



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TASK AND FINISH GROUP TO CONSIDER YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE ON WEDNESDAY, 16TH NOVEMBER 2011 AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

H.A. Andrews, D. Hardacre, K. James, L. Hughes, G. Jones, M. Prew, J Fussell and K.V. Reynolds.

Together with:

G. Hardacre (Head of People Management and Development), M. James (Personnel Officer), A. Bolter (Group Manager – Strategy and Funding), J. Tarling (Hub Youth Project), D. Greenway (Senior Youth Worker), T. McMahon (Community Regeneration Manager-Communities First), R. Searle (National Training Federation Wales), S. Timothy (ACT), S. Davies (ACT), D. Beck (Torfaen County Borough Council), M. Davies (Genesis), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer), C. Evans (Democratic Services), Shannon Ellaway (ITEC).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr M Sargent, Cllr L Hughes, J Bennett and representatives of the Hub Youth Project and the Senior Youth Workers.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES OF MEETING 31ST OCTOBER 2011

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true record following clarification of projected costs over a 3-year period for the Council Apprenticeship Scheme.

3. PRESENTATION – REPORT ON BARRIERS TO ACCESSING PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT IN TORFAEN

Danielle Beck, Torfaen County Borough Council presented information to Members on a recent research project undertaken within Torfaen to determine the barriers to accessing employment within the Public Sector. The exercise was specific to Torfaen and included a wide range of participants, both young and old and of different qualification levels and backgrounds.

The presentation outlined the findings as a result of the research project and a number of recommendations have been passed to the Council in relation to the barriers that have been identified. Work will be carried out in order to reduce these barriers as a result of the project.

Cllr Harry Andrews queried Caerphilly CBC's policy on notifying unsuccessful applicants for posts. Mr Hardacre confirmed that there is a system in place to notify applicants if they are unsuccessful, particularly after interview. It was noted that the volume of applications received for posts in recent months has meant that this is often difficult, however letters are always sent.

Mr Hardacre informed members that the "Emergent Themes" identified as a result of the presentation and research project has been taken into account in Caerphilly CBC also and work is intended to be undertaken to look at the suitability of our own application forms. It is proving that the "one size fits all" theme is not effective for many posts. Advertising for apprenticeships is also to be reconsidered in order to offer "smarter" ways to advertise and target a specific audience.

Cllr Prew requested information on the percentage of participants in the project between the ages of 16-24. It was confirmed that approximately 50% of participants were within this age bracket. The work carried out was specific to the Public Sector (including RSL's). The participants volunteered some information relating to accessing employment in the Private Sector and it was outlined that the processes for application and selection differ between the two sectors.

Ms. McMahan explained that a number of jobs are expected in the area with the opening of the new Morrisons Store in Bargoed. In order to prepare for this a meeting has been arranged with the store to ascertain the types of jobs that will be available during both the construction and fitting stages as well as when the store is open, workshops and training will be taking place to inform and train people for the kind of skills and knowledge that would be required for the jobs that will be available. It was suggested that a similar scheme could be implemented within Caerphilly CBC for any vacant posts.

Mr. Hardacre agreed with this suggestion and suggested that more detailed information is required for many of the posts within Caerphilly CBC, with more background information provided and less jargon and complicated language to ensure that posts and their requirements are more clearly understood.

Cllr K Reynolds requested information on the percentage of participants whose skills bases were directed at office/ administrative skills and those with manual/ practical skills. Ms. Beck confirmed that there was a wide variety of participants within the project, however, there were a higher percentage of participants with the skills to perform more manual work.

Cllr Hardacre queried whether transport was discussed as an issue for accessing employment. Ms Beck confirmed that although this was expected to be discussed as an issue, it was not offered as a barrier to accessing work by the participants who took part in the project.

4. PRESENTATION - COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUNDED PROJECTS (ESF)

Matthew Davies, Genesis Co-ordinator, provided a presentation to Members on the projects and support available as a result of the European Social Fund.

Following the presentation, Cllr K Reynolds requested information on the venues in which some of the training is provided. Members were informed that training is often provided in Community Venues such as Libraries, Church Halls, Community Centres etc, venues in which people feel comfortable and are easy to access.

Cllr Hardacre requested information on how the service is accessed and if there were any specific criteria in place. Mr Davies confirmed that there is a criterion in place, however, often if a person applies for one service and doesn't meet the criteria; there is often another service available for them, providing the appropriate support they need.

There are a number of success stories in relation to these services. Areas are targeted through the support of Communities First and the more difficult to reach. Members were also reassured that the support provided by these projects does not affect a persons benefit entitlement.

Cllr. Prew questioned the amount of uptake for the "Employer Pledge". This is a new project and the current numbers are low as it is difficult, in the current climate to sign up employers.

Cllr. Prew also requested information on the total number of apprenticeships available. Mr. Davies agreed to provide these figures and information on the schemes in place to assist young people.

Mr. Davies reassured Members that there is a joined up process in place. There is a great deal of cross working going on courtesy of the advisors working for the project. Where possible, internal services will be used to provide a service, however, where this is not possible, alternative sources are sought.

Cllr. Hardacre suggested closer working with GAVO. A skills questionnaire has been sent around by them in his area and suggested that the results of this could be used to inform need and target services.

5. WORKSHOP ON BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS GAPS

The meeting participants were divided up in 3 separate groups and provided with a subject area:

- Barriers to accessing employment for Young People
- Skills Gaps for Young People

The groups discussed these areas and fed back to the remainder of the group, some of the issues they had identified.

The meeting closed at 7:20 p.m. The next meeting will be on Monday, 5th December at 5.00 p.m. in the Sirhowy Room, Ty Penallta.