

## Smart government for hard times

A local Liberal Democrat response to the recession



The Local Government Association is the national voice for more than 450 local authorities in England and Wales. The LGA group comprises the LGA and five partner organisations which work together to support, promote and improve local government.



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## Foreword

### Vince Cable MP

Deputy Leader and Shadow Chancellor

**The recession we face is unprecedented in my lifetime in its severity and speed of advance. The depth and length of the downturn is uncertain but it is clear that millions of British people will be affected by unemployment, falling incomes, home repossession, negative equity, diminishing private pensions and a decline in financial security.**

Since we are dealing with big global developments it is tempting to be fatalistic and to believe that nothing can be done at a local level. Yet while the government is apparently paralysed and unable to turn rhetoric into effective action Liberal Democrat councils are showing that there are plenty of opportunities for creative and practical intervention locally. This publication describes some of the initiatives. It also raises the possibility of liberating local government from some of the many constraints imposed by controlling national government in the last few decades.

At a national level it is clear, in broad conceptual terms at least, what government has to do to fight the recession. First, there has to be monetary expansion to offset the drastic contraction of credit taking place. Interest rates have been cut to near-zero and the next step is the government directly creating credit, expanding the money supply. Second, budget deficits have to be used to sustain demand and employment. There is a rather theoretical debate at present about whether a 'fiscal stimulus' is desirable or affordable.

The simple, common sense, point is that it is more sensible for the government to pay people to work than pay them not to work. Also it is more sensible to use government funding for creating long term assets, which may yield an income stream – like social housing or railway projects – than ephemeral, uncertain give-aways like the temporary VAT cut. In any event the government has no alternative but to shoulder the burden of funding capital expenditure when infrastructure development is grinding to a halt because of the collapse of the PFI model and when other focus of co-financing – like social housing financed on the back of

private development – have also dried up. And, third, the government has to take effective control of the banks which it has acquired by buying a majority stake through the recapitalisation process. Fear of the dreaded N-word, nationalisation, seems to have prevented the government doing what it has to do: to use the vast balance sheet of RBS/Natwest to direct credit to sound companies, currently being denied working capital by banks seeking to rebuild their capital base.

So far, government intervention, and parallel action by other governments has failed to stop a downward spiral in economic activity and employment. The human costs of the crisis are already being felt in lay offs and growing numbers falling into mortgage arrears, faced with the threat of repossession. With unemployment expected to rise from two million to three million this year and repossessions expected to double to 75,000 there will be considerable hardship. There is understandable focus on the role which local communities can play in mitigating the damage.

## Foreword continued

### Vince Cable MP

Deputy Leader and Shadow Chancellor

Some councils are actively helping local small companies by ensuring that they are informed, or helped, to obtain the commercial rate relief to which they are entitled. Kingston found that only a quarter of local firms were aware that they could get help. All councils should be following government guidelines to pay bills within ten days of invoicing. The latter, however, is only really useful in conjunction with measures to ensure that local companies benefit from council procurement.

There are many ways of helping individuals faced with unemployment. Sutton has started a council apprenticeship scheme to train or retrain people who are out of work. Councils working with voluntary bodies and the DWP can try to ensure that residents receive the many and various benefits to which they are entitled, the absence of which can lead prematurely or unnecessarily to serious debt problems. Advice is important too and local CAB's often need help from councils to survive and expand to meet growing need.

A key area for proactive councils is housing. There is a chronic need for social housing and also an opportunity to supplement the stock from unsold private homes becoming available and by building on land currently available at heavy discounts. Yet little is happening since some housing associations are paralysed by financial difficulties accumulated in ill-conceived joint ventures with developers while others are inhibited by the Treasury's insistence on a social housing subsidy formula which makes development financially unviable.

Enterprising councils are trying to plug the gap. Oldham has a grant scheme for helping private landlords to refurbish disused, under occupied, property and make it available for social letting. Newcastle is one of several cities buying up empty property from developers for use as council housing. Liverpool is restarting an old council mortgage scheme, helping first-time buyers to take the first step on the housing ladder now that prices are falling to saner levels. Several councils are looking at 'rent-back' arrangements to help families faced with repossession to stay in their own homes.

Some councils, like Newcastle, are raising the issue of councils' potential for using their cash reserves, currently placed in deposit at low interest, for lending to local businesses and homebuyers, working in cooperation with locally based building societies. Lending to credit unions is another option.

We should not expect too much of councils which necessarily have limited resources. But they have local knowledge and can tap into the energy of local communities in a way that central government cannot. In hard times they should be given their head.



# Introduction

## Cllr Richard Kemp

Leader, LGA Liberal Democrats

**Liberal Democrats are in a very different place in this recession than we were in the last one. In the 1980s, as unemployment rose and the United Kingdom was ejected from the ERM, we were very much the party of the shires and suburbs. Unemployment and monetary problems hit the areas we represented but not as much and not as severely as they did in the areas which we now represent. We are now no longer just a party of the shires and suburbs but of major urban areas as well.**

**With our outright control of Hull, Liverpool, Sheffield, Newcastle, Rochdale, Stockport and Portsmouth – and our joint control or leadership of Southwark, Oldham, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Swansea, Northumberland, Leeds and Birmingham – we now represent some of the most deprived communities in the UK. These are the communities that will bear the brunt of the recession as low-paid people and those with the least resources, get laid off.**

This presents Liberal Democrats with a real leadership challenge. Dealing with communities that have been fractured for a long time and have been subject to regeneration schemes with every set of initials known to man is difficult enough. Doing so when unemployment and the social problems that flow from it is rising by the day is doubly difficult.

This publication shows that Liberal Democrats are rising to these challenges. We are proud to have Vince Cable, a highly respected political commentator on economic issues, as our spokesman on the recession. He is calling the shots in the development of the national macro agenda, but the solutions provided at this level will take time to come to fruition. Our unemployed need action now, and it is to their council that they turn for advice, housing and a wide variety of practical assistance.

Increasingly though, the macro is turning to the micro. We are all beginning to understand that too many decisions about our communities are being made by people remote from them. Whether it's a decision about Liverpool being made in London, Bonn, Wall Street or Shanghai, it's too far away. Such decisions will be made by people who neither know nor care about our unique strengths, opportunities and weaknesses, nor indeed about the specific threats that we face. What this means is that one of the macro considerations is localism: creating a load of micro solutions to the problems in our communities and creating new decision-making processes that we can influence at a local level.

Our challenge then is not just to deliver, but to deliver liberal democracy. This booklet highlights some of the things that make us different. We are determined that green issues will not be sidelined because they are "too expensive in a recession". Indeed, just as Nick Clegg suggests national solutions based on a green economy, so we are stepping up the environmental work of our councils. Liberal Democrats are championing organisations like credit unions and social enterprises in the short term but looking to the development of local banks and mutual societies in the medium to longer term. We are recommending buying up land for housing in the immediate future to stimulate the market but looking at the development of co-operatives and community land trusts in the long term to provide sustainable development in sustainable communities.

Above all Liberal Democrats are seizing the opportunities created by the recession to think of new ways to do things faster than local government has been able to do them in the past. Complex reports from timid officers that have looked for years at possible solutions will not serve the purpose of dealing with the massive problems that are confronting communities every day. We are refocusing our councils away from the back room to the services being delivered on the front line; we are driving through changes to ensure that our services and those of our partners meet the real needs of those we represent rather than the needs that our officers think are convenient to service.

Having a Liberal Democrat council will not stop a recession in those areas we control or lead. But if we do the right things then we will shelter those that need shelter more than others and we will provide our communities with the chance to come out fighting when the worst of the recession is past. By doing the right things now we can help insulate our communities from the boom-and-bust cycle and can help create communities that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable in the future.

What follows are examples of Liberal Democrats already rising to the challenges we are facing, through initiatives in their authorities and also evidence that they are rising beyond the current challenges in their thinking. I hope these examples offer you food for thought and impetus to act.



# What kind of council are we going to be?

**Theme leader: Cllr Howard Sykes**

Leader, Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

**Councils are keeping an understandably close eye on what's going on in the United Kingdom's economy. The seismic shifts affecting everything from banking and finance to manufacturing and the retail sector are having huge knock-on effects for the people and organisations in our communities and, indeed, for the councils themselves. At the same time, existing problems around demographic change, energy and the environment have not gone away.**

**As a result, demand for our assistance has gone up just as capital receipts and parking income have gone down: the majority of councils are reporting severe budget pressures, with Cardiff seeing a £400,000 drop in income due to a fall in planning applications and land and search fees and Northampton reporting a 25-30 per cent reduction in parking revenue.**

This tight financial situation challenges councils to improve their performance and effectiveness in the face of these difficulties so that we can continue to offer communities and residents the support that they need. Of course, there is no clear path set out explaining exactly how to go about it. This is particularly true given that the challenges that we are facing are interlinked and complex: when budgets are being squeezed, how do you make the investment that you would like to?

Some councils have already started cutting costs by making redundancies or instating recruitment freezes. Others plan to introduce recruitment controls that require senior officers to challenge the need to fill each post and requires them to consider temporary and internal recruitment. In some situations redeployment could be an option: one council representative faced with a tight budget said it would be handy if authorities could reassign planners to work in debt advice; this example may not be practical, but an open-minded approach to problem solving will need to play a part as we reshape councils for the future.

Newcastle has worked out that good management in this coming financial year will allow it not only to balance this year's budget but also to make the substantial savings that they expect to need if they are to protect jobs and services in the future. It is doing this by using a contingency fund, inflation provision reserves and increased treasury management income of £3 million plus £700,000 in further savings.

The environment is also benefiting from Newcastle's efficient financial approach: it has proposed an annual 3 per cent energy reduction target for 2008/09 and a 10 per cent target for 2009/10. This is expected to save £107,000 in electricity. Islington's effort to cut the borough's carbon emissions have also paid dividends, with its green initiatives saving the council some £700,000 on their energy bills.

Procurement is another area where savings can be made. Somerset is 12 months into a 10-year contract with IBM that should save the council £200 million over the life of the contract. Most of the savings – the target is £150 million – will come from changes to the way that the council buys goods and services, while the rest will come from streamlining administration, changing working practices and other related initiatives. The contract involved Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, Avon and Somerset Police and IBM joining forces to set up a joint venture company called Southwest One.

Finally, councils can also use their procurement decisions to support local businesses, as is happening in Islington. The authority there is introducing a new procurement code that supports the use of local suppliers, where available. They have also cut the time it takes them to pay local invoices from 30 to 10 days.



## Case study: Oldham takes action

Oldham has proved just how seriously it is taking the recession by forming a special credit crunch 'war cabinet'. The group, which is made up of senior representatives from the council and other members of the Oldham Partnership, will meet each fortnight to analyse the latest local economic intelligence and take any necessary actions as quickly as possible.

It will also decide how to allocate money from a £400,000 rapid intervention fund, which has been set up to support residents and businesses through some of the worst effects of the credit crunch. For example, it could be used to help local people find jobs quickly if they are facing redundancy or to provide extra advice services at their place of work.

The cabinet will also signpost businesses and residents to other agencies offering help such as benefits advice, training and financial assistance. Oldham's community, voluntary and faith organisations will also have an important part to play in providing volunteering opportunities.

The credit crunch cabinet will also lobby Government and other agencies for changes to rules and regulations to help Oldham and allow it to cushion the impact of the credit crunch. If necessary, the council and its partners will find more funding for the rapid intervention fund.

# The council as financier

Theme leader: Cllr John Shipley

Leader, Newcastle City Council

**Trust in banks and traditional financial institutions has plummeted in response to the recession; alongside this, many individuals and businesses are now struggling because they are unable to access credit and other financial products. It may now be up to councils to help their local communities by offering some of the services that in the past were left to private companies.**

Many councils hold significant amounts of cash on their balance sheets, either in the form of historical reserves or as working capital. Traditionally, they have placed cash balances on deposit with banks, building societies and with the Government's Debt Management Office (DMO). In the past the interest earned on these deposits has often been substantial but the fall in interest rates means that councils are no longer able to earn worthwhile sums on their deposits, while the failure or downgrading of a number of institutions has raised questions about deposit security.

A cautious reaction would be for councils to place part of their reserves with a range of banks which retain (comparatively) strong credit ratings and part with the DMO, where deposits are guaranteed by the UK Government. Unfortunately, this does not compensate for the lost interest.

However, Liberal Democrat councils are adopting bolder ways of confronting this problem by using some cash reserves to benefit residents now, instead of placing them on deposit, and by borrowing money at historically low interest rates for investment in infrastructure projects. These benefit residents directly and also provide immediate employment and training opportunities.

One of the most high-profile possibilities for such reserves is lending directly to businesses and homebuyers. A number of councils are looking at this as part of their response to the recession, with some councils considering mortgage rescue schemes as supplements to the schemes announced by the Government. At least two are looking at ways of running local authority banks.

However, councils' total resources are much less than those of the Government. Equally, they lack the specialist expertise needed to make prudent credit decisions and it is unlikely that they will lend on such a scale that it becomes cost-effective to hire employees who do have that expertise. This means that council funded and administered mortgage rescue schemes may not be attractive either politically, because they will compare less favourably with the Government-sponsored schemes, or practically, as they will be costly to administer and risk turning into bad debts for the council.

One solution would be for councils to channel their lending through banks and financial institutions which do have the

expertise and administrative systems required. So, for large loans to individuals and local businesses, councils will need to co-operate with local building societies or commercial banks. Under this model, the council would divert funds from its reserves to the bank or building society with the specific understanding that it will be used to provide capital support for loans to individuals and/or businesses in the council's area. Credit decisions and administration remain the responsibility of the bank or building society but the council and its residents benefit through the greater availability of credit in the local economy.

Another way in which councils can help homeowners is by offering financial advice. In Newcastle the majority of households who lose their homes could avoid repossession if they received and followed advice on budgeting and managing debt. It has invested in a publicity campaign designed to help people avoid repossession and has increased its budget for debt and housing advice staff. Stockport and Birmingham have also taken steps to help protect individuals by investigating and publicising the actions of illegal loan sharks.

Councils could also help their communities by funding credit unions. These tend to be small, local and able to offer affordable finance to people who find it difficult to obtain credit elsewhere; because they are mutual organisations, they encourage financial responsibility among their members. However, their small size can be a disadvantage as many lack the capacity to lend on a large enough scale to make a major difference in the local economy as a whole. This is where councils could help by lending money to credit unions for them to lend in turn to their members.

Liberal Democrat councils are also acutely aware of their responsibilities to their many business tenants who face significant financial pressure arising from the availability of finance and challenging trading conditions. Councils should take care to look at the financial information submitted by tenants so that they can judge each case on its merits and put in place any appropriate business support via other agencies. Levels of rentals and charges to businesses must be kept under review and the impact of the downturn on market values taken into consideration during individual rent reviews.



## Case study: Banking on an alternative option

Leeds City Credit Union and Sharing the Success, part of the Government-funded Local Enterprise Growth Initiative, have joined forces to create a unique enterprise loan package to help local people who are refused bank loans. This is particularly important for people who have started, or who plan to start, their own small businesses.

With the scheme's support, local enterprise culture can continue to thrive in Leeds as people access the funding needed to launch new products or services, and take themselves off benefits.

Sharing the Success hopes that the scheme will lower a number of the barriers faced by would-be entrepreneurs. They will get the finance they need but they will also receive support and guidance in the early stages of starting their business. This is often just as valuable as the loan.

In Birmingham, the Aston Reinvestment Trust (ART), a Community Development Financial Institution, is another useful tool for social, economic and physical renewal.

ART, which was founded in 1997, is an independent social enterprise that is constituted as a mutual society. It is in a healthy position financially, despite being designed to take greater risks with its lending, and therefore incurring greater write-offs, than the banks.

ART makes loans of between £10,000 and £50,000 to businesses and social enterprises in Birmingham and Solihull. It assists businesses that need funds to survive or grow but have been unable to secure them from conventional sources. The loans can be used to assist cash flow or to support a capital investment project. It could be part of a finance package with other financiers, or a stand alone product.

ART's portfolio of borrowers include limited companies, partnerships, sole traders and registered charities. It has supported both innovative start-ups and established enterprises in a range of sectors – manufacturing, services, the care industry and education.

# The council and the economic development role

**Theme leader: Cllr Paul Tilsley**

Deputy Leader, Birmingham City Council

**The outlook for 2009 is one of worsening recession and worsening unemployment. Many small businesses could go under and a significant proportion of people who lose their jobs will face the risk of falling into relative poverty.**

**For councils, doing nothing is not an option. It is up to Liberal Democrats to offer leadership that encourages local businesses, understands and manages the increasing demands on council services and does everything possible to lighten the impact of this recession on our communities. At the same time, we must be preparing for the subsequent recovery.**

No town, city or region is the same so no one single approach will solve the multifaceted problems that we face. However, there are a number of different options that can be woven together to help build a solution.

For a start, councils can use their own business weight to help support local enterprises. One of the simplest ways is by adapting procurement terms so that suppliers' invoices are paid faster than the traditional 30 days. Westminster has committed to pay local small businesses within 7-10 days, Islington have cut the time it takes them to pay local invoices from 30 to 10 days and Bury Liberal Democrats are also helping small businesses by paying invoices from local firms within 10 days. (This measure, introduced by Bury Council in late 2008 was part of a policy motion put forward by the Liberal Democrat opposition.) It could even be possible to pay in advance rather than in arrears.

Making it simpler for local businesses to bid for and win council contracts is another useful idea. Advertising smaller contracts on the council website and simplifying the procurement process would help. Stockport held a one-day 'meet the buyer' event so that local businesses could meet procurement staff from the council and its key partners (see case study); York has planned a similar event.

Councils can also offer business advice. Birmingham will provide a full week of themed days during National Enterprise week in November 2009 offering advice to small and start up businesses. It is also working with Business Link West Midlands, its economic development partner, which runs a credit crunch advice line for small and medium enterprises. Providing small business rate relief advice can also help; business rates are set by Government but councils can support small businesses to claim all rate relief to which they are entitled, as well as other support such as VAT relief.

Another possibility is maintaining or reducing rent levels for council-owned commercial properties occupied by small and medium businesses, and providing premises for start-ups. Existing retail businesses can be helped by accelerating existing planned improvements to shopping areas and by offering free parking to encourage customers. Sheffield has developed a number of other initiatives, including a forum for independent retailers and a city centre retail website. Promoting the local area to attract business and tourism should also help to secure local jobs and bring in investment.

It is also worth looking at longer-term opportunities. The recent decline in the value of the pound against the euro has resulted in many eastern European workers beginning to leave the UK, creating a potential gap in the supply and demand for tradespeople such as plumbers and electricians. Councils can help to support apprenticeships and other training programmes that would allow unemployed people to gain the skills needed to get back into work while also creating the workforce that will be needed to support building work when the economy picks up. Even now national programmes such as Building Schools for the Future alongside local programmes such as Birmingham's Big City Plan will require many skilled individuals.

Apprenticeship and training schemes have more immediate benefits as well. A recent programme in Birmingham will create direct full time employment or training for 50 16-18 year-olds not in education, employment or training. By April 2009 two-fifths of the trainees on the scheme would otherwise have been claiming Job Seekers Allowance. Another apprenticeship scheme in Islington (as detailed in Appendix 2) aims to offer residents from disadvantaged backgrounds both work and training and development opportunities and create a network of sustainable routes to real jobs for local people.

Other employment-related initiatives supporting local businesses include the Talent2Sheffield scheme (which advises companies how to make jobs more attractive to candidates and offers relocation support once an appointment has been made); and Stockport Into Work's job-matching service. All efforts to help people keep, get and prepare for work are extremely important, particularly as the longer someone is unemployed the harder it becomes for them to find a job.



## Case study: Meet and greet

Stockport's 'Meet the Buyer' event at Edgeley Park in March last year was a huge success. More than 125 local companies attended, while council buyers kept more than 200 one-to-one appointments. Potential suppliers were also able to attend meetings with a whole range of buyers from the council and associated companies, including NPS Stockport, Stockport Homes and Pure Innovations. Attendees ranged from building suppliers and cleaning services, to printers and photographers.

The event was designed to help local companies understand how to do business with the council and its key partners by letting them meet buyers directly rather than relying on telephone and e-mail contact. The event was aligned with a number of other existing initiatives to help local people and businesses within the borough to win contracts from the council.

'Doing Business with City of York Council', due to be held in mid-February, has similar goals. Local suppliers who attend will gain comprehensive access to all representatives from all departments who may be able to assist them, including the corporate procurement team. They will also receive information packs.

# A green road out of recession

Theme leader: Cllr Keith Moffitt

Leader, London Borough of Camden

**Economic challenges may be taking centre stage at the moment but action to tackle climate change and make our communities more sustainable become even more vital as the country enters recession. Many local authorities have already taken up the environmental challenge by including green targets in their local area agreements.**

**Nick Clegg has set out plans that would put the nation as a whole on to a green road out of the recession. This approach would create jobs and leave a legacy that would save energy, put money back into people's pockets and fight climate change. A Liberal Democrat government would fund the entire package of proposals by cancelling the 2.5 per cent VAT cut.**

But it is not just national politicians who can make a difference. Several of the proposals in the *Green Road* report are within the scope of local authorities and their partners. One of the most straightforward is funding insulation and energy efficiency in existing homes, schools and hospitals. It could also mean ensuring that new schools constructed under Building Schools for the Future reach the highest standards of energy efficiency under the BREEAM code, and funding or supporting the construction of more zero-carbon social homes.

These and similar measures have three benefits that are particularly valuable in hard times: they combat climate change and enhance sustainability; save residents and businesses money; and provide jobs. Kirklees council's Warm Zone scheme, which has economic, environmental and social objectives, is a good example of this. It offers help to every household in Kirklees to improve the energy efficiency of their home, including free loft and cavity wall insulation, regardless of household income. The initiative aims to visit and assess 170,000 houses and to install insulation in 53,000 lofts and 35,000 cavity walls. The scheme has already created 80 full-time jobs and helped households to cut their energy bills by about £1 million a year. The overall economic benefit to the area is more than £50 million.

Widespread insulation and the installation of other energy-efficient technology in council and social housing, schools and hospitals, is a challenge not only to councils but to partnership working. Climate change alliances that are built around local strategic partnerships but also draw in other businesses are an important tool here. Such alliances are an important way for local authorities to play a leadership role and to demonstrate that, despite the recession, they have an unwavering focus on climate change and sustainability issues.

Green initiatives can also offer job creation opportunities. Training apprentices and other tradespeople in green skills

could provide another environmentally friendly route out of the recession. For example, replicating the cutting-edge insulation techniques used in Camden's eco-house project (see case study) requires special-trained workers, while many environmental technology companies have skills gaps. Councils should work with employers to identify these gaps and provide new training opportunities, including apprenticeships with local authorities and their partners.

Local authorities that decide to return to the business of granting mortgages could make a point of offering green mortgages to help residents and business meet capital expenditure for renewable energy sources and energy efficiency measures like those in the eco-house are a real possibility.

Other initiatives combining recession-busting with sustainability include:

- Growing food on council estates and other open spaces. This puts money back in people's pockets, saves food miles and is a very quick win at little cost;
- Ensuring that council premises are lit with efficient bulbs;
- Green procurement practices. Local procurement can help local businesses and support local jobs whilst saving transport-related emissions; and
- Expanding car clubs. These are already experiencing unprecedented popularity as motorists' pockets are hit. Councils can speed up this process by streamlining approval of new parking bays for car clubs. Clubs that use electric vehicles bring further advantages by reducing emissions.

Last but not least, the recession should give a boost to the transition towns movement. Somerset recently voted to become the UK's first 'Transition Local Authority'. This allows it to start taking an integrated approach to its planning processes and to put peak oil and climate change at the heart of its forward planning.



## Case study: Cool (and warm) Camden

Camden has pledged to insulate 9,000 council homes with cavity walls and to provide further support to private home-owners. However, wide-scale insulation of homes in the borough is complicated because many of its homes are Victorian properties in conservation areas. The council has tackled this with an eco-house refurbishment project that combines high levels of insulation to external walls, roof and floors; heat recovery ventilation; and solar, thermal and photovoltaic sources of energy to reduce carbon emissions by 80 per cent over comparable conservation area properties.

The London borough has a number of other green initiatives under way. One of the more unusual is a new £250,000 'revolving energy' fund, which will be used by the council to invest in projects to test environmentally friendly ideas and reduce the amount of energy council buildings use. By reducing the energy council buildings use, the scheme aims to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, help protect the environment and save money. The savings would then be re-invested in more energy saving projects. The project ultimately aims to show businesses and residents how to make changes that help save the environment and money too.

The project will start with council-owned buildings, such as libraries and council offices, and concentrate on simple changes such as putting in better insulation or modernising heating systems. Inefficient lighting in Bloomsbury Square car park will be replaced with modern bulbs. This should cut the council's electricity bill by £14,000 and save 104 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year.

Another project will see a Powerperfactor installed at Swiss Cottage library. This box of electronic tricks regulates the supply to a building and should reduce the electricity used by the library by up to 11.5 per cent.

The idea for the revolving energy fund was suggested by the council's all-party sustainable taskforce.

# Housing opportunities

Theme leader: Cllr Warren Bradley

Leader, Liverpool City Council

**The housing market is in a mess. For at least 10 years house prices have been hyped, the wrong stock has been built – too many one and two bedroom flats in city centres, too little concern for environmental standards – and the wrong type of amateur, inexperienced landlord has been encouraged. As Liberal Democrats review the problems and opportunities of the housing crisis four thoughts will be uppermost in our minds.**

The first is that housing is a long-term option. Housing cycles take up to 25 years to change districts and populations. Short-term considerations and opportunities should not obscure councils' long-term housing strategies.

Secondly, Liberal Democrats have very clear aims for housing: to provide neighbourhoods with a wide variety of housing types and tenures to ensure they can contain a balance of people of all ages, types and incomes. Such places have a sustainable sense of community.

Thirdly, we believe in environmentally sound housing. This means high levels of thermal efficiency, minimal damage to the environment and pocket-friendly costs for the people who run and maintain such homes.

And fourthly, we understand that housing is about providing homes, not financial assets. People's houses are the places where they live, not something on which they should speculate. Home ownership is not for everyone but recently there has been too much emphasis on getting people into home ownership even when their financial situation made such an option risky.

Liberal Democrat councillors who want to develop long-term sustainable housing strategies for their areas have a number of short, medium and long-term options open to them.

Begin by asserting the council's role as the strategic housing authority. Developers, landlords and housing providers need a clear understanding of an area's opportunities. They will be more likely to invest in an area if there is clear council leadership and actions designed to make development easier. Newcastle is working with lenders and developers to ensure that existing development schemes remain viable and are adapted to reflect the changes brought about by the recession.

Recognise that the changes can offer opportunities. Councils that are in a position to acquire land should do so. For too long land-banking has meant that the developers have had the whip hand over what would be developed, given the weak planning controls that councils have. Local authorities should also look at available properties coming up for sale to see if they can be acquired either by the council or one of its RSL partners to

meet growing housing needs. Birmingham has been buying empty properties using compulsory purchase orders so that they can be sold on and brought back into use. Take care when researching potential purchases – some of the properties that have been built in the past five years are not worth buying.

Councils that have land should consider how they can use it to best effect. One possibility is selling it to realise part of your capital income as houses get sold. This will also help to ease developers' cash flow problems. Another option is to hold on to such land and place it in a community land bank.

All local authorities should require higher quality developments, thus reducing the ongoing costs of running a home for minimal extra cost at the beginning. As of January, building costs alone have come down by 15 per cent. While there is a need to reduce the capital costs of houses, there is also a need to decrease the ongoing costs of running them. Increasing capital outlay by as little as 2 per cent can create major saving in energy costs that will last the lifetime of a home.

Work with partners to investigate ways of changing the demographics of an area. For example, look at how 'rent to buy' schemes could be established to help people buy when their finances improve or their capacity to get a mortgage increases. Newcastle is working with a developer to look at the possibility of adopting the Government's HomeBuy Direct shared equity scheme for properties on one of its development sites. This would give eligible first time buyers an equity loan of up to 30 per cent of the purchase price, with the remainder funded by the Government and the developer.

Consider the development of housing cooperatives, which not only provide homes for people to live in but self-sustaining, self-supporting communities as well. Another communal option is developing self-build groups. There are lots of people with building skills around who might be able to help themselves and others with reduced priced houses.

Finally, councils should not let private developers bully them into giving up S106 rights and incomes. Local authorities will still have to bear the costs of associated developments when the developer is long gone.



## Case study: A matter of trust

Community Land Trusts (CLT) are local community-controlled organisations set up to own and manage land and other assets, such as affordable housing, in perpetuity for the benefit of the community. There are a few successful rural CLTs in existence or under development in England, mostly providing properties for purchase on a shared ownership basis, though in some cases with some properties also available for rent.

Stonesfield Community Trust in Oxfordshire is a charity that was established 25 years ago and that now owns 14 homes that it lets at affordable rents to people on a working income. It also owns the village's Post Office and pre-school.

It is now working with Gloucestershire Land for People, which is an umbrella body for community land trusts in Gloucestershire, and Bibury Parish Council to launch a community bond that would allow Arlington Mill to be bought and owned by the community. The mill building would be converted into workspace studios with living accommodation attached. This would bring increased employment and economic activity to the village. The proposed development would also provide a living display of the mill's history and machinery. Finally, if possible, the trust plans to restore the old mill wheel and use it to generate electricity.

For more information on CLT: [www.communitylandtrust.org.uk](http://www.communitylandtrust.org.uk)

# Hidden voices of recession

Theme leader: Cllr Lucy Watt

Deputy Leader, London Borough of Islington

**There has not been a news bulletin over the past few months without a major story of gloom from the credit crunch, economic downturn and now the recession. But in the competitive space of 24-hour rolling news, some people's stories have been told more loudly than others.**

**For example, a recent report from the TUC, *Women and the Recession*, raised fears that job losses amongst women are less likely to make the headlines because more women work for smaller employers.**

Additionally, more women work in part-time jobs on low incomes. Many will not qualify for redundancy pay if they have recently returned to work from a career break. And many work in the black economy, outside the protection of employment law and very vulnerable to any change in the financial situation of the family whose house they clean or the local business that they help out. Women without a strong employment record may also have more problems in claiming contribution-based benefits when they do face unemployment.

Women may also find it more difficult than men to secure new jobs. Anecdotal evidence suggests that employers are less likely to take risks during difficult times and may prefer male candidates, particularly for more senior jobs.

The collapse of the private housing market means that social housing provided through new developments is also disappearing. The supply of new social homes will not increase in line with demand, which will present particular problems to lone parents, people escaping abusive relationships and those who are leaving their partners and need a new home.

Increasing unemployment has made immigrant workers more susceptible to attack as they are seen to be taking 'British' jobs. Immigrants are easy targets for the anger and fear felt by many people across the UK and Europe. They may face other issues regarding their work status if they lose their jobs; illegal workers could be particularly vulnerable as they have no access to benefits, healthcare or job-hunting support.

Companies run by people from black and ethnic minorities already have a higher chance of failure and are finding it particularly hard to gain credit in the current climate. General rates of unemployment are much higher amongst many black and ethnic minority groups; on top of this, the competition for new jobs is going to be much tougher over the coming months. Indeed, this will affect all people who have been unemployed for a long time.

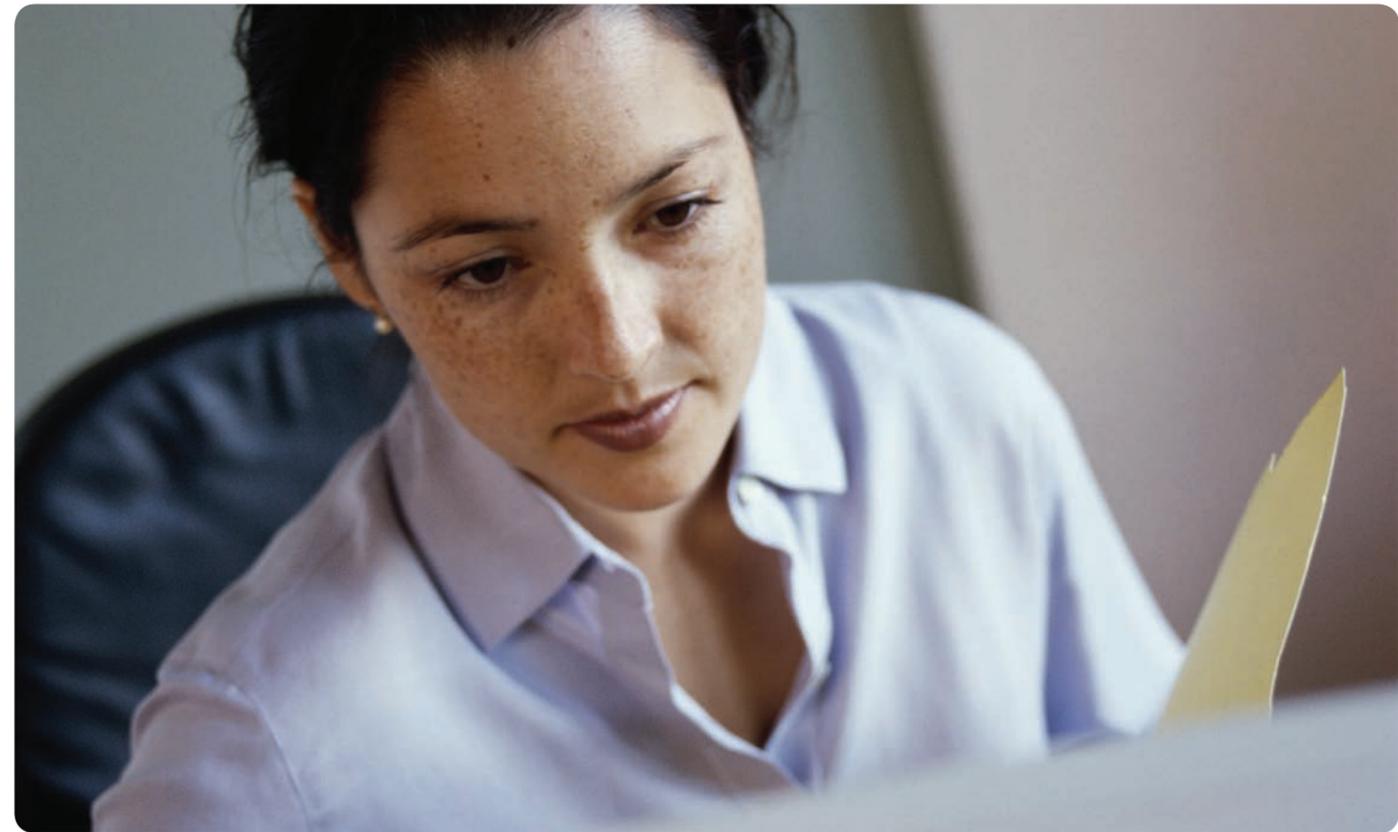
Housing associations have just started delivering a number of new flats suitable for disabled people under the Lifetime Home Standards, which has become part of new planning regulations. However, with many new developments becoming financially unviable, fewer people with disabilities will be able to benefit from these new homes.

Employers may be more reluctant to take on a disabled worker when they have to pay for reasonable adjustments under the Disability Discrimination Act. Disabled people who are in employment may worry that taking off time to deal with their condition could place them nearer the front of the redundancy queue.

Age Concern Islington reported an increase in older people looking for part-time jobs to supplement their falling income from savings and investments, but these jobs are increasingly difficult to find. They also reported concerns that older people with financial worries are spending less on things like insurance, which could have devastating consequences in the long run.

Other groups particularly vulnerable to the recession include former prisoners, people leaving the Armed Forces and older workers who lose their jobs. Younger people will also find it even harder than before to get their first break. Those who do not have parents who can support them through periods of voluntary work, internships and further professional training may settle for options that they perceive as easier or less risky, but which are often lower paid.

One of the causes of the current recession was bad debt, which is a symptom of low incomes and poverty. The likelihood that we will see another generation reliant on unaffordable credit just to be able to purchase the essentials may be reduced by investing in a skilled, competitive workforce for the future. But, as the long-term unemployed are not the news story of the recession, politicians must think beyond the next day's headline, and focus on the long-term implications of the decisions that we make today.



## Case study: Islington

The Islington Debt Coalition – a group of local organisations, including advice centres and the local authority – will play a crucial role over the coming months in helping people to avoid and manage debt. Additionally, Islington council has invested an extra £250,000 in the local Credit Union and helped to pay for additional capacity to promote membership of the scheme.

The borough is also working with local volunteering groups to produce a leaflet about how to become a volunteer. This is aimed particularly at out-of-work professionals, as volunteering can help to maintain and improve mental health during difficult times. The pamphlet will be distributed through local Jobcentres, doctors' surgeries and other venues. The volunteers will benefit from the opportunity to get involved in their local communities and to keep their professional skills up to date, while local charities will gain access to much-needed skills such as bookkeeping and law.



# The community leadership of councils through the recession

Theme leader: Cllr Richard Kemp

Leader, LGA Liberal Democrats

**When things get difficult it's the council that people turn to first for the help they so badly need. In the short term we are seeing increased demand on a whole range of services such as housing, welfare benefits, free school meals, small business support. From past recessions we know that increased demand on our social services will follow swiftly as financial and other problems rip apart family life. In these circumstances the council and its leadership must be clearly visible. They need to be seen to be taking their area forward and dealing not only with the short term problems caused by the recession but also looking for long term opportunities that it offers to reshape the area's economy and prospects.**

This publication is full of ideas about both short and long-term, but for those ideas to be successful councillors must show confidence, direction and immediate action where it's needed most. The last thing we want or need – and which I remember well from the last recession – is pictures of council leaders standing outside factories and offices pledging support for businesses which they cannot affect.

At our recent recession event with council leaders we looked at number of ways this could be achieved. These are just some of them:

**Create a recession partnership.** Invite leaders from the public and private sectors into a 'war cabinet' to deal with issues as they arise and to forward plan. Some of these might be people you have not involved before. You may well have had the vice-chancellor of the university at your local strategic partnership meetings, but what about the professors of economics and science? They can give running commentary about what is happening and might have good ideas for the future.

**Share information.** You know more about what is happening in the area than anyone else, but you could know more. Government statistics about unemployment and other social problems such as increasing burglaries are a lagging indicator. You know what is happening faster than the statisticians do because people are calling at your one-stop shops, the local DWP and registering the need for assistance with their local landlord. Stay ahead of the information curve and use your local knowledge to predict the range and scale of services that you might need to deploy to deal with events.

**Involve more people in the debate about the future.** Liverpool is holding a 'state of the city' debate not only for councillors but for people from a range of public, private and community sector agencies. This is just one way to stimulate discussion and involvement.

**Watch out for and promote positive stories.** Don't try to pretend that problems don't exist or conjure up 'green shoots of recovery' that are not there, but present as many positive messages about your area as possible.

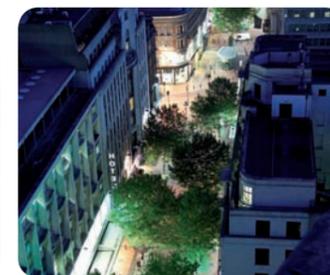
**Be more challenging within the council.** There is a desperate need to change service delivery to meet changed patterns of demands. Reports that take months just won't do; neither will dithering lawyers cogitating for weeks on ways forward. Changes that could have taken years need to take months or weeks.

**Be more challenging with partners.** Action on a range of social and economic issues needs to be taken not to meet the needs of producer silos but to wrap around and meet the needs of people and businesses.

**Use your powers to the full.** And make sure that your officers know that you are going to. The powers to deal with the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of your area are almost the same as a power of general competence. We will press for the Government to clarify these powers following at least one adverse ruling, but too often councillors who want to set these powers have been held back by timid and conservative officers who don't want their boats rocked.

**Procure better.** Attack some of the received wisdoms within your council. Chief amongst these is the role of the private sector; why not look at other and better options? Look at bringing privatised services back in house. Look at the use of local social enterprises to deliver services, as they can add more value than just the service you pay for through enhanced employment prospects, high environmental standards and the recycling of cash around needy communities.

So be visible. Be bold. Be innovative. Be authoritative. Be leaders. Above all, remember that this is not just a role for council and group leaders. It is a role for each of us in our wards.



## Case study:

### Think about thinking

Mike Jones, Director, Open Minds Consulting

The issues we face are complex. As well as an economic crisis, we are also facing an environmental crisis and a looming energy crisis. All three are interconnected and are best addressed in the round; linked problems cannot be solved in isolation.

Breakthroughs will come where people are working across boundaries; where they are seeking overlaps, valuing each other's contributions and where there is a spirit of genuine enterprise. Local government can act as enablers and convenors – hosting and gathering people together, building bridges between the existing players as well giving a voice to the quiet majority – so that our communities' collective intelligence is utilised.

Leaders are between a rock and a hard place. In times of uncertainty we often look to our leaders for the answers and expect them to navigate a path that we can follow. However they – you – might be able to achieve far more by acting as enablers, convenors and facilitators. If local government is successful in creating a participative and collaborative approach to the economic crisis, then an unintended consequence might also be the revitalisation of our democracy.

# Conclusion

**Richard Kemp**

Leader, LGA Liberal Democrats

**When Bill Clinton first ran for the US presidency he made sure that the phone of every volunteer campaigning for him carried a tag explaining exactly what mattered: “It’s the economy, stupid”.**

**This reminder is just as relevant now as it was in 1992.**

**When councillors meet, the biggest topic on our lips is the recession. It shapes the challenges placed on our communities and on the councils which we lead and influence, which in turn serve those communities.**

**Members of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group developed this publication to share our thinking on the immediate problems created by the recession and to remind us of the opportunities for change that will arise from these challenges.**

**We are very grateful to Sian Peake-Jones and Mike Jones, the directors of Open Minds Consulting, who spent a significant amount of time talking to leading Liberal Democrat councillors and finding out what is happening across the country.**

**Thanks also go to The Leadership Centre for Local Government, which organised the 24-hour event on the topic to develop our thinking, and also funded some of the costs of this report, which grew out of the event. It is testament to the importance and timeliness of this that 20 council leaders and senior portfolio holders gave up 24-hours at a weekend at very short notice to join us in a seminar to debate these emerging issues.**

**Lastly we place on record our thanks to Joe Simpson, Charlotte Eisenhart and Siobhan Monaghan-Coombs of the Leadership Centre, who put up with the instinctive individualism of Liberal Democrats and managed to herd us firstly to the event and then to complete our contributions on time and in the right order.**

## Appendix 1: The process

**In December 2008, with the recession growing in prominence, the LGA Liberal Democrat Group commissioned a short piece of research by an independent organisation, Open Minds Consulting, to investigate the local response to the recession.**

Their research involved speaking to a sample of liberal democrat council leaders to establish their reaction and consequent actions in response to the recession. The council leaders consulted were spread from North and South, rural and urban, London Boroughs, English, Scottish and Welsh Councils.

This was followed by a residential event in mid-January 2009 facilitated by Open Minds and organised by the Leadership Centre for Local Government. This iterative process continued with common approaches and ideas of particular interest developing into several key themes, which were then adopted by a theme leader. The in depth Open Minds report, supported by the themed contributions formed the basis of this document and discussion piece to share best and future practice.

**Sian Peake-Jones, Open Minds Consulting**  
**For more information please visit:**  
[www.open--minds.co.uk](http://www.open--minds.co.uk)



# Appendix 2: Islington Apprenticeship Scheme Executive Report

(15 January 2009, agenda item D1)

## 1. Synopsis

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to set out the context for Islington Apprentices – an apprenticeship scheme for approximately 100 apprentices within the London Borough of Islington, its partners and local businesses. This project will help deliver key performance indicators for Islington, including addressing worklessness, reducing NEETs and, in a wider context, assisting residents through the current economic situation.

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 To agree in principle to establish Islington Apprentices as a new scheme as part of the Council's agenda to tackle worklessness in the borough.

2.2 To agree that where appropriate in future Council procurements should ask bidders to identify apprenticeship roles they will be able to commit to and that this should be part of the decision making process.

2.3 To delegate authority to the Service Director (Strategic Planning and Regeneration) to take forward the development of the apprenticeships scheme.

2.4 To ask officers to report back with detailed proposals for how the scheme will be funded and operate.

## 3. Background

3.1. This paper represents the first steps in the redevelopment of an Islington Apprenticeship scheme. This will be an exciting opportunity for unemployed Islington residents to develop their skills, experience and knowledge. It will bring together various departments and partner agencies to develop and demonstrate a shared approach to growing talent within the borough. The project will build directly on the work which is already underway through the following projects: Construction Works and Homes for Islington Apprenticeship Scheme, Career Start – Islington Care Leavers Scheme, Islington Work Placement Scheme, and other employment and training programmes.

3.2 National Apprenticeships are a framework in which apprentices work towards achieving an NVQ, Key Skills qualifications and a technical certificate. Learning takes place both in the workplace and with a local learning provider. Apprentices can come from any background as long as they are over 16 and not in full time education but they need to be on an eligible course i.e. an Learning Skills Council (LSC) approved course [further information can be found at a dedicated website: <http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/> ].

3.3 This scheme will be led directly by Islington Council and delivered in partnership with local statutory, education and third sector organisations.

3.4 The Council is the main local employer and provides a wide range of services to local residents. Through this scheme, the Council can engage more local people in the running of its services and provide career opportunities for unemployed Islington residents. Apprentices will benefit from being in a supportive work environment and will gain further awareness of work within local communities. Some sectors of our work are difficult to recruit to, e.g. social workers. This scheme will provide a way of 'growing our own', set a good quality standard and develop best practice.

3.5 In addition this scheme will also place apprentices and develop further placement with our key partners such as Aquaterra, Enterprise, Northgate and local businesses. There are examples of where this is already happening and we have 35 apprenticeships or jobs with training per year with the Homes for Islington (Hfi) contractors (Kier, Apollo, Mullalley & Co, Balfour Beatty, Mansells) and these are in skills ranging from site management to plumbing and electrical. Our Waste Contractor Enterprise has 10 apprenticeships (5 in grounds work maintenance and 5 on the cleansing teams). This scheme will continue and extend this activity.

3.6 At the current time these arrangements with our contractors are bi-lateral agreements and the firms involved take apprentices voluntarily. However, given every year the council contracts out millions of pounds of work there is scope to increase apprentices across the range of our sub-contracting partners. Therefore, in future, and where appropriate Council procurements should ask bidders to identify apprenticeship roles they will be able to commit to and that this should be part of the decision making process.

3.7 We intend to work closely with the London Skills and Employment Board (LSEB), who have recently published proposals for future funding so that we are well planned and ready to act on any opportunities for public funding to improve service delivery in Islington.

### 3.8 How the scheme will operate

3.81 It is proposed that Council Departments are asked to create apprenticeship roles in the staff structure. It is further proposed that partners identify apprenticeship placements.

3.82 The scheme is intended to recruit and support candidates for a period of up to 3 years within each position.

3.83 The apprenticeship scheme will take into account individuals' needs, aspirations. The scheme will also offer mentoring and one-to-one support to participants and managers. A series of networking events both for apprentices and managers will promote good practice and help devise solutions to common problems.

3.84 The apprentices will be Islington residents from diverse backgrounds and could either be adults or young people. The main feature of the scheme that will provide added value to the target group is the nature of the work we undertake with the candidates before and during the apprenticeships. There are 3 elements of the project the candidate would participate in although the actual length of the apprenticeship would vary according to the role and the level required to perform it.

1(a) Support package i.e. recruitment, pre interview support,

1(b) Coaching and mentoring during the apprenticeship

2 Vocational Training – relevant to role

3 Employment with day or block release for training

3.85 The structure of the scheme will include:

**Preparation stage** where candidates would be undertaking some form of training or taster as an entry route to the apprenticeship scheme.

**Entry to the scheme/recruitment** will be through pre-screening and selection process which is clear and criteria-based. Unsuccessful applicants will be given other forms of support through local employment and training programmes and guided towards other suitable progression routes.

**Candidate employment** will include comprehensive induction package, network opportunities and regular reviews.

**Training and support** will be designed to reflect the particular placements and their length and delivered by the appropriate training organisation. It might be on a formal basis and on a day-release but it could also be more informal in the form of short courses or pre-designed traineeships with additional development opportunities. The employer will appoint someone on a relevant level scale to a apprenticeship post and then link them to a training provider who delivers that course. In Islington, training providers deliver apprenticeships in construction, manual handling, finance, ICT, customer services, administration and health and social care. The providers support the manager and the apprentice through the assessment process, deliver the training and link up to the relevant accreditation body.

**Progression within scheme** will be according to clear progression criteria.

**Progression routes** will be incorporated into the development and work programme of each apprenticeship. Progression routes could include a job with Islington Council or other public sector, private or third sector organisation or further full time education.

## 3.9 Scheme costs

Each element of the scheme will be funded differently as outlined below:

*Support package ie recruitment, pre interview support, coaching and mentoring during the apprenticeship:*

Seek external funds from a range of appropriate sources (e.g. from London Development Agency (LDA), European Social Fund (ESF), Local Area Agreement (LAA)) or to add a charge to costs of each apprenticeship post to ensure resource is available for this c. £300,000 p.a.

*Vocational Training – relevant to role:*

The LSC fund a range of local training providers to deliver the appropriate training to support individual through their apprenticeships. Each apprentice will receive training from the relevant training provider with whom they are placed.

*Salaries (employment with day or block release for training):*

Salary costs, national insurance etc, to be provided by the employer e.g. Council or business.

Estimated at c. £26,000 per apprentice including on-costs

## 3.10 Timetable

January 09:  
In principle agreement –  
Executive 15 January 2009

January 09:  
Initial submission to funders  
including LDA and LSC

Jan – June 09:  
LDA, LSC, other funders bidding  
and commissioning processes

June 09:  
Funding package final approval

June 09:  
Apprenticeship scheme starts –  
recruitment and internal set up

July 09:  
Training programmes and support finalised

August 09:  
Scheme co-ordinator appointed

September 09 – January 10:  
First intake of apprentices start

February 10:  
First Networking event

## Appendix 2: Islington Apprenticeship Scheme Executive Report

### Continued

(15 January 2009, agenda item D1)

#### 4. Implications

##### 4.1 Financial implications:

The financial implications to the council are dependent on two factors

- the availability and success in attracting external funding for the support costs associated with the scheme
- the number of apprentices we place directly in our establishment

Officers will work on the details of these and report back once these two factors are known more clearly.

##### 4.2 Legal Implications:

Apprentices are entitled to the statutory employment protection rights (provided they meet the necessary qualifying conditions).

Apprentices have additional rights, including a right to receive substantial compensation where their contracts of apprenticeship are terminated before the end of the fixed term, even for good reason e.g. redundancy (Flett v Matheson [2006] EWCA Civ 53).

Approval of the terms and conditions of apprenticeship is a non-executive function so this will need to be determined by Audit Committee or Personnel Sub-Committee or else delegated to an appropriate officer in a more general report.

##### 4.3 Equality impact assessment:

A full EIA will be produced. This is a scheme that will help tackle worklessness in Islington and increase people's life chances and its effect will be positive.

#### 5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1 An Islington Apprenticeship Scheme as realised above will offer real chances for Islington residents from disadvantaged backgrounds to access both work and training and development opportunities.

These opportunities will either be internal to the Authority or with Islington Partners or local businesses. By creating these positions and ensuring our contract processes oblige bidders to further support this approach – we will create a network of sustainable routes to real jobs for local people.

#### Islington Apprenticeship Scheme Executive Report Author:

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Cllr Lucy Watt with a construction apprentice

## Appendix 3: Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council Credit Crunch Resolution

(approved February 4 2009)

#### RESOLVED:

(i) This Council is concerned about the impact of the credit crunch, particularly in relation to the people of Oldham and is keen to ensure services are realigned to ensure citizens and local businesses are appropriately supported through uncertain economic times.

This Council together with our partners in the Oldham Partnership will establish a Credit Crunch War Cabinet which will meet at least fortnightly in the first instance.

In partnership we will establish a 'Rapid Intervention Fund' (RIF) to respond to and prevent some of the worst impacts of the changing economy being experienced by local residents and businesses, funded by unallocated Area Based Grant as agreed by the Public Service Board.

The Credit Crunch War Cabinet will achieve this by:-

1) Sharing information, data and intelligence on a regular basis in order to understand any rapid changes in our economy, housing market, levels of debt, housing repossessions and the impacts on society. This information will be shared with the appropriate members of the political groups on a regular basis.

2) On a quarterly basis produce an economic position statement for the Borough showing the overall trends arising from the changes in our economy as it impacts upon unemployment, benefit levels, our local business base and our housing market and occupancy. This economic position statement to be shared with all members of the Council and the Oldham Partnership on a quarterly basis.

3) Using the evidence from the reports and quarterly economic position statements to identify key actions that need to be taken including:-

- Introducing additional support services e.g., redundancy support, improved provision of debt advice;

- Reviewing the services commissioned by the Oldham Partnership e.g., increasing focus on sustaining existing businesses rather than business start ups; and

- Reviewing the delivery of relevant Council services.

4) Deploying the Rapid Intervention Fund where it can have most impact.

5) Regular reporting to the Borough's MPs and Government Office North West and other agencies of the outcome of the position monitoring and subsequent actions taken by the Council with its partners.

6) Using the experience gained to contribute to the development of national good practice and influence Government's response to the changing economy.

We note the measures outlined in this motion, but feel that they do not go far enough, in this time of dire economic circumstance. We urge this council to take active measures to promote the local economy by establishing an economic forum in which both large and small businesses can meet and pool ideas that would have a positive effect on business in Oldham.

## Acknowledgements:

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Fellow, New Economic Foundation

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Warren Bradley,  
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Tim McNally,  
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Southwark

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##### Presenters:

Nick Sharman,  
Managing Director, Amey

John Benington,  
Former Professor of Public Management  
& Policy,  
University of Warwick

John Fisher,  
Director and Co-Founder,  
Local Futures

Phil Swann,  
Programme Director,  
Shared Intelligence

Michael Ward,  
Chief Executive, British Urban  
Regeneration Association

##### Attendees:

Richard Arnold,  
Business Link

Janet Battye,  
Calderdale

David Bill,  
Hinckley and Bosworth Council

Warren Bradley,  
Liverpool

Richard Brett,  
Leeds

Maggie Clay,  
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Tony de Vere,  
Vale of White Horse

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Islington

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Keith House,  
Eastleigh

Richard Kemp,  
LGA

Ashley Lumsden,  
Lambeth

Tim McNally,  
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Keith Moffitt,  
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John Shipley,  
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