

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE – 13 FEBRUARY 2001

EAST AYRSHIRE ACTION TEAM FOR JOBS

Report by Director of Development Services

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To inform the Committee of the progress of the East Ayrshire Action Team for Jobs project, from its establishment in June 2000 to the present.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1** At its meeting on 1 August 2000, the Committee received a report advising of the establishment of a new project to support unemployed people overcome barriers which have prevented them from securing employment. The role of the project is to complement other existing programmes of support which are available and to act as a point of access to them.
- 2.2** The project was established as one of three national pilot schemes in June 2000, to run for a period of 1 year. The project is administered by the Employment Service, working in close partnership with other local agencies including East Ayrshire Council. Due to effective partnership working and early success, particularly in the East Ayrshire pilot, the number of pilot projects throughout the UK was increased in October 2000 and the duration of the project in East Ayrshire was extended by 6 months to October 2001.
- 2.3** From its inception, the project has been targeted on two areas of highest unemployment. It operates in the postcode areas of KA1 4 (Riccarton / Shortlees) and KA18 3 (Muirkirk / Lugar / Logan / Netherthird & Craighens).
- 2.4** The total funding allocated by the Employment Service to the East Ayrshire project is £1.5 million, for the 16 months duration of the project.

3 PARTNERSHIP WITH EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

- 3.1** The partnership between the Council, other projects which it supports and the Action Team is effective with many strong working relationships having been established across a range of services.
- 3.2** The Action Team has established a local office in Shortlees, in premises leased by the Council on a concessionary basis. Identification of suitable premises in Riccarton is being progressed.

In Muirkirk, the project shares premises with the Ayrshire Electronic Community and in Cumnock, the project has a regular presence in the Netherthird Library. The Council's Mobile Library also provided a resource for the project in the more outlying areas, but as this facility was little used, it has been discontinued and has been substituted by an increased presence at the Netherthird Library.

3.3 Projects are in operation or are being developed with the following range of other partners :

- East Ayrshire Coalfields Social Inclusion Partnership;
- Ayrshire Electronic Community;
- YIPWORLD.com;
- CONDUIT;
- Money Advice Service;
- Educational & Social Services;
- Kilmarnock & Ayr Colleges;
- Citizens Advice Bureau;
- Strathclyde Passenger Transport;
- Childcare Partnership.

4 UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF THE PROJECT

4.1 Information available to 5 January 2001 shows that initial contact has been made with 552 people, of whom 162 had been placed into work. This means that the Action Team is well placed to achieve the yearly target of 360 people into jobs.

4.2 The types of assistance given to clients varies according to individual need and includes the following types of financial assistance and support (the list is indicative and not exhaustive):

- travel costs to interview;
- transport to work;
- clothing costs for interview;
- costs of protective clothing or personal tools for work;
- childcare costs;
- training costs and programmes;
- working grant (to provide money in the gap between end of benefit entitlement and start of wage payments).

4.3 A facilitated development workshop was organised by the Action Team in November 2000 and included a wide range of organisations which could support the work of the Action Team. Ideas initiated at that event are now being developed into projects for delivery to the clients.

5 DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACTION TEAM FOR JOBS PROJECT

5.1 The project aims to support unemployed people to secure jobs. Accordingly, publicity of the project focuses on both the residents of the relevant local areas

and also businesses in any location which can offer employment opportunities. New and innovative ways to publicise the project are constantly being considered and implemented.

- 5.2** Representations have been made locally by the Council about the extension of the East Ayrshire project. At a national level, the National Action Team Steering Group is considering extension of the current projects and although the format of such an extension is now yet known, announcements will be made in due course by Government.
- 5.3** In mid- January, David Blunkett, the Education and Employment Secretary announced a new initiative entitled "RECRUIT" which will give small firms grants of up to £2,380 to recruit unemployed workers through the New Deal for 18 to 24 year olds or the New Deal for 25+. The new initiative will be piloted in the 12 Action Team for Jobs areas, including East Ayrshire and will be evaluated after 6 months. The new RECRUIT scheme will be available throughout all of East Ayrshire and is due to become available from April 2001.

6 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** The work of the East Ayrshire Action Team supports the Council's policy objectives to develop the economy and reduce unemployment and deprivation.
- 6.2** The working format of the Action Team is also consistent with the Council's operating principles of Quality, Equality, Access and Partnership.

7 FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** There are no direct financial implications, other than officer time. There are no legal or personnel issues.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1** That the Committee notes the current position with the project and the positive impacts which it is having in East Ayrshire.

STEPHEN CHORLEY
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31/01/2001/jrs

BACKGROUND PAPERS - Nil

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