

TELFORD AND WREKIN CO-OPERATIVE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE EMPLOYMENT SKILLS AND THE ECONOMY SUB GROUP

2 MARCH 2012

1.0 **PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the work of the Co-operative Commission sub group on Employment Skills and the Economy and to set out the proposed recommendations to be considered by the Co-operative Commission Assembly.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Council and its partners need to develop a more effective focus on attracting inward investment and support for existing businesses to boost the local economy that:
- A commercial approach to economic development is adopted through the development of an 'economic development board' to aid information sharing, monitoring, transparency and accountability.
 - Telford and Wrekin Council promotes itself as a 'Business Winning Council'.
- 2.2 Help support employers through the creation of a highly skilled, adaptable workforce equipped for the modern economy. As learning and skills are the key drivers of this we need to:
- Identify skills gaps, improve skills and boost employment in the private and third sectors, especially within Telford & Wrekin's emerging industries

3.0 **INFORMATION**

3.1 **EMPLOYMENT SKILLS AND THE ECONOMY IN THE BOROUGH**

- 3.1.1 There is a shared recognition that all aspects of 'employment, skills and the economy' make a major contribution to life in the local community and is essential in underpinning the success and sustainability of the borough.
- 3.1.2 The 16th September Co-operative Council Commission Assembly meeting identified 'employment, skills and the economy' as a theme for one of its working sub groups with a specific focus on:
- Encouraging economic investment in the borough
 - Looking at the current sector strengths and opportunities of Telford and Wrekin and building on these
 - Encouraging young people (18-30 years) to live in and contribute to the borough economy

- 3.2.1 The Employment Skills and the Economy sub group comprised of small and large businesses, education providers, social enterprises and charities all with experience of the issues impacting on 'economy and skills' within the borough. The full list of group members is attached in Appendix 1.

3.2 **Developing Key Areas of Focus**

- 3.2.2 In order to identify the key areas of focus and agreed outcomes, the sub group considered a range of information including evidence and the key messages from the Local Economic Assessment (as

outlined in Appendix 2) and direct experience from the organisations represented. This information was used to inform the identification of the key areas of focus for the group.

3.2.3 This was also informed by the Co-operative Council Community Forum meeting on 15th December. Made up of community representatives, they looked at the issues relating to 'employment, skills and the economy' in the borough and their perception of the key challenges. A member of the Commission sub group attended this session. The feedback from the Community Forum was used to develop the final recommendations of the sub group.

3.3.1 The sub group chose two main areas to focus on:

- **Attracting Businesses into the Borough** – through greater inward investment and better more effective support for existing businesses and together these can help to boost the local economy.
- **Improving Employability** – by supporting employers through the provision of a highly skilled, adaptable workforce equipped for the modern economy and employment practices. Key to this are 'learning and skills'.

3.3.2 The following recommendations have been developed to support the delivery of these areas of focus. Further information on the rationale and supporting actions are set out in Appendix 3.

3.3.3 **Recommendation 1:** 'That a more 'commercial approach' to economic development is adopted through the development of an 'economic development board' to aid information sharing, monitoring, transparency and accountability'

3.3.4 Desired Impact:

- More openness, transparency and data sharing across organisations to better understand new and emerging opportunities for securing inward investment and the provision of support to existing businesses
- Retain and support existing businesses to grow locally
- To increase MPs and MEPs understanding of Telford's 'offer' and their involvement in promoting the borough as a excellent place to do business and to invest
- For Telford to be nationally recognised as a great place to do business

3.3.5 The Local Economic Assessment indicates that key sectors in the borough are: tourism, business and professional services, advanced manufacturing and food and drink. The sub group considered that a more commercial approach to exploiting these key sectors needed to be adopted to encourage investment.

At a local level the Council would be at the core of this work and a more co-operative approach with local businesses and partners would be more successful at attracting businesses to invest in Telford, creating jobs and supporting a stronger local economy.

Further work with partners, including the Telford and Wrekin Business Board needs to be completed in order to agree which sectors this new approach needs to be focussed on.

To assist with this, the group felt that 'One Telford' (the current part of the Council responsible for attracting and nurturing inward and new investment) was currently not visible enough for new and existing business and that all opportunities needed to be better understood and activity to secure investment better coordinated from a central point. For example, the recent 154 Jaguar Land Rover development was identified as an opportunity and an area that required a quick and co-ordinated response from the Council and its partners.

Due to the state of the national economy, the opportunities for inward investment are limited and competition to attract them is strong. The borough needs to sell itself in the most effective way possible.

The group also recognised that to support this recommendation, further work would need to be completed at a national level. This focussed on the current relationships in the borough between the local authority, local businesses and central government. The group considered whether our local MPs and MEPs could do more on a national stage to promote Telford.

3.3.6 Recommendation 2: 'That Telford and Wrekin Council promotes itself as a 'Business Winning Council''

3.3.7 Desired Impact:

- Attracting new businesses into the borough
- Securing economic growth
- Potential of attracting wealth into the area by marketing the fact that executive homes are more affordable in Telford

The group felt that a competitive, pro-active sales approach could be an effective approach to attracting new business into the borough.

The current Telford 'Prospectus' is an online tool and provides prospective businesses with information and data about Telford and with key contacts too. As a first point of contact for a prospective investor, it was recognised that there was an opportunity for this to be updated and better illustrate what the borough has to offer.

In addition to this, existing businesses within the area could be ambassadors for Telford, both nationally and internationally if provided with the right tools to do so.

The borough's 'unique selling point' was recognised to be at the core of such an approach. Although a complex combination of things it was considered that a more targeted approach might be beneficial. The further exploitation of the World Heritage Site was considered as a marketing opportunity for example 'Telford and Ironbridge' as well as the potential of attracting wealth in to the area by marketing more affordable executive housing.

3.3.8 Recommendation 3: 'Identify skills gaps, improve skills and boost employment in the private and third sectors, especially within Telford & Wrekin's emerging industries'

Desired Impact:

- Ensure those entering the workplace not only have the academic or vocational qualifications that they need, but are also 'work ready'
- Ensure that education and training provision meets the future needs of Telford and Wrekin employers and is of a consistently high quality
- Ensure targeted support for those with additional needs
- A multi-agency approach to apprenticeship opportunities for all young people with relevant training and work experience to enhance their employability skills

It is essential that all parties understand the needs and expectations of businesses and what is on offer in the borough to help businesses establish the workforce they require and desire. In particular, the relationship and communication between 'training providers' (TCAT, New College, schools), 'support organisations' (Job centre Plus and Image Match) and businesses should be improved.

Volunteer work and work experience are important pathways to employment and employment goals. As well as supporting young people to understand the world of work it also enables them to understand the different pathways available to reaching their career goal - beyond just the degree pathway. More detailed information to schools would assist in addition to schools contextualising the national curriculum.

If we are to develop key sectors in the local economy and provide opportunities for innovation (which is a current Government priority) to drive economic growth, the issue of graduate supply, retention and employment will need to be addressed – ultimately how do we keep our “home grown talent”. It is important that the Council and the Universities within the Borough work together around these issues to ‘drive up’ the knowledge economy. It was recognised by the sub group that this is very much a cross cutting issue across both areas of focus; ‘attracting businesses into the borough’ and ‘employability’.

4.0 Conclusions

4.1 The sub group agreed that there is already good practice in relation to employment skills and the economy and that these could be further developed through the implementation of the sub group’s recommendations.

In addition to this, there are areas where a more co-operative approach would be beneficial and it is essential that all parties are encouraged to collectively work towards the recommendations in order to ensure they are delivered and are a success.

There are many local opportunities and strengths – excellent education and training provision, a delightful local environment, economic capacity – which should make the Borough attractive to the investor. To make these ingredients work more effectively for the benefit of the borough and core to our recommendations, is a need for better, more co-ordinated joint or partnership working.

It was suggested that the Commission Assembly consider ways in which the impact of the recommendations could be measured.

5.0 Overlap with other Commission Sub groups

- Image of Telford - that the Council promotes itself as a ‘Business Winning Council’
- Commissioning Services & Procurement – that procurement and commissioning processes are used to maximise local opportunities in terms of awarding contracts to local organisations and businesses and maximising benefit to the local economy and community including employment and training opportunities.
- Volunteering – the importance of volunteering as a pathway into work.

6.0 Acknowledgements

6.1 With thanks to the Employment, Skills and the Economy Commission group for dedicating their time and for their commitment to the cooperative approach and the developing of recommendations.

Appendix 1 - Members of Cooperative Commission Employment Skills and the Economy Sub Group

Name	Organisation
Rosie Beswick	Shropshire Chamber of Commerce
Shah Bhatti	Tan Bank Mosque
Anna Brennand	Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
Jane Brookes	Wrekin Housing Trust
Graham Clark	New College Wellington Regeneration Partnership
Sian Deane	Holmer Lake Primary School
Ian Dosser	Cap Gemini / Telford Business Board
Fay Easton	Ironbridge Regeneration Partnership
Jan Ellis	Telford College of Arts and Technology
Cllr Rae Evans	Telford and Wrekin Council
Sherrel Fikeis	Connecting Communities Group
Rose Gregory	Donnington Lifelong Learning Centre
Ann Johnson	Federation of Small Business
David Llewellyn	Harper Adams University
Steve Miller	Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
Cllr Leon Murray	Hadley Parish Council & Telford and Wrekin Council
Faith Sloan	Public & Commercial Services Union
Jayne Stevens	Parents Opening Doors
Neil Stonehouse	Phoenix School
Cllr Barry Tillotson	Wellington Town Council/Admaston House Charitable Trust
Michelle Young	Parents Opening Doors
Gary Duncombe	Job Centre Plus

Support Officers	
Jon Power	Telford and Wrekin Council
Rachel Humble	Telford and Wrekin Council

Appendix 2 – Local Economic Assessment Presentation



a co-operative
council



Telford & Wrekin
COUNCIL

Telford and Wrekin Economic Assessment 2011


Telford and Wrekin Co-operative Council
Commission
Employment, Skills and Economy Working
Group
14th November 2011

Peter Smith
Head of Economy and Skills
Telford and Wrekin Council


Telford and Wrekin Economic Assessment 2011

Format

1. Context – the Council’s economic development function
2. The Economic Assessment – methodology
3. The Borough economy – key facts
4. Our competitive edge
5. Barriers
6. Key recommendations:
 - a. Improving employability
 - b. Jobs growth



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Telford & Wrekin
COUNCIL

Context – the Council's economic development function

Economy and Skills

Service Objective: To create good quality jobs and to support residents into work

Economic Development
(20 posts)

- Business development/
inward investment (4)
- Tourism (3)
- Enterprise support (2)
- Regeneration (6)
- Markets (3)
- Funding support (2)

Skills
(37 posts)

- Adult and community
learning (6)
- Careers (24)
- Youth employment (7)



The Economic Assessment – methodology

- The brief – Identifying Telford and Wrekin's competitive advantage
- The methodology:
 - Evidence base analysis
 - Action research
 - 46 businesses, organisations and individuals interviewed
 - 3 themed discussion groups
 - Business survey – 48 responses



The Borough economy – key facts

Businesses:

- 4,500 businesses employing 81,000 people
- 20% of jobs in foreign owned companies
- Inward investors: 48 US; 28 German; 16 French; 14 Japanese
- Sectors (jobs):
 - Public 26%
 - Retail, hotels and restaurants 23%
 - Banking and finance 21.7%
 - Manufacturing 18%
- Wage levels below regional and national average
- Net inward commuting



The Borough economy – key facts

Employment:

- Unemployment (August 2011)
 - 4.3% overall (4.9% regionally, 3.9% nationally)
 - 34.3% of those aged 18-24 (29% regionally, 29.4% nationally)
- Skills
 - Attainment at 16 above national average
 - Below regional average at NVQ3 (A level) and NVQ4 (Degree)
 - Persistent problem on young people not in education/training/jobs



Our competitive edge

- Distinctive rural/urban, modern/historic environment
- Plenty of available employment and housing land
- Good road network and motorway links, low congestion
- Rail freight terminal
- I54
- Diverse and innovative manufacturing base
- Strong leisure and business tourism offer
- Excellent Research and Development enabling business cluster development:
 - Polymer research
 - Rapid prototyping and fuel cell technology – Wolverhampton Uni.
 - Food and drink – Harper Adams
- Self sufficiency and strong business networks



Barriers

- Image
- Below average business start up
- Tourism assets not linked and exploited
- Public transport to employment sites
- Strategic rail and road links
- Broadband and energy supply
- Low skill levels



Key recommendations: Improving employability

Recommendation	Council response
Improve links between schools /colleges /employers to create routes into work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careers, youth employment support (including work experience) • Employability Centre • TWC support programme for those facing redundancy • Community Jobclubs • Work with regeneration contractors (e.g. Keir)
Discussion between employers and training providers to match provision with future skill needs	
Liaison with Work Programme provider to address employability	
Graduate retention scheme through employer programmes and marketing	
Focus support on hard to fill vacancies	
Targeted support for those leaving the public sector	
Community based support for newly unemployed	
Employment hubs for regeneration projects	



Key recommendations: Jobs growth

Recommendation	Council response
Ensure that Telford is an easy and cost effective place to do business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One stop shop for business 'One Business' • Business sector development – strategic employers / sector development / inward investment • Enterprise support • Business Board/ TWC procurement work
Good liaison with strategic employers	
Promote local procurement	
Business start up advice 'post Business Link' focussed on key sectors	
Enhance capacity of HE sector to attract research funding	
Targeted inward investment support	
Engage businesses in inward investment activity	



Inward Investment

- A. Build on our strengths
 - Sectors:
 - Tourism
 - Business and professional services
 - Advanced manufacturing including polymers
 - Food and drink
- B. Sector focus v clustering (or both)?
- C. Address the image problem
- D. Maximising the links with HE
 - Low carbon energy
 - Prototyping
 - Food and drink
 - Incubation
 - Knowledge Transfer Partnerships
- E. Engaging businesses



**Appendix 3: Employment, Skills and the Economy
Co-operative Commission Working Group**

Area of Focus	Recommendation – What do we need to focus on and what can we do differently?	Rationale – why do we think this is something that we need a cooperative approach to?	Desired Impact – what do we want to happen as a result of the recommendation?	Suggested Actions – how are we going to implement the recommendation?
Attracting Businesses into the borough	That a commercial approach to economic development is adopted through the development of an 'economic development board' to aid information sharing, monitoring, transparency and accountability	<p>The Local Economic Assessment indicates that key sectors in the borough are: tourism, business and professional services, advanced manufacturing and food and drink. It was considered by the group that a more commercial approach to exploiting these key sectors needed to be adopted to encourage investment.</p> <p>It was however noted by the group that we may not want to totally restrict ourselves to these sectors when attracting business. Telford & Wrekin Council with the Business Board need to agree that these are the 3 priority areas for focus are and what restrictions (if any) there will be.</p> <p>At a local level the Council would be at the core of this work driving it forward however a more co-operative approach with local businesses would also be more successful at attracting businesses to invest in Telford, creating jobs and supporting a stronger local economy.</p> <p>The sub group agreed that One</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All partners involved sharing intelligence to provide a short, medium and long term business plan for the area • More opportunities seized • Increased visibility of One Telford • More openness and transparency across organisations – data share • Retain and support existing business • For MPs and MEPs to see Telford in 'action' • To increase MPs and MEPs understanding of Telford's 'offer' • For Telford to be promoted as an area to do business at a national level • Executive housing is marketed as more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree priority sectors for focus - TWC, Business Board • Develop a prospects list of short, medium and long term opportunities • Develop a coordinated approach to I54 to maximise opportunities in the borough • Map out who is currently doing what and ensure that work is not duplicated across different organisations • Develop the role of the business board to include ownership and delivery of the prospects list • Review and publicise the Telford 'prospectus' • Produce an information pack a business would need/want to know if considering relocating to Telford. This can be distributed to MPs/MEPs in addition to existing businesses within the borough.

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		<p>Telford (the current part of the Council responsible for attracting and nurturing inward and new investment) was currently not visible enough for new and existing business. It was felt that all opportunities needed to be understood and coordinated from a central point.</p> <p>The group understood that there was a need to support existing businesses and provide a co-ordinated approach to current opportunities. The recent I54 development was identified as an opportunity and an area that required a quick and co-ordinated response.</p> <p>There is a need to understand our current sectors where we may be able to exploit opportunities to promote the borough to attract businesses and therefore create jobs and a stronger local economy.</p> <p>The group had a discussion around current relationships in the borough between the local authority, local businesses and central government. The group considered whether our MPs and MEPs could do more on a national stage to promote Telford.</p>	<p>affordable with easy access to the attractive rural areas of the borough</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange frequent ‘familiarisation’ visits to Telford for MPs and MEPs to further understand Telford’s offer • Invite MPs and MEPs to the Business Board on a regular basis e.g. every 6 months • Create an Employment and Skills Partnership in conjunction with the Telford Business Board

Area of Focus	Recommendation – What do we need to focus on and what can we do differently?	Rationale – why do we think this is something that we need a cooperative approach to?	Desired Impact – what do we want to happen as a result of the recommendation?	Suggested Actions – how are we going to implement the recommendation?
		<p>To support the objectives of both inward investment and supporting existing businesses the borough's 'unique selling point' was recognised to be at the core of this approach. This is a combination of things however in order for this to be effective it was considered that a more targeted approach might be beneficial. The further exploitation of the World Heritage Site was considered as a marketing opportunity for example 'Telford and Ironbridge' as well as the potential of attracting wealth in to the area by marketing more affordable executive housing.</p>		
Attracting Businesses into the borough	That Telford and Wrekin Council promotes itself as a 'Business Winning Council'	<p>It was recognised that a competitive, pro-active sales approach could be an effective new approach to attracting new business into the borough.</p> <p>The current telford 'Prospectus' is a tool that can be updated to begin to map out what the borough has to offer – this could include jobs/opportunities/housing/funding opportunities/skills etc.</p> <p>That local business are given the tools and encouraged to be ambassadors for Telford both nationally and internationally</p>	<p>Attracting new businesses into the borough</p> <p>Economic growth</p> <p>Potential of attracting wealth into the area by marketing the fact that executive homes are more affordable in Telford</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council to consider different models to asset management to develop commercial interface e.g. joint venture with the commercial/marketing sector • (Deliver actions as per recommendation 1)

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Employability	Identify skills gaps, improve skills and boost employment in the private and third sectors, especially within Telford & Wrekin's emerging industries	<p>It is essential that all parties understand the needs and expectation and what is on offer in the borough to help businesses establish the workforce they require with the right skills. In particular, the relationship between 'training providers' (TCAT, New College, schools), 'support organisations' (Job centre Plus and Image Match) and businesses could be improved.</p> <p>There needs to be 'wrap around support for businesses and residents seeking work' which must take into the account the needs of all residents.</p> <p>Volunteer work and work experience are important pathways to employment and employment goals. As well as supporting young people to understand the world of work it also enables them to understand the different pathways available to reaching their career goal beyond the degree route. More detailed information to schools would assist in addition to schools contextualising the national curriculum.</p> <p>Some residents are unable to access job opportunities on industrial estates due to lack of</p>	<p>That support available for residents seeking work is mapped and a means to communicate this effectively is developed (particularly the voluntary sector)</p> <p>Ensure those entering the workplace not only have the academic or vocational qualifications that they need, but are also 'work ready'</p> <p>Increase business engagement in workforce development</p> <p>Reduce long term unemployment, reduce barriers</p> <p>increase engagement of those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)</p> <p>reduce the percentage of people with no qualifications</p> <p>Raise employer demand and investment in skills, including accelerated take-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an Employment and Skills Partnership in conjunction with the Telford Business Board • Develop an employment and skills strategy for Telford & Wrekin through a collaborative infrastructure • Develop greater co-ordination and communication between businesses, training/education providers and support organisations • The partnership landscape between business, training/education providers and support organisations should be mapped, reviewed and simplified • Support available for residents seeking work is mapped and a means to communicate this effectively is developed (particularly the voluntary sector) • Build on the work currently being undertaken by the CVS

Area of Focus	Recommendation – What do we need to focus on and what can we do differently?	Rationale – why do we think this is something that we need a cooperative approach to?	Desired Impact – what do we want to happen as a result of the recommendation?	Suggested Actions – how are we going to implement the recommendation?
		<p>available transport that supports shift working</p> <p>If we are to develop key sectors in the local economy and provide opportunities for innovation (which is a current Government priority) to drive economic growth the issue of graduate supply, retention and employment will need to be addressed. It is important that the Local Authority and the Universities within the Borough work together around these issues to ‘drive up’ the knowledge economy. It is recognised by the group that this is very much a cross cutting issue across both areas of focus; ‘attracting businesses into the borough’ and ‘employability’.</p>	<p>up of Apprenticeships aged 16-24</p> <p>Ensure that education and training provision meets the future needs of Telford and Wrekin employers and is of a consistently high quality</p> <p>Ensure targeted support for those with additional needs (not just LD)</p> <p>Improving the quality of facilities and access to learning</p> <p>Graduate retention</p> <p>Increase the numbers achieving recognised qualifications at/or equivalent to NVQ levels 2 and above</p> <p>Reduce the percentage of people with no qualifications</p> <p>Employment levels – knowledge economy?</p>	<p>on arranging transport solutions to shift workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the Local Authorities current approach to working with universities in the Borough • Explore how businesses can work with educational providers to aid workforce development • Encourage the retention of graduates through practical work placements and employment programmes • Promotion of STEM – Science, Engineering, Technology & maths through schools, employers and training providers