, Phoenix 10, the Old Square Shopping Centre redevelopment, the Enterprise Zone and other high profile projects.
- 7.6 I should make clear, however, that system thinking approach is being applied. Using the example of City Deal, using the Vanguard approach, Walsall has developed the most thorough understanding of the potential for bringing sites forward for development. In detail this has meant developing a relationship with land owners, agents and developers as well as potential end users to enable

solutions to be developed for what for many years may have seemed intractable problems. We also now understand that traditional grant approaches to support business are unlikely to address underlying problems in some business caused by their knowledge of their customers, their resource levels and the way they finance the business.

- 7.7 Where this work has not developed fully according to the method is in its systematic acquisition of knowledge on customer demand based on evidence and then seeking to address barriers, moving toward a system designed against the typical and predictable demand.
- 7.8 In order to better understand the effectiveness of the service a draft set of measures has been developed against which we can understand performance against our purpose. These are included at Appendix 3. Please note that they currently do not yet include the standard system thinking measures of, for instance, failure against value work and nominal value met.

8 Findings and Conclusions

- 8.1 Good progress has been made in better understanding customer needs and responding to them to give a more efficient service. Staff have been supported in thinking differently and are more empowered to respond to customer needs and some of the results are having an impact not only in Walsall but across the Black Country as we see greater integration in service delivery through City Deal and Local Economic Partnership led work on the Growth Deal.
- 8.2 As previous funding sources are exhausted, principally Working Neighbourhoods Fund, the resources available to the Council, and its partners, to respond to the needs of business and people seeking work is reducing. However, the role of the teams within Regeneration has always been to work with partners, shape existing provision to best meet local needs and to maximise the draw down of external funding, reducing the impact of budget reductions on customers.
- 8.3 In addition the implementation of the Working Smarter programme has shown that getting people into work is part of the demand from a wide range of customers across Council services. Revenues and Benefits officers are now able to provide a range of support to job and training seekers as we respond to what our customers need and stop delivering a narrow prescribed service. This is the right thing for the customer but it also means that the call on public sector services will, over time, reduce as people become more self reliant.
- 8.4 Likewise the improvement approach has brought an understanding that supporting business is not the responsibility only of Regeneration. Business rates and regulatory activities such as food safety and planning have long acknowledged how their activity relates to economic prosperity. However, working smarter has made more explicit this understanding; that taking the business perspective can still achieve council objectives whilst also achieving better outcomes for customers.
- 8.5 Whilst resources are not everything and other mainstream resources can be brought to bear as the impact of more people in work and in better work is understood across all service areas, it is undeniable that dedicated resources are

critical. Increasingly as council mainstream resources are reduced the Council will need to ensure that its priorities are reflected in bids for such as the Single Growth Pot, European funding and other external funding opportunities, mainly to be controlled by the LEP. In addition sub-regional working will be required to make the most of scarce resources across the sub-region with expertise to co-ordinate activity and make bids for funding.

Employment & Skills Support **Regeneration Service - Walsall Council**

Employment and Skills Team

The Employment and Skills team is responsible for managing Economic Regeneration activity that reduces unemployment and stimulates job growth. In partnership with a number of key organisations, the Employment and Skills Team can deliver a wide range of services which help to improve the employability and training opportunities for local people. As well as supporting local businesses through recruitment, existing workforce skills development and all round business support. With our partners we can offer a free service to support all your recruitment needs including support with advertising your vacancies, pre-recruitment training, initial assessment, information sessions.

Information Sessions / Job Fairs

Information Sessions are organised to meet employer needs and offer an opportunity to present job opportunities to interested unemployed candidates. Similarly, Job Fairs promote range of services available from Walsall Council, and its public and private partner organisations. These events aim to assist local people find employment, particularly those individuals who are long term unemployed.

The events offer a comprehensive range of services such as advertising job vacancies; advice on CV's and interview techniques, benefits advice, training opportunities and practical help with childcare, transport, and many more services. They are designed to help people to become job ready by improving their employability skills and personal attributes so that they can take up employment opportunities in the future.

The events also place an importance on offering re-training advice and bespoke support to those who are at risk of redundancy or have been made redundant so that they may promptly re-enter the labour market.

Walsall Works – Apprenticeships

Walsall Works is a multi-million investment by Walsall Council to support local employers to recruit young people aged 16-24 year old as Apprentices in the growth sectors of:

- Niche and high value Manufacturing &
- Engineering
- Building & Environmental Technologies
- Construction
- Financial, Professional and Business Services
- Creative and Digital Services
- Health and Social Care
- Logistics

Employers who recruit a young Walsall resident as an apprentice will be offered an incentive payment of between £3000- £6000 (depending on eligibility criteria)

The employer will offer the young apprentice a minimum employment contract of 35 hours per week for at least 12 months and adhere to the agreed minimum hourly rates. They will also commit to employing the young apprentice for the full duration of the apprenticeship which could last from 1 year to 4 years. The incentives will be reduced

by £1500 to employers who are eligible to claim the National Apprenticeship Service AGE grant.

Walsall Works – Pre- Apprenticeships

Walsall Works currently has hundreds of young people aged 16-24 year old on pre-apprenticeship programmes across a number of Sector Academies with a number of training providers. The focus of the programme is to prepare young people for an apprenticeship or job in a desired sector and each learner will cover off the following areas of learning:

- Technical Certificate at Level 1 in the relevant industry sector
- Functional Skills (English, Maths, ICT) at Entry Level 3, Level 1 and Level 2
- Employability Skills (inc CV writing, application form completion, interview skills, rights and responsibilities in the workplace)
- Building customer service skills (inc character building, time-management, communication, working to plan, presentation etc)
- 4 weeks Intensive Block Work Placement (within the relevant industry setting and ideally with a employers who wishes to recruit a young apprentice)
- Intensive job search, apprenticeship search, further education advice

Employers can participate by offering learners a work placement of up to 4 weeks as a mechanism to trial young people before they offer a guaranteed interview for an apprenticeship or job. Our pre-apprentices have completed and gone to securing roles in Walsall Council in the areas of Health & Social Care and Sports Development and Walsall Housing Group and their Major Contractors in Construction roles. We are keen to engage with employers to participate.

Employment One Stop Shops

Through our partnership with local charity, Steps to Work (Walsall) Limited we support unemployed residents with their employability and training needs in order to prepare them for the world of work. Our One Stop Shops aim to help people overcome their barriers and find rewarding, long-term employment.

For employers the shops offers a unique support approach with the following benefits:

- Access to a pool of prospective, motivated and job-ready candidates
- Pre-selection of candidates according to your specifications
- Tailored recruitment process, application sifting, interviewing facilities
- Information sessions to potential clients
- Engagement in the design and delivery of pre-apprenticeship placements
- Subsidised Apprenticeships in all sectors
- Access to possible wage incentives (subject to eligibility)
- No obligation work trials and work placements
- Practical support and wage incentives (subject to eligibility)
- Customized pre-recruitment and employability training packages
- Vacancy advertising and job matching
- Highly experienced staff providing ongoing aftercare for your new employees
- Professional Health and Safety assessments for all work placements and trials
- Access to post-employment support and funding for training and staff development
- Employer networking meetings

The shops are geographically placed across the borough:

- Darlaston Jobs Employment Training
- Bloxwich Work on the Horizon
- Caldmore Employment One Stop Shop
- Walsall Employment One Stop Shop

Jobcentreplus

In partnership with Jobcentre Plus we can support employers with the following services:

Universal Job Match

This is a new and free DWP service which is available 24 hours, 7 days per week. It offers employers a service for posting jobs and matching service which enables employers to securely post and manage jobs online, making it quicker and easier for you to find jobseekers who are actively looking for work. All businesses and employers can use Universal Jobmatch, no matter what size of company or business.

Wage Incentive

Employers may be able to receive up to £2,275 for recruiting a young person aged 18 - 24 who has been claiming Jobseeker benefit for 6 months+

Work experience

This offers an opportunity to take on an unemployed person for 2 -8 weeks free of charge. It offers an opportunity to provide meaningful work and a reference to those successfully completing the placement. We advertise the opportunity and arrange interviews and then the employer selects the most appropriate person for your business. This is not a mandatory government programme so the people you see are enthusiastic and have chosen to participate themselves. There does not have to be a job available at the end, it can literally be just an opportunity for them to be active within a working environment however, should you wish to take them on, this is an excellent way of ensuring you have selected a suitable person for your business.

Sector based work academies

This is a bespoke programme where a course is run tailored to skills around your specific sector. They are designed to help meet employers immediate and future recruitment needs as well as to recruit a workforce with the right skills to sustain and grow your business. A sector-based work academy can last up to six weeks and has three key components:

- Pre-employment training relevant to the needs of your business and sector
- A work experience placement of great benefit to both the individual and a business
- A guaranteed job interview

Work Trials

This is offered where there is a definite job available at the end. The length of a work trial is between 1 - 3 weeks but again the person will remain on benefits whilst both parties see whether job is suitable for the client.

Black Country Skills Factory

This is an employer -led education & training collaboration being coordinated by the Black Country Consortium Ltd with pump prime funding from UKCES.

The objective is to address the current skills shortfall in the High Value Manufacturing sector (HVM) in the Black Country for both large and small employers.

There are four key activity strands:

- Upskilling of existing workforce through small and bespoke training solutions in order to counteract ageing workforce and reflect new technology
- Apprenticeship subsidies to penetrate into SME's for Apprentice Engineers
- School Engagement to increase the pipeline of people wanting to enter into the HVM sector
- Skills Factory Profile in order to be the first point of contact for skills in HVM

Work Programme Providers

Through our working relationship with the three providers of the DWP Work Programme:

- EOS Works
- Pertemp People Development Group
- In Training

We can offer a range of services aimed at helping long term unemployed learners to move into, or nearer, further education and / or sustainable employment. Our service will ensure that employers are helped with finding the right candidate for their business.

- Effective sifting and screening of applicants for employers
- Pre-Employment and sector specific training for most sectors and employers
- Ongoing workplace training and apprenticeships
- Vocational skills provision to gain qualifications in the sectors of retail, fitness, construction, hospitality, warehousing, office skills
- EDI Award / Certificate in Preparing for Employment
- Employability courses
- Simulated work environments aligned to employers through Employment / Metro Centres
- Ability to create an employer's work environment through our dedicated 'work areas' i.e. canteen, gymnasium, warehousing, casino, office, construction zone, retail shops.
- Ongoing pastoral support to address client needs whilst in employment

Walsall College

Walsall College is an Outstanding provider of vocational education and training in the West Midlands, supporting young people, adults and local businesses to develop their skills and achieve success. We are committed to equipping students with the relevant knowledge, skills and experience employers and universities are looking for. We work with business, locally, regionally and nationally to ensure that the training we provide is

relevant in today's market and provides employers with skilled and qualified staff that can help develop and drive their business forward.

Our customers include many names that you'll be familiar with, such as, E.ON, National Grid, the NHS, Walsall Council, Accord Group and Balfour Beatty.

However, you don't need to be a big business to make the most of Walsall College. We tailor our services to suit you. Before we do anything else, we make it our business get to know your business. What you want to achieve. Where your strengths lie. The challenges you face. And most importantly, what skills will help drive your business further. Based on this, we will put forward a training development plan to match your resources, timeframes and objectives.

We'll also help you identify potential sources of funding. Professional training is an investment, not just for your business, but also for the community and the country as a whole. As such, there are various local and national initiatives you may benefit from.

Business Training Solutions

Walsall College provides a range of training programmes and services for all types of businesses. These include:

- Qualifications delivered in the workplace (including apprenticeship training for existing employees)
- Recruitment and training of young employees via Apprenticeship schemes
- Specialist short courses - can be delivered at Walsall College or at employers premises (minimum of 12 employees)
- University level course, including Foundation Degrees
- Bespoke training, qualification and accreditation services – we can write and accredit qualifications to your specific requirements
- Pre-recruitment training through sector based academies
- World class facilities for hire
- BSL interpreting and note taking services

Employability Services

Walsall College in partnership with Job Centre Plus (JCP) provides a range of employment services to assist businesses with recruitment and redundancy training needs, in the challenging financial climate. The bespoke solutions we offer employers include:

- Assistance with the selection of candidates
- Provision of venues and staffing for recruitment events
- Customised pre-recruitment training packages
- Sector Based Work Academies
- Skills conditionality
- Training for staff at risk from redundancy, including CV writing and interview techniques skills to better prepare them for the job market

Sector Based Work Academies

Sector Based Work Academies, are a fully tailored service to employers looking to fill current vacancies. The service includes a consultation with the employer to truly understand their vacancy and business needs. Following this a bespoke training package is developed, to ensure all learners who complete the training are equipped with the 'wish list' qualities of the employer and are ready for interview. Companies we

have and are continuing to work with include Premier Inn, Ikea, Beefeater, National Express, KFC, Aspray 24, East End Foods and DX Freight. In eleven months we have successfully placed over 120 people into employment as a direct result of a Sector Based Work Academy.

Skills Conditionality

Working with JCP we provide support for claimants on active benefits who have a skills need preventing them from getting and keeping a job. JCP have help us identify specific skills gaps and we provide relevant training to help claimants get back to work.

Training packages include:

Care to make A Difference (Adult Social Care)

Child Care (Introduction to Early Years)

Get IT Right (Creating & using Universal Jobmatch, computing for the terrified)

Security (SIA Training including the license)

Ready to Work Essential Skills (for those who just need a new CV and some interview Skills)

5 Star Skills (a three week intensive programme resulting in 5 qualification/skills)

Retail (Currently under development)

Integrated Young People's Support Services (IYPSS)

IYPSS is part of Children's Services and provides a wide range of services to help young people develop the skills, knowledge and understanding to make and implement sound decisions for work and life. The services are offered to young people aged 9 -19 (25 for those with disabilities) and include: Positive Activities for young people through youth centres, detached youth work in communities and partnership working with other youth work providers, and key agencies such as Health and Police; Targeted Youth Support supporting vulnerable young people with a range of interventions; Youth Justice Service, working with young offenders and those at risk of offending; Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) services, delivered by Prospects Services Ltd., providing careers based support to schools, employers, young people and their families; and the Education Business Partnership (EBP) which supports work based learning projects in schools, such as work experience, teacher placements and vocational learning projects.

Curriculum based activities

A wide range of opportunities exist for curriculum based projects to be developed working with key teaching staff across all departments. The size and reach of JLR and its supply chain mean that all subjects taught in secondary education could benefit from a project link. From the obvious links to design and technology, computing, science, and foreign languages, projects could be developed in History, Geography, Maths and English, even PE and Social Studies.

These would not only enrich the curriculum, they would bring industry into the classroom. They also provide opportunities for JLR staff to engage with the education world, teachers and young people directly, improving understanding and developing opportunities for collaboration.

Specific company led projects, solving real business problems has been shown to have a very direct benefit to young people and the business.

Visits to the factory (and suppliers) for young people across all age ranges would also help with personal as well as career development, and should include specific tasks for young people to complete, including asking questions, doing pre-visit research etc.

Work experience opportunities

Walsall schools use a wide variety of companies for work experience for young people in year 10 and 11, as well as seeking opportunities for those in post 16 education. A well managed system of support is already in place for schools and post 16 establishments, through the EBP. Given appropriate support, the EBP could develop a tailored programme suited to JLR's needs which could be offered across the borough.

In conjunction with Jobcentre Plus, EST – offers an opportunity to take on a unemployed person for 2 -8 weeks free of charge. It offers an opportunity to provide meaningful work and a reference to those successfully completing the placement. We advertise the opportunity and arrange interviews and then the employer selects the most appropriate person for your business. This is not a mandatory government programme so the people you see are enthusiastic and have chosen to participate themselves. There does not have to be a job available at the end, it can literally be just an opportunity for them to be active within a working environment however, should you wish to take them on, this is an excellent way of ensuring you have selected a suitable person for your business.