

**Central Dudley Area Committee - 13<sup>th</sup> March 2007**

**Report of the Director of the Urban Environment**

**Future Skills Dudley**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To focus on the work of Future Skills Dudley (FSD) and the training opportunities provided within the Central Dudley area.

**Background**

2. Within the Central Dudley Committee's area there are 4 Wards, Castle & Priory, St Thomas's, St James's and Netherton and Woodside, that fall amongst the worst 23 in the Black Country measured in terms of their "worklessness" levels.
3. Worklessness is a recognised Government term used to capture the total number of economically inactive people who are in receipt of key benefits, such as Jobseekers Allowance, Incapacity Benefit and Disability Benefit. The average worklessness levels for these 4 Central Dudley Area Committee wards is around 31%, well above the Borough average rate of 19.6%.
4. Throughout Dudley there are a range of organisations that are currently active and are implementing initiatives and delivering contracts that are aimed at engaging, recruiting and placing people into work. These include two Dudley MBC directorates, the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services (DACHS) and the Directorate of the Urban Environment (DUE), who, with their partners, work closely together to meet this aim.

**Future Skills Dudley MBC**

5. Future Skills Dudley is part of the Economic Regeneration Division, within the Directorate of the Urban Environment. Established during 1989 (formally known as the Community Refurbishment Scheme), its initial role was to link local unemployed people with training opportunities arising from a variety of construction programmes delivered as part of Housing improvements to the Kates Hill and Wrens Nest estates.
6. It soon became apparent that there was a significant need for services that enabled long-term unemployed adults to be recruited into services that linked them with meaningful training and support that equipped them with the skills needed to gain employment. This was the platform from which FSD's services began to widen, as both the levels of success and demand grew.

7. Throughout the 17 years of its life, Future Skills Dudley has continued to develop its infrastructure and its range of services. Today it is recognised as one of the most significant deliverers of mainstream preparation for life and work programmes across the Borough. This has extended throughout the South Black Country region through a number of area-wide initiatives that FSD now manages, with many services now delivered through partnership agreements.
8. A recent Adult Learning Inspection (ALI) during 2005 gave FSD a grade 1 for its Leadership and Management with grade 2s across all other areas covered by the inspection, FSD is now classified amongst the 'Best of the Best' providers nationally.

### **Service Delivery – Operational / Accredited Training Centres**

9. The services offered by FSD that support unemployed people throughout the Borough are through a mixture of client focused products, services and through its variety of operational / training centres, which for the Central Dudley area includes:-
  - **Central Dudley Client Support Centre** (Regent House, King St, Dudley Town Centre), occupying all 4 floors, it offers: integrated Skills for Life (Literacy & Numeracy) training, Information Advice & Guidance (IAG), Job search/brokerage and work experience placement services for around 350 clients each day.
  - **Meadow Road Operational Centre** – the FSD Head Office and Building and Environmental Works teams offer; work experience and vocational training for around 80 clients each day in; Fencing, General Construction, Painting & Decorating, Store Keeping and Horticulture.
  - **Priory Park Training Centre** offers training for around 25 clients each week, who through maintaining the park under the supervision and guidance of our skilled training staff, gain valuable skills in amenity horticulture.
  - **Myrtle Rd Fencing Centre** (Wrens Nest) offers accredited NVQ training in fence erection up to level 3, accessed by the Operations and Training teams.
  - **Turner House Client Support & Training Centre** (Wrens Nest), offers accredited Skills for Life (Literacy & Numeracy), IAG and community Job search and jobs brokerage services, with spaces for around 50 clients each day.
  - **Griffin Street (Netherton) Painting & Decorating Training Centre** offers a range of accredited training and has spaces for around 30 clients each day.
  - **Netherton Park**, offers training for around 15 clients each week, who together with skilled training staff, are maintaining the park through which they gain valuable skills in amenity horticulture

With a neighbouring centre:-

- **The BEST (Building Essential Skills for construction Trades) Centre**, Merry Hill, Brierley Hill, offers accredited vocational skills training in many construction trade areas, including: bricklaying, multi-skills, general

construction, paving, access towers, first aid, etc, supporting up to 50 clients each day.

### **Service Delivery – Client Related Products and Services**

10. The services that support clients who attend these centres are funded through a range of externally funded contracts or grant offers made to FSD. They come from a wide variety of bodies, that include: Advantage West Midlands (AWM), Jobcentre Plus, the Learning & Skills Council (LSC), Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF).
11. The range of products that are delivered can be classified as:-
  - Vocational / Accredited Training
  - Work Experience – Direct Delivery
  - Work Experience – Placements
  - Job Search Training
  - Jobs Brokerage
  - Information Advice & Guidance (IAG) Services
  - Skills for Life (Literacy & Numeracy)
  - Mentoring & Client Support
  - In Work Mentoring & Support
12. The contracts or grant offers secured that support these services include:-
  - **The Building Essential Skills for Construction Trades (BEST) Programme** - Sponsored through the Black Country Regeneration Zone and funded by AWM (Advantage West Midlands), with £5 million available to sponsor 4 years of activity up to July 2007. This initiative covers the areas of: Dudley, Sandwell and West Birmingham, it will create over 1000 new learning opportunities, filled by thousands of trainees, place over 800 people into jobs within the construction and allied sectors and educate many more. Specific initiatives will support priority groups such as the long term unemployed, members from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups and those still at school.
  - **Prime Contractor - New Deal** - Future Skills Dudley won the right last year to become the Jobcentre Plus Prime Contractor and is now the lead body for the delivery and management of all new deal programmes across the South Black Country. Together with key partners (Pertemps, Sandwell MBC & SCVO) FSD have now begun delivering services that will support almost 10,000 local unemployed people over the next two years, with around half from within Dudley and a target of placing up to around half, 50% into work.
  - **Programme Centres** - For clients who have been unemployed for 6 months, but are not yet called onto mandatory programmes within the New Deal framework, FSD are now able to offer dedicated support for clients, which helps them to find, secure and gain employment.
  - **Basic Skills** - Within all provision basic skills support and training is offered, this has now been enhanced through the award of the Learning & Skills Council contract for ESOL, Literacy and Numeracy across the South Black Country for Jobcentre Plus clients.

- **Operational & Environmental Improvement Teams** - FSD has its own in-house operations teams that complete a range of construction (paving, brickwork & community safety programmes), environmental improvements (fencing repairs and renewals) and maintenance programmes (social decorating programme) for Council directorates.

This is achieved through tradespersons and trainers who together with the trainees they are instructing and teaching complete around £500k of real life improvements each year to Council land and tenanted properties.

These works are secured through either competitive tendering or through an agreed set of unit rates, which demonstrates value for money and again is at no additional cost (as the works are at the same rates as those issued to external contractors) to the Council.

- **Liveability (Groundforce) Programme** - FSD in partnership with Green Care and Parks and Heritage, have been maintaining two of Dudley's parks (Priory & Netherton) for the past two years, making significant improvements linked to structured training, as staff and trainees maintain the parks and work closely with the friends groups.
- **LPSA and NRF** - FSD combined the Local Public Service Agreement programme with our own Neighbourhood Renewal scheme to deliver a set of outreach and part time employment programmes. Together with partners, such as DACHS and Neighbourhood Management, FSD succeeded in meeting both the LPSA & NRF targets (400 people into work), with the successful programme continuing through the 2006-08 NRF programme.
- **Local Area Agreement (LAA)** is an agreement for the Dudley borough that will set out a range of agreed objectives under a number of headings. This will include targets covering the next 3 years and allow the aligning and pooling of funding to support its delivery. Many of the above programmes will be built into this agreement and will contribute towards the achievement of both qualifications and job entry targets for unemployed people.

### **Strategic Service Development – Employment Opportunities**

13. FSD places clients into employment through the delivery of services that equips them with the skills they require to find and secure employment, largely through meeting the replacement demand from local employers.
14. Dudley Borough is about to benefit from a number of large scale capital infrastructure developments, valued at around £200 million over the next few years. The planned schemes for the year ahead include:-
  - Castle Hill Improvements/Development Plans - £100 million
  - Brierley Hill Sustainable Access Network - £27 million
  - Brierley Hill LIFT (health centre) Scheme - £30 million
  - Daniels Land Development - £33 million
15. Future Skills Dudley (FSD) has provision in place that will engage with and support around 3,500 local people during the 2007/08 period and aims to place at least a 1000 of these into employment, within many more achieving skills and qualifications as a result of participation.

16. With plans developing for the following few years including:-
- Beacon Centre for the Blind Improvements/Developments - £5 million+
  - Ruskin Mill Improvements/Developments - £6 million+
  - Local Colleges Both Planning Extensions/New Buildings - £10 million+
17. To ensure that any new jobs created are linked to local people, FSD are developing/ delivering two strands of activity:-
- Through the Construction Initiatives Development Manager (CIDM) FSD have developed and are now implementing a charter that developers / employers are signing up to. This charter enables FSD to co-ordinate / act as the focal point for the supply of trainees from both itself and from its partners, with the aim of ensuring that as many local people as possible benefit from work experience placements and job vacancies created as part of the construction phases.
  - Once built there are many more opportunities for local people and again the CIDM is working on a one-stop-shop approach to co-ordinating the activities of partners so that we can maximise these opportunities. It is hoped that this approach will build on the current activities operated from within Regent House - The FSD central Dudley Client Support centre and will be running from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007.
18. FSD fully accepts that access to these opportunities must be shared amongst all appropriate bodies that deliver 'local jobs for local people services'. FSD will ensure that these bodies are consulted with and involved within these proposals through partnership arrangements. This approach is required if FSD are to realise the anticipated opportunities that will be created.
19. FSD is also developing new products and services that will secure support for the years ahead, this includes the running of an Employability Pilot scheme on behalf of the Learning & Skills Council (LSC), the development of the BEST 2 construction programme, the extension of the Jobcentre Plus contracts, City Strategy initiative and the Local Area Agreement that will commence on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 and last for 3 years.

### **Finance**

20. In the current year, FSD manages contracts totalling £3.9m against which similar levels of funding are drawn down. FSD closely monitors outputs delivered to ensure that the required level of funding is achieved to match costs incurred.

### **Law**

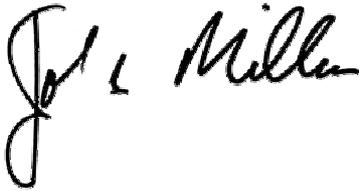
21. The Council may do anything which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the area under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000.

## **Equality Impact**

22. The services provided by FSD take into account the Council's Equal Opportunities policies. A number of initiatives support priority groups such as the long-term unemployed, black and minority ethnic groups and those still in full-time education.

## **Recommendation**

23. It is recommended that Members of the Area Committee note the contents of this report.



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## **List of Background Papers**

Report on Employability and Training Activities that Benefit the Central Dudley Area (2007)