

<b>WARDS AFFECTED: ALL</b>	<b>ITEM No. ....</b>
<b>REPORT OF: Worklessness Overview Project Group</b>	
<b>CONTACT OFFICER: Andrea Tomlinson, Democratic Services Officer</b>	
<b>TITLE: FINAL REPORT – June 2014</b>	

## **INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR – COUNCILLOR TARIQ**

The Worklessness Overview Project Group was asked to review the work undertaken by the authority in relation to support offered to the unemployed across the borough and those wishing to return to employment following career breaks or education.

The research carried out involved a large amount of technical information and required in-depth explanation from the officers working in these areas. I would like to thank those officers for their support and patience in this process, particularly Tracey Flynn, Christine Seymour and Michelle Delaney as well as the representatives from the partner agencies; Anne Boocock and Tan Ahmed.

I would also like to thank the other Elected Members of the Project Group for their attendance at the meetings and visits and their input into the work of the Group; Councillors Grimshaw, Gunther, Heneghan and Nuttall.

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the work, findings and recommendations of the Worklessness Overview Project Group.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 At its first meeting of the 2013/2014 Municipal Year, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that a Worklessness Overview Project Group be established to review and consider the issues affected by worklessness and what the Council and its partners were undertaking in relation to this
- 2.2 The Membership of the Group comprised Councillors Grimshaw, Gunther, Heneghan Nuttall and Tariq (Chair).
- 2.3 The Project Group was delegated to agree its own project plan which is at Appendix 1 to the report.

## **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 The Group met on the following occasions:-

31 October 2013  
26 February 2014  
7 May 2014

- 3.2 Members of the Group attended visits to Whittaker Street and Radcliffe Works.
- 3.3 The group were invited to the 'Have a Go' event which was held on 5 March 2014 in the Elizabethan Suite.

## **4.0 WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE GROUP**

- 4.1 The group received information in relation to the work that the Council were undertaking either independently or alongside partners to assist residents to gain skills, training and employment.
- 4.2 The group also received information in relation to the work that the Council were undertaking either independently or alongside partners to provide residents with assistance in relation to digital inclusion, benefits claims and debt management.

## **5 SKILLS, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT**

- 5.1 Bury Employment and Skills Task Group had been established in November 2004 and the current membership was; Bury Council

(Employment, Support and Training, Libraries and Adult Learning, 14 – 19 Team, Organisational Development, Children’s Centres, Childcare and Early Years), Connexions, Bury College, Bury Third Sector, ADAB, Skills Funding Agency, Jobcentre Plus, New Economy and Six Town Housing.

There were a number of different schemes being provided across the borough at both a local level and a regional level to assist people to gain employment and/or skills.

5.2 Backing Young Bury was launched in 2012. This scheme was set up to assist young people to gain an apprenticeship place, work experience and employability skills and various pre-employment opportunities including:

- The Super 6 scheme – six months full time paid employment within Bury Council;
- 3Employ scheme – 3 months full time paid employment within Bury Council;
- DWP extended work experience scheme: in partnership with the Jobcentre Plus – provides young people who are claiming JSA the opportunity to gain 8 – 12 weeks work experience.

It was explained that the employers who became involved with the apprenticeship scheme received a package of support which could include funding.

A Work Ready Scheme providing young people who have a learning disability the opportunity to gain 8 – 12 weeks work experience through undertaking a placement within Bury Council had also been established and relevant training to become Work Ready was also provided.

5.3 Connecting Provision activity incorporates traineeships available. This focuses on young people in need of assistance (care leavers/Looked after children/at risk of offending). Individuals are offered 7 weeks with the council, they would keep their benefits and receive on the job training as well as 1.5 days a week with adult learning and sportivate activity once a week. If after the 7 weeks they had done well it could lead to a 26 week paid placement followed by signposting to external job opportunities.

Jobcentre Plus, Adult Learning and the European Social Fund/DWP Families with Complex Needs Project were partners in the Connecting Provision Activity. The future cohorts for this scheme will be aligned with the troubled families work – (SCIL) Supporting Communities Improving Lives.

City Deal sets out a range of bespoke agreements between the government and Greater Manchester Combined Authority based on the needs and opportunities of the region's economy.

They are geared towards accelerating growth, boosting skills and encouraging local decision-making and increased self-sufficiency.

With the only combined authority in the country, Greater Manchester is in a unique position to bring forward this ambitious package of measures.

The Greater Manchester Commitment to Youth Employment ensures that all available grants are secured to support young people into apprenticeships.

The Work and Skills element of City Deal has established a Greater Manchester Apprenticeship Hub. In Bury the Council is working in partnership with Bury College and Jobcentre Plus to establish an Employment and Skills Gateway which is located in the Millgate Shopping Centre within Bury Town Centre.

- 5.4 The Members of the Group also had input into the contents of Bury Councils 'Menu of IAG Activity' (Information, Advice and Guidance) to schools. The menu would help young people start to prepare for employment, ensure that they are aware of apprenticeship opportunities and ensure that the skills needs of local businesses are met. It was hoped that by working together local businesses will find it easier to recruit young people and ensure that the opportunities are created.

Schools were asked to host an apprenticeship session for year 11s which would be introduced by the Council's corporate apprentices. This would allow young people to review the options available to them other than further education. All young people would also be asked to register on the national apprenticeship website where all apprenticeships were advertised.

### 5.5 Backing Young Bury

To date: 12 Young people have secured a corporate apprenticeship with Bury Council and it was anticipated that this would be increased to 30 over the next 3 years; 70 work experience placements within the Council have been offered since January 2012; 41 out of the 51 available commitment grants have been used to support Bury young people into apprenticeships and there were currently 27 jobs with training funding pots being utilised by Bury Young People. It was explained that the Communities section would benefit from the introduction of a key worker/mentor post to offer support to the apprentices. The position could be funded through external grant support.

### 5.6 Traineeships

2013/2014 to date: 22 young people recruited in partnership with connecting provision all but one placed on traineeships. Now seeking to work with employers to offer a similar programme with placements in private companies.

5.7 Ingeus would soon be providing support across 6 of the Greater Manchester Authorities including Bury. Ingeus is a leading provider of the Government's 'Work Programme' initiative to tackle long term unemployment by providing employment and training services. Ingeus work alongside over 100 partner organisations and would be providing Bury residents with bespoke solutions.

## **6 COUNCIL ON SITE SERVICES**

6.1 The Members of the group were invited to attend a visit to Whittaker Street Digital Hub in Radcliffe where a range of services are provided that can be accessed by residents. The Digital Hub has been set up to support the digital inclusion strategy and the 'Go on Bury' campaign please see <http://www.bury.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=8653> for more information. The web page has also been set up to provide information across the borough on where residents can access pc's, the internet and work clubs and the information is all held in one place.

7 Internet Access PCs are available to residents with a library membership (or we can join customers if they bring ID) . The PCs can be used for 2 hour slots and allow full access to sites

(with restrictions).

A further 7 PCs are also available with access restricted to Bury Council and Direct Gov site.

Free 2 or 3 hour computer skills training sessions are provided for residents who require assistance to set up an e-mail address, use the internet and log onto certain websites such as DWP and Jobmatch sites. These sessions are provided by Adult Learning and DWP.

3 days a week the National Careers Service provide appointments to help with CVs, training and work opportunities. The appointments are held at Whittaker Street with an on site advisor.

Citizens Advice offer a drop in service on Wednesday 10am to 2pm as well as bookable appointments at other times.

On site telephones are also available to enable contact to Step Change debt charity and the Credit Union as well as other Council services.

## **7 CORPORATE DEBT MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 The Council has recently introduced a Corporate Debt Policy which has been put in place to assist residents who are struggling to repay debt due to a number of different reasons such as changes in circumstances either job related or benefit related.

The policy looks at ways of assisting people through advice and signposting in order to prevent increasing debt.

At the time that the policy was being implemented there were 17 payday loan opportunities in Bury Town Centre alone with extremely high APR attached.

It was also explained that the debt policy looked at the different advice given in relation to sanctions implemented in relation to benefit claims which could leave a person unable to claim benefits for up to 3 years.

## **8 RADCLIFFE WORKS**

- 8.1 The group visited the Radcliffe Works shop in Radcliffe Town Centre. The facility is a tendered service and is currently provided by ADAB.
- 8.2 Radcliffe works had been operating since July 2009 and had seen a steady increase in footfall since. The number of people attending had increased from 1000 in the first year to expected figures of over 2500 for 2014. Initially more men than women were registered but this has now changed to more women attending.
- 8.3 The number of people helped into jobs had been steady with the highest figure being 57 people during 2010.

It was explained that the centre offered a range of facilities including:-

- Job Search skills
- CV preparation
- Form Filling
- Interview Skills
- Employment workshops
- IT courses
- Careers Advice
- Money advice
- Debt Management
- Benefits Advice
- Training Courses including; Security, Health and Safety, Hygiene, First Aid.

18 partners attended sessions on a rota basis during the course of the month and the employment workshops were currently being provided by ASDA.

There were also themed days providing information on issues such as universal credit benefits and mentor days where local successful business men and women visit and successful service users.

Training can also be tailored to individuals following the initial appointment and evaluation.

The main areas of concern that were raised at Radcliffe Works

were computer illiteracy and issues around universal credit.

It was explained that there was a similar facility in place at Prestwich Works which was based in Prestwich Town Centre and is largely targeted at the Orthodox Jewish community in Prestwich to assist the Jewish community to access mainstream services.

## **9 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **9.1 RECOMMENDATION 1**

That this Group recognises the hard work being undertaken across the Council and partners to assist Bury residents in gaining employment, skills and training.

### **9.2 RECOMMENDATION 2**

That external funding be sought to provide a key worker/mentor within the Communities section of the Council to support the apprentices.

### **9.3 RECOMMENDATION 3**

That all Councillors receive a training session and/ or information in relation to the work being carried out by the Council and its partners to help people into work and training.

### **9.4 RECOMMENDATION 4**

That all options for regularly advertising the available apprenticeships are considered to ensure as large an audience as possible.

### **9.5 RECOMMENDATION 5**

That the work being carried out by Radcliffe and Prestwich Works be supported and promoted to ensure as many customers as possible benefit from the services offered.

### **9.6 RECOMMENDATION 6**

That the computer access available within Whittaker Street reception is replicated at as many sites as possible across Council buildings in line with the digital inclusion strategy.

#### **9.7 RECOMMENDATION 7**

That a report setting out the work of Ingeus in the borough be submitted to the relevant Scrutiny Committee to inform the Members on their work

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