

Minutes

Credit crunch cabinet (CCC)

21 October 2009

The Leader's office

3pm

Present:

Howard Sykes (chair)	Oldham Council
Cliff Ellison	Groundwork
Steve Lowe	Royal Bank of Scotland
Michelle Ford	LSC
Viv Robinson	Jobcentre Plus
Michele Carr	Oldham Council
Jon Bloor	Oldham Council
Karen McCrackle	Oldham Partnership support team

Apologies:

Nick Brown	Oldham Sixth Form College
Caroline Ball	Greater Manchester Police
Charlie Parker	Oldham Council
Karen Wells	Oldham Partnership support team

1 **Welcome and Apologies**

The chair welcomed everyone and gave apologies.

2 **Minutes of last meeting**

The minutes were approved

3 **Matters arising**

Tim Mitchell (TM) will be invited to the next CCC in December to talk about the reduction in young people not in employment, education or training (NEET).

A decision will be made about meeting frequency after each CCC meeting; however the economic dashboard will continue to be produced monthly in a simplified format.

ACTIONS:

TM to be invited to our next meeting

4 **Declarations of interest**

None

5 **Economic dashboard and intelligence report**

Jon Bloor reported that the number of Jobseekers Allowance claimants went up again between August and September 2009. Jobcentre Plus vacancies were up in September, and seasonal work will soon start to affect these figures.

The wards with the most JSA claimants remained Coldhurst, St Marys and Alexandra. There were significant decreases in Chadderton South and Royton South.

The NEET rate in July was 8.9%, but school leavers will have affected this figure and November's figure will give a more balanced view.

6 **Options appraisal for Citizens Advice Bureau support**

An options appraisal for an extension to the CCC's support for the CAB was brought to the meeting. The CCC had already confirmed that the casework support officers currently in post and funded through the RIF would be funded until the end of May 2010, so this paper looked at the CAB's need for further support.

The CCC agreed to commission an extension to the specialist advice worker funding until December 2010 and an additional post with primary responsibility for recruiting and training volunteers until December 2010. It was stressed that the RIF is a short-term fix to help Oldham through the recession, and shouldn't be relied on as a way of filling the gaps left when other funding ceases to exist.

ACTION:

A new costing to be provided for the chosen option

7 **Community reporters**

Steve Duthie (Oldham Chronicle) gave a verbal update on the community reporters pilot, which was part of the business case for the community and business roadshows. The pilot will upskill community members to help deliver good news about Oldham.

Seven reporters are in the early stages of their training, having been recruited through Highway to Opportunities. In addition to the Chronicle, Oldham Community Radio, Revolution Radio and University Campus Oldham are involved in the delivery of the scheme. Participants include a recent English graduate and a 50-year old who had been struggling to find work.

CCC members were asked to explore whether they could offer the reporters work experience, or whether there were forthcoming events that they could come along to document.

It was highlighted that because fewer reporters had been recruited than were originally planned for, some funds would go back into the RIF. Relating to this, the chair asked that a financial update be provided for each CCC meeting

ACTION:

A financial update to come to every CCC meeting

8 **CAA economic activity report**

This report is a result of the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) enquiries into income and poverty in Oldham. In particular, Oldham has seen a decrease in the employment rate AND a decrease in the number of people claiming out of work benefits. This is because there has been an increase in the number of economically inactive people: those who are neither working nor seeking work, for example carers or those who are living off a redundancy payment.

In Oldham we have been aware for some time that this figure is going up, and there is a risk it will continue to do so. However, we have met the targets we set to reduce worklessness and will therefore dispute the Audit Commission's allocation of a red flag to this issue.

The CCC confirmed it was happy for the report to go to the Audit Commission and colleagues will debate this issue further with them. .

9 **Future Jobs Fund**

We are awaiting the grant letter from government and upon receipt of this FJF can go live. The intention is that the first cohort is recruited before Christmas. There will be approximately 500 vacancies in Oldham over three waves.

The chair asked whether there were any more possible vacancies within the council; there is scope to add more opportunities to Oldham's list at a future date, however all roles must clearly be for the benefit of the community.

ACTION: Jon Bloor to keep Carl Marsden, press and media manager, informed of developments.

10 **Date and venue of next meeting**

21/12/09 at 2pm in the Leader's office, Oldham civic centre.

The agenda will include a report from Tim Mitchell, Positive Steps, regarding the interventions that have been so successful in bringing down Oldham's NEET rate, and a full financial update on the RIF.

The CCC's scheduled November meeting is cancelled.