



Responding to the Recession and Planning Recovery

Economic Wellbeing

Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel

3rd November 2009

Strategic Regeneration Team



Walsall Council



Walsall - The impact of the Recession

Worklessness:

- JSA claimant count increased by 4818 (75% in 12 mths)
- 300+ claimant increases in St Matthews, Birchills/ Leamore, Darlaston North / South, Bloxwich East, Willenhall S, Blakenhall
- 100%+ increase in claimants Streetly, Aldridge, Pheasey, Pelsall
- Unemployment in Males 50+ has doubled
- Overall women / men increase is proportionate - 72% male
- Other claimant counts ie Income related, Incapacity Benefit and Lone Parent benefits show very slight increases



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Walsall - The impact of the Recession

Employers / Businesses:

- Manufacturing, automotive and construction particularly badly hit
- Many companies have been forced to cancel or postpone investments
- Loss of sales and contracts
- Several large scale redundancies e.g. Amtrak, Wagon, Bolton Brass
- Site consolidation has meant site closures/downsizing e.g. GKN, Woodward Foodservice
- Sites closing and could move from employment land to housing e.g. George Carter Pressings
- Town Centre units close - Woolworths, Zavvi, Beneficial Bank, small retailers
- Business Needs Survey - Traditional business barriers remain an issue in addition to downturn e.g. business rates, business crime, low skills



Response to the Recession – Walsall Partnership

Development of the **Credit Crunch Action Plan**

- Summit convened with key influencers.

14 Priorities with Aims and Outcomes inc:

- Increase Job opportunities
- Apprenticeships, work experience and training opportunities
- Deliver on the Government Skills Pledge
- Think Walsall- encourage local supply chain use
- Improve information flow to Businesses and residents
- Walsall.com / Walsall Pride / Support events
- Speed up payments to creditors and suppliers (14 day Target)
- Promote Walsall's significant changes – Inward Investment
- Map Public expenditure across partners
- Improve town and district centre safety and Environment



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Walsall Council – What we as a Council are doing

Increased Capacity to address the problem - Economic Teams

Local Employer Partnership / Employment Practices

(Walsall Council first Local Authority to sign in the Black Country)

- 140 work placements (4 weeks - disadvantaged groups)
- 500 work experience opportunities (1/2 weeks -students)
- Outreach Events – Support into Jobs (2500 attendees)
- Positive Action - Recruitability, Lone Parents, LAC (130 ppl)
- Apprenticeship programme launched (90 over 2 yrs)
- Flexible recruitment processes and person specifications
- Maximising on Train 2 Gain for existing workforce
- Workforce planning -to address worklessness agenda

Future Jobs Fund

- £2.6 million for Walsall
- 460 paid job placements for young people over two years



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Walsall Council – What we as a Council are doing

Business

- New enterprise support package
- Payments to SME's
- Procurement practices e.g. Think Walsall, maximising I-procurement
- Direct support through business visits/ support through redundancies
- District Centre Support for retailers

Individuals

- Court Desk Facility
- Mortgage Rescue Scheme
- Financial Inclusion Officer
- Walsall in Credit Partnership
- Rent Guarantee Scheme
- Repossession Prevention Fund
- Help for people with former tenant arrears (1/3,1/3,1/3 scheme)
- Increasing benefits advice/ promoting available schemes



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Walsall Council – What we as a Council are doing

Communication:

- West Midlands LGA Weathering the Storm
- City Region Worklessness Audit Commission Report 2009
- Walsall Pride Special Editions April 2009 & Sept 2009
- Council Website with Economic Downturn links
- Walsall.com updated
- Local Neighbourhood Partnership engagement
- Redundancy Roadshows held bi-monthly
- Support into Jobs Event held bi-monthly
- Communicating with all partners via PoWER



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Working Neighbourhood Fund Target Action Planning

Working Neighbourhood Fund

- Value to Walsall £18.6M
- Priorities
 - Worklessness
 - Enterprise
 - Skills
 - NEETS

Target Action Planning Process – Walsall Partnership

- Steering Group formed.
- Map/Review all current provision
- Identify Gaps
- Develop Specification to fill gaps
- Commission Services
- Contract / Monitor / Evaluate



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Worklessness Target Action Plan Activities

Worklessness:

- Multi Agency One Stop Shops – Darlaston, Bloxwich, St Matthews, Walsall Town Centre
- Pre-redundancy assistance
- Pilot Benefits Advice
- Mental Health / Health Preventing Worklessness
- Confidence in Childcare
- Disability Revolving Fund
- Graduate & Professional Workers
- Self Employment
- Workwise



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Enterprise Target Action Plan Activities

Enterprise:

- Business engagement and support
- Inward Investment
- Business start up, relocation and security grants
- Enterprise in schools
- Enterprise coaching – WHG
- Innovation Support
- Social Enterprise
- Employment land protection



Regional / Sub Regional Working

- Sub-regional and Regional working is necessary
- New legislation and guidance in this area requires this way of working e.g. Economic Assessments, Multi Area Agreements, Joint Core Strategy, Regional Funding Allocations etc
- Successes so far - the implementation of the City Strategy and new ESF programmes.
- Built on to develop a City-Region Multi-Area Agreement for Employment & Skills
- The MAA is a key change in the way we will work throughout the region to help tackle the unemployment and skills gaps



Regeneration- Worklessness Audit

Audit of the 7 Metropolitan Council's in the Region

Overall recommendations:

- Align a single performance management system for the delivery of employment and skills services to a single strategic framework through the MAA
- Ensure the vision to work together differently to tackle the issues across boundaries is delivered in practice
- Each Council should develop a Council-wide worklessness strategy that should be performance managed and ensure the role of the whole Council is maximised to deliver on this agenda
- Each Council to review recruitment, workforce planning and development to deliver against this agenda through it's role as an employer
- Each Council and it's partners should develop an outcome based approach to tackling worklessness.
- Demonstrate and improve VFM in tackling this agenda



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Regeneration- Worklessness Audit

Walsall's highlights:

- Good leadership and commitment
- Improvements in Sub-regional and regional working
- Good knowledge and understanding of the issues – initiatives based on knowledge of local needs
- Strong capacity within the Council and Partnership
- Robust forecasting and Target Action Planning process
- Good links between worklessness and regeneration agenda
- Businesses appreciate the range of support provided by the Council and these positive relationships ensure Council and partners tailor responses to needs of local companies



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Regeneration- Worklessness Audit

Walsall's highlights:

- Good response to the economic downturn
- Interventions are based on what is proven to work e.g. Darlaston JET
- Partnership has a record of withdrawing from interventions that do not provide VFM
- A good understanding on local procurement with companies
- Fairly good integration on workforce planning
- Delivery of successful models for employment & skills
- Some targets have been exceeded and the LAA skills targets were surpassed.



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Regeneration- Worklessness Audit

Recommended improvements:

- Need to improve clarity on specific target groups needs eg BME's
- There are some gaps in information about the Council's workforce that could improve response
- Need all aims and actions on this agenda to be held in one document (although all officers and partners understand aims, priorities and actions)
- Need to include local input into contracts the Council has with national companies
- Despite significant effort tackling the worklessness rate is historically worst in Walsall than the national average- we need to continue to focus on this agenda





Regeneration- Worklessness Audit

Our response:

- Overall pleased with report on Walsall and it's significant highlights.
- Most areas for improvement we were aware of and already had plans to tackle
- Workshop on 6th November with all local authorities and the audit commission to discuss report and responses
- Formal action plan with timelines to tackle recommendations and improvements is being developed for Council and Partners to adopt
- Will continue to work in partnership through the Multi Area Agreement and our local, sub-regional and regional partnerships
- Need to continue to invest in this area of activity to see improvements – will be key part of Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)



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Any questions?

Any answers?



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