

UPDATE/ CHANGES TO LOCAL AUTHORITY BUSINESS GROWTH SCHEME INITIATIVES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Deputy Leader Councillor C Giel
Councillor T Knowles
LEAD OFFICER: Mike Tichford, Head of Regeneration
REPORT AUTHOR: Sherrie Lewthwaite, Regeneration Projects Officer

Summary and Recommendation:

The report provides an update on the Local Authority Business Growth Incentives (LABGI) scheme and details suggested changes to the Whitehaven projects to utilise the funding, to the benefit of the Copeland economy.

Members are requested to note the progress and approve the changes to the programme as detailed in the report. The programme will be managed by Fergus McMorrow, Corporate Director (Economic Prosperity and Sustainability) as delegated from The Executive.

Suspend CS05 in respect of advertising and tendering for consultancy services, utilising instead the West Lakes Renaissance framework agreement for same.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The schemes under the LABGI executive report 24.10.06 have all been progressed and developed apart from The Whitehaven Town Centre Programme. This report gives an update on progress of the LABGI Schemes.
- 1.2 The previous report presented to exec on 24.10.06 proposed to recruit a Business Liaison Officer who would work closely with town centre businesses to represent their views on the Whitehaven Town Centre Task Group. The Council has not been able to secure matched funding from Westlakes Renaissance, therefore Whitehaven Town Centre Task Group Members have considered other options to achieve the desired outcomes.

2. ARGUMENT

- 2.1 Paragraph 3.1 outlines a programme of initiatives to utilise the £55K that was approved for Whitehaven Projects at the executive meeting on 26th October 2006.
- 2.2 This programme has been put together by the Whitehaven Town Centre Task Group which is chaired by the Council's Economic Development Manager.

3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

3.1 At the meeting of the Executive on 24th October 2006 a programme of initiatives was approved. Proposed changes for the Whitehaven Town Centre Regeneration Programme are made in 3.2 with an update on progress detailed in 3.3 to 3.5.

3.2 Whitehaven Town Centre Programme

It was proposed that the funding is utilised to implement recommendations from the recently completed 'Sea Change' study, including the recruitment of a Business Liaison Officer who would work closely with town centre businesses to represent their views on the Whitehaven Town Centre Task Group. In addition he/she would be involved in developing marketing initiatives to promote Whitehaven to potential investors and developers.

3.3 Securing funding for a Business Liaison Officer has proved difficult and it has been suggested by the Town Centre Task Group to use the money to develop projects including:

- Visitor signage and street furniture
- Developing a Business Improvement District for Whitehaven
- Public Realm Feasibility
- Car Parking Strategy
- Investor/ Developer Marketing

3.4 It is proposed to allocate £55k to this programme over the next two years with a matched contribution of £25k being sought from the private sector and £25K being sought from West Lakes Renaissance.

3.5 Delivery of these projects will involve an element of external consultant support, estimated to be below £50K. In order to expedite the process it is recommended to make use of the WLR framework agreement to procure consultancy services. In order to deal with this it is necessary to suspend CS05 in respect of advertising and tendering of the consultancy services. The council will act client for the projects noted above except the Business Improvement District which will be led by the private sector.

3.6 Enterprise Development Programme

This is a joint project with Allerdale Borough Council to encourage more people in deprived wards to consider self employment as a career option. The scheme would involve the recruitment of enterprise development workers, encouraging enterprise in South Whitehaven and Cleator Moor. The Council will work closely with the South Whitehaven Partnership and Cleator Moor Business Centre in the delivery of this project.

5 Enterprise Development Workers were recruited and in post in February 2007 to help develop and promote community enterprise activity that will benefit the residents of the area by encouraging and supporting entrepreneurship and self employment. The Enterprise Development Workers have been working with 31 clients across West Cumbria and 2 have started training already

3.7 **Partnership Project with St. Martin's College**

We have recently launched a new initiative which involves the Council paying a 50% wage subsidy to Copeland businesses employing under-graduate students and graduates under the Business Placements Programme and the Graduate Recruitment Service schemes. The subsidy covers 50% of the allowance paid to the placement student/graduate up to a maximum of £700. The scheme commenced on 1st April 2007 and to date three local businesses have expressed an interest in taking on graduates and are now involved in the recruitment process with the help of St. Martin's College. It is hoped to support 20 businesses in the first year of the scheme.

3.8 **Business Development Initiatives (Cleator Moor, Egremont and Millom)**

This project has involved each of the three town's business networks developing a programme to address their own needs.

i. Cleator Moor:

The money allocated to Regen NE Copeland from the Business Growth Initiative has been directed towards the development of a business network for the 5 parishes involved in the partnership to support the growth of our local business sector.

At present the area does not have a business forum/ network in place to support the dissemination of information, advice and support between local companies and to businesses from external support agencies. Initial delivery has focused on background research and compilation of information.

It has been agreed that the Business Forum offers a route for the Chamber of Trade and that they will support the joint initiative. The group are also working with the Chamber of Commerce to bring area wide links and match funding to our local business network. The group have put together a comprehensive list of local businesses and to date a cross section of businesses have been approached to discuss the key issues that they are facing, the local market and support needs, etc.

ii. Millom:

The Millom Business Forum was launched in December 2005 with 75 local businesses attending the first meeting. The forum utilised funding from the Council to recruit a Support Officer to work for 14 hours a week to promote the work of the forum and organise meetings and business events. The forum plans to undertake a business survey in the town and develop a local business directory in the future.

iii. Egremont:

Egremont have appointed a Marketing and Tourism post in March. This post will work closely with businesses to look at ways to maximise the benefit that they bring to the town and to make the most of all Egremont's assets, including retailers, the improving Main Street and Market Place and the developments at the Castle to bring more visitors and shoppers into the town. The Marketing and Tourist person has commissioned an upgraded website for the town and will involve business in the development of that site, by looking to give an online presence to all the town's businesses with a central purchasing page that will allow some of the very small businesses to sell through the website.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 All the projects included in the Copeland programme, are monitored by the Economic and Tourism Development Section on a quarterly basis.
- 4.2 The LABGI programme helps to support additional business development activity within the borough as outlined section 3 of the report.

5. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)

- 5.1 The council received £161K for the 'LABGI' scheme in 2006/7.
- 5.2 The programme levered in an addition £226K of funding from sources in 2006/7.

6. PROJECT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 All the projects included in the Copeland programme, are monitored by the Economic and Tourism Development Section.

7. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

- 7.1 The programme supports the Councils objective to create and sustain a healthy local economy.

List of Appendices

Appendix A - <Appendix Title>

Appendix B - <Appendix Title>

List of Background Documents:

Progress Reports from Town Partnerships

Sea Change Study

Minutes Whitehaven Town Centre Task Group

List of Consultees:

Corporate Team

Chris Lloyd

Graham McWilliam

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed. This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	N/A
Impact on Sustainability	N/A
Impact on Rural Proofing	N/A
Health and Safety Implications	N/A
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	N/A
Children and Young Persons Implications	N/A
Human Rights Act Implications	N/A

Please say if this report will require the making of a Key Decision YES/~~NO~~