



REPORT BY EMPLOYMENT WORKING GROUP

Board Meeting – 5 December 2002

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update members on the activity of the Employment Working Group.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In a paper presented to the Board on 17 January 2002, a number of issues were highlighted which would be taken forward over time by the Employment Working Group, as follows:

- profiling of Coalfield settlements;
- job rotation;
- childcare;
- transport to work;
- employer forum; and
- skills audit.

- 2.2 Tenders were invited from a range of external consultants to take forward the development of the Employer Forum, clarify whether perceived barriers to employment such as childcare and transport actually affect the employment prospects of the residents of the Coalfield Area and inform the development of future initiatives to address identified barriers to employment. Sheila White, Management Consultant, was subsequently appointed to undertake this work.

- 2.3 A working group was established to develop a funding bid to the European Social Fund in respect of Job Rotation.

3 JOB ROTATION

- 3.1 It is recognised that there is a need for individuals to develop their existing skills, gain new skills and continually acquire knowledge to ensure their future employability. Long term unemployed people face particular problems in convincing employers of their ability to 'do the job', whilst accessing the right training for their needs can also be problematic. The need for trained people to quickly put their skills to use in the workplace is critical in underpinning the training investment.

- 3.2 It is also recognised that investment in staff development is a major key to survival and growth for companies within East Ayrshire but carries with it a high cost in terms of releasing key staff for training and accessing the correct training.

- 3.3 The Job rotation approach is relatively new in Scotland, designed to address the above issues by raising the skills of the existing workforce whilst providing paid employment for unemployed people. The programme encourages company and employee development by providing 'off the job' training for selected staff whilst supplying and training unemployed people to substitute for the staff released.
- 3.4 The project will target thirty unemployed people and will release approximately one hundred and twenty employees for training.
- 3.5 An application for funding has been approved by the Objective 3 European Partnership under European Social Fund, Priority 4 Measure 4A.2 'Competitive Economy'. The total funding package is as follows:

East Ayrshire Council	£ 21,500
Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire	£ 45,404
East Ayrshire Employment Initiative	£ 15,000
Coalfield Area SIP	£ 15,000
European Social Fund	£165,397
Employer contribution	£105,250
Total project costs	£367,551

4 PROGRESS BY CONSULTANT

4.1 Community Audit

- 4.1.1 The consultant has developed a community audit framework which will provide information to inform and support local development strategies by identifying current skill levels, the skill development needed and other critical resources required, such as transport and childcare. This community audit framework allows the range of issues to be addressed in one data gathering exercise.
- 4.1.2 The consultant has analysed existing information and identified gaps in available data to allow for more focused and relevant information to be gathered.
- 4.1.3 A community audit is currently being undertaken in Logan and Lugar which are deemed to be representative of the communities in the Coalfield Area in terms of indicators such as age and gender mix and levels of unemployment. The sample used will be large enough to allow conclusions to be drawn regarding the key issues detailed above across the Coalfield Area. This method of information gathering can be used in the future in other communities and over time to track improvements.
- 4.1.4 The methodology for the community audit involves a mix of survey, face-to-face interviews and small focus groups which are a mix of gender specific or age specific. The involvement of local people is crucial and community council representatives have been instrumental in bringing people together for focus group meetings and building credibility in the community.
- 4.1.5 The activity detailed at 4.1.4 above is ongoing.

4.2 Transport to Work

4.2.1 It was agreed to undertake a supplementary transport to work survey based on the needs of individuals through the Job Centre in Cumnock. This, together with the larger study, will give a broad perspective on the transport to work needs within the Coalfield Area.

4.3 Employer Forum

4.3.1 The consultant has also been tasked with establishing an Employer Forum which will inform the development of a long term vision for the Coalfield Area and represent local business on the East Ayrshire Coalfield Area Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) Board.

4.3.2 The consultant is currently engaged in identifying interested individuals from local businesses who would wish to participate.

4.4 The consultant will have completed this work by 31 December 2002. A report will be presented to the SIP Board in March 2003.

5 SUSTAINABILITY

5.1 The Employment Working Group has been tasked with recruiting an external consultant with expertise in working with initiatives to ensure sustainability.

5.2 This area of work will be progressed on completion of the Annual Review Meetings on 22 November 2002 and after the Project Networking Event of 3 December 2002, as the information gathered will inform the detail of the brief.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- i) notes the content of the report.

**Jim Burns, Chairperson
Employment Working Group
21 November 2002**