



## **Coventry Partnership Business Group Meeting**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Wed 05<sup>th</sup> Nov 2008 at Council Room LSC, Oak Tree Court, Binley**

### **Present:**

Dianne Williams, Chamber of Commerce  
Ric Richards, Federation of Small Businesses  
Les Ratcliffe, Jaguar Cars (Chair)  
Pete Walters, CV One  
Roger Lewis, Peugeot Citroen  
Linsey Hunter, Federation of Small Businesses  
Jo Sandford, Consultant  
Nigel Wain, Coventry Partnership  
Anna Walker Coventry City Council  
Donna Reeves

### **Apologies:**

Dhiran Vagdia, FORCE  
Andy Walmsley, Coventry City Council  
Karen O'Donaghue, Coventry First  
Faye Williams, Common Purpose  
John Guildford, Business in the Community  
Louise Bennett, Chamber of Commerce  
Sherod Williams Institute of Directors  
Jayne Magee, Business in the Community  
Dawn Ford, Coventry Partnership

### **Meeting Highlights**

**Donna from the PCT consulted with the group about the best way to engage with businesses to allow access to employees for screening of Chlamydia which was the most prevalent sexually transmitted disease in Coventry. It can cause long term health issues such as infertility in men and women if not treated. Coventry is in danger of failing to meet the target on screening agreed with the Government and Business was challenged to identify ways it could assist.**

**The worsening state of the economy was discussed and it was agreed to raise the concerns of Business at the Partnership meeting which would be held the following day.**

**The summary version of the Sustainable Community Strategy was circulated to the group for comment by the end of Nov.**

## **1. Welcome and Apologies**

Les welcomed everyone to the sixth meeting of the Coventry Partnership Business Group.

Introductions were given and apologies as above were noted.

## **2. Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept were agreed.

Matters arising:-

### **Employer Offer**

The revised Coventry employer offer leaflet had been distributed before the meeting along with an explanation of how the feedback from the Business Group had been used in revising the wording. The leaflet had been significantly improved as a result of consultation with the Business group.

### **Review of the Business Group**

Roger was concerned to ensure that the Business Group agrees what message if any as a result of the meeting should be raised at the Partnership Board Meeting which follows. Les agreed that this should be covered as a separate agenda item at the end of each meeting.

Dianne had fed back some of the concerns raised at the last meeting re the economy during the presentation she gave on LEGI. In view of the worsening situation the group felt the message might need to be revisited at the next Board meeting.

### **No Discrimination Charter**

Linsey reported that she had organised a follow up event for the FSB for the anti discrimination training for the 25<sup>th</sup> Feb. Dianne had held ongoing discussions re the training with Sue but nothing had been firmed up yet.

### **City Centre Consultation**

Wide consultation events had been held with all sectors and the consultation remained open until end November.

## **Holocaust Memorial Day**

Much of the activity was being organised with the schools, but Nigel reported that he had given the names of the Business group to Chris Boyce so he could write to engage Business. Nothing had yet been received so Pete agreed to follow it up at the next steering group meeting.

### **3. Chlamydia Screening – Donna Reeves**

Donna explained that she had wanted to talk to the Business Group to explore how best she could work with Business to promote Chlamydia screening to employees'

A presentation had been circulated to the group prior to the meeting.

She highlighted that Coventry had a massive problem with Chlamydia which was the most common STI especially in the under 25s. It causes no symptoms in 50-80% of people infected but can lead to infertility in later life.

There is a need to target young men who currently represent only a 1/3 of the people tested; the majority of these are only traced as contacts. Men do not understand that they can also become infertile in later life.

Donna last year wrote to several Businesses but only had one response and she was now seeking the advice of the Business group to find ways to engage with more Businesses.

Roger asked about the testing and Donna explained that it was all covered in a simple leaflet and self contained test kit. She characterised the testing:-

- People needed to give consent
- Personal information is required but this is not shared with any one else
- A post code is required so that hot spots can be identified
- Contact preferences for feedback are required – telephone or text and whether voice mail can be used
- Test is a urine sample or swab
- Treatment is simple - a one off antibiotic tablet handed out by the nurse after the test results without the need to visit a GP.
- Names of possible infected contacts are asked for.
- 3 behavioural questions are asked to help plan future strategies.
- Result takes a week.
- A full sexual health screening service is also offered.

The only employer to respond was Solar Glass. Donna was ideally looking to target employers with many young workers such as Call Centres.

Donna thought that employers would benefit from improved welfare for employees and less time off sick.

Les commented that many large employees have occupational health units which should be straightforward to contact and he would follow up with Jag to see who should be contacted.

Linsey offered to help promote the service to her business contacts.

Dianne repeated the Business groups concerns from previous meetings that Businesses need to be engaged with a coordinated health message not with individual campaigns.

Concern was expressed about any feedback to employers on the numbers of tested and any indication of positive results- It is not their concern and could encourage further suspicion on the nature of the tests (do they include a test for drugs?)

Pete thought the local media could help promote the service.

Linsey suggested that Donna organise events at Business Parks where there is often a central location through which many small businesses which could be contacted.

Les thanked Donna for attending the meeting.

The general view was that employers would be very sensitive about approaching employees on sexual health issues but may be prepared to publicise events and allow access to staff when screening events are organised externally.

#### **4. Feed Back On Business Issues**

Les asked for feedback on the key issues for Business.

Linsey had just received the latest survey results from the FSB members. She summarised the key issues :-

- Late payments
- Cash Flow
- Banking support
- Obtaining Credit
- Sales falling
- Costs increasing

Businesses doing better are Graphic/Web Design, IT and Legal sectors

Nationally 54% of businesses are reporting a decrease in activity and 50% either have or would consider reducing their number of employees.

A reduction in interest rates is seen as one of the most important things that Government could do.

Dianne supported the problem of delayed payments with many large businesses moving from 30 to 60 days.

Linsey reported the initiative that the FSB was following to get public sector payments in 10 days and for the public sector to mandate that through their supply chain.

Dianne commented on the number of businesses reporting withdrawal of long standing banking agreements and is pushing for banks to explain if the withdrawal is due to the business circumstance changing or the banks. There are specific cases where businesses have gone into administration because banks can not respond quickly enough because of regulations. Ric highlighted that banks seem unwilling to use the small business guarantee scheme.

Both the Chamber and the FSB reported increased volume of recruits which happen when people start their own business after being made redundant.

Les said Jaguar was offering sabbaticals in an effort to maintain skills which they will be need for the launch of new products next year.

There was concern about how the construction industry could maintain the skills to support future growth.

Nigel circulated a summary of the state of the economy prepared by Myles Mackey in the Council (see attached)

Concern was also expressed that there was a prevailing view that Coventry would not be as badly hit in the current recession as it used to be when there were more large manufacturers. A large number of smaller businesses are never the less finding business tough.

Pete reported that footfall in the city centre was down 6/7% but half term was buoyant and voids were going down, so the picture was mixed.

Local organisations and the Partnership need to be encouraged to use local business.

It was also noted that Public Sector construction was still going on but smaller local businesses are not favoured by the national procurement policies. It was also noted that projects such as the NDC were being delayed by the falling house prices.

It was agreed that Dianne would raise these issues during the Board meeting to encourage the Board to increase its focus on what it can do to mitigate the impact of the worsening business environment.

## **5. Sustainable Community Strategy Summary**

Nigel reminded the group that they had previously been consulted on the content of the Sustainable Community Strategy. The feedback from the group had been that it was too wordy. Anna handed out a new summary a5 version for the group to comment on. This version contained a summary of each of the Themes at the front and then listed the short and long term priorities along with ideas on how people could get involved. Anna invited comments from the group on the content. The revised wording of the summary is attached to the minutes.

**Action Business group members to forward comments on the summary document by end Nov to Anna.**

## **6. Review Of Next Partnership Board Agenda Items**

Nigel outlined the items which would be covered on the Partnership Board meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Health was the key item, the Business group has discussed health issues at 2 recent meetings and the key points which could be fed back were:-

Health needs to be addressed with business as a single issue not per campaign. Larger employers have occupational health units to work with, smaller employers often find it difficult to engage with employees around health but may well allow access to staff for health events organised externally.

There will also be an opportunity to feed back the Business group view on the economy.

The next meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> Nov is a planning workshop to agree priorities for the Partnership to tackle. It was agreed that the key issue from Business was the economic crunch.

## **7. Key Messages**

The group agreed that Dianne should feedback the key messages around the Economy to the Partnership Board meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> Nov.

## **8. Future Issues**

The meeting identified the following as items to be considered for future meetings:-

Business Crime Consultation (proposed by the Community Safety Theme group) -  
March

Bike to Work – a scheme to enable employees to save money on buying Bikes to travel  
to work.

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The scope of future meetings will be influenced by the priorities agreed at the planning  
meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> Nov.

## **9. AOB**

Future meeting dates will be arranged to coincide with the Partnership Board meeting ,  
but there would be no meeting prior to the January board mtg.

.Nigel Wain