

REPORT TO COUNCIL FORUM – APRIL 2010

EXECUTIVE MEMBER CORPORATE PROJECTS (BUSINESS REPORT)

Local Procurement

The Council has committed £30k of Working Neighbourhoods funding to help local companies to bid for Council contracts. The Procurement Team has already held a number of breakfast briefings at the East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce on “How to do Business with the Public Sector”, but this is a new approach which focuses on specific contracts.

By targeting specific Council tenders we are able to map Pennine Lancashire companies and invite them to training sessions to help them to complete the tender documentation. We also offer one to one support to help them to get their businesses “tender ready”. This includes signposting them to development funding, training them on business finance, helping with health and safety and environmental policies, etc. The Chamber carries out this supplier work on the Council’s behalf.

We are currently at tender stage of a stationery contract and 16 companies were shortlisted at prequalification (PQQ) stage, 5 of which are local suppliers. This is an excellent result as most of these companies would not have succeeded at this first stage if they had not been given this level of support.

We are now working on a construction framework agreement with Capita and will offer local construction companies similar support by inviting them to briefings where we will explain how the Council tenders and also take them through the documentation. The Chamber will then offer more in-depth support to complete the PQQ and tender documents.

The EU Procurement legislation prohibits public authorities from giving any advantage to companies based on geographical location. Therefore by taking this approach to up-skilling our local companies we are enabling them to bid on a level playing field with the bigger national and multi-national companies who have large bid teams to complete tender documentation. Even if local companies are not successful in winning Council business, the help they receive puts them in a much stronger position to bid for other work within and outside Pennine Lancashire.

Chamber of Commerce Export Session

On 26 March the Chamber of Commerce delivered the first in a planned series of seminars on the technicalities of export for local businesses.

Whilst there is considerable experience of international trade amongst the borough's businesses, there remain many which are not yet active in the global market place. Those businesses which took part in the workshop looked at all aspects of export activities including the most efficient ways of costings for exporting including letters of credit. Feedback from the session was very positive and businesses found this exercise particularly useful. It was felt that this was a valuable way of encouraging businesses in the Borough to become involved in exporting activities.

It is planned to repeat the session later in the year with the valuable assistance of the Chamber of Commerce, who are the regional experts in this field.

Pennine Lancashire Joint Investment Plan and Business Support activity

The Pennine Lancashire Joint Investment Plan and Local Investment Plan were signed on March 24, 2010. These two plans are the first to be agreed in the North West and further strengthen the continued commitment of all of the Pennine Lancashire authorities to work together to improve the area.

The Joint Investment Plan is a commitment, in principle, of £20m funding per year for the next ten years from the North West Development Agency (NWDA). The Local Investment Plan commits the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to £64m of funding to Pennine Lancashire to help deliver much needed new housing and improvements to existing homes in the face of the economic downturn.

These two plans represent a move away from the restrictions brought by programme led funding within administrative boundaries to a place centred approach where funding can be invested based on priorities and developments which will have a greater impact both on the economy of Pennine Lancashire as a whole and the well-being of local people. The investment will support new, high value jobs and growth within the advanced manufacturing sector including aerospace and engineering; better skills provision; better transport links across the area and into Manchester; and the development of new affordable and better quality housing.

In particular, £8.4m has been set aside for investment in Pennine Lancashire businesses. A number of schemes will be funded and eligible businesses will be offered grants. These will include the High Growth programme - a three year coaching initiative for business growth supporting budding entrepreneurs and assisting SME's with ambition and capacity to expand by at least 20% a year, Innovation vouchers which will help Pennine Lancashire businesses, entrepreneurs and social enterprises to purchase knowledge expertise to develop innovation and enhance business. There will also be grants available to support businesses undertaking major investment projects and to allow them to relocate to bigger premises or expand existing sites.

The Joint Investment Plan will progress some of our key regeneration sites across Pennine Lancashire including the Whitebirk strategic site, adrenalin gateway in Rossendale, support to the knowledge zone, town centre developments in Hyndburn and Pendle and development at the Burnley Bridge business park. The rail schemes within the MAA, Clitheroe to Manchester, Todmorden Curve, Rawtenstall to Manchester will also benefit from this ten year investment commitment.

By agreeing joint priorities Pennine Lancashire has a stronger voice and a clearer way forward. The Joint Investment Plan and the Local Investment Plan both set out what the local authorities, NWDA and HCA want to achieve.