

Summary of the fourth meeting in the fifth series of TEN – EC1 New Deal for Communities 8th December 2008

Tackling worklessness

Present

Margaret Almond, Access to Jobs Co-ordinator, Newham Council

Esther Caplin

Marc Dorfman, Assistant Director Planning & Regeneration, Haringey Council

David Hennings

Nicholas Falk, Founding Director, URBED

Sue Foster, Head of Planning and Land Charges, LB of Hackney

Karen Galey, Head of Economic Regeneration, Haringey Council

Tom Jeffrey, Director, Environment, Culture and Public Participation, Croydon Council

Mark Lucas, Head of Regeneration, Redbridge Council

Seema Manchanda, AD Strategic Planning & Regeneration, Islington Council

Stephen McDonald, Strategic Director of Major Projects, Southwark Council

Andy Murphy, Chief Executive, EC1 New Deal for Communities

Darren Richards, Head of Planning and Transportation, LB Sutton

Chris Shellard, Interim Chief Officer, LB of Redbridge

Anne Wyatt, Project Manager, URBED

Apologies

Chris Donovan, Assistant Director (Strategy, Planning & Regeneration), Bexley Council

Paul Evans, Interim Corporate Director of Development & Regeneration, LB of Tower Hamlets

Pat Hayes, Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing, Ealing Council

Colin Lovell, Head of Land Use Planning, Transport for London

Bernadette Marjoram, Interim Head of Physical Regeneration and Dev, Newham Council

Shifa Mustafa, Assistant Director of Development, Waltham Forest Council

Daniel Ratchford, Strategic Director of Environment and Leisure, LB of Sutton

Brendan Walsh, Director of Regeneration and Community Development, Ealing Council

Robert West, Assistant Director Planning, LB of Camden

Introduction

Faced with pressures to get more people into jobs at the very time that organisations are laying off staff, the fourth meeting of the TEN Group focussed on sharing experience of what can be done to help the 'workless' and what local authorities should be doing to help. Thanks to Andrew Murphy, Chief Executive of EC1 New Deal for Communities who kindly hosted our meeting.

Walkabout

EC1 New Deal for Communities is one of 39 Neighbourhood Renewal schemes that represent the largest ever effort to direct investment at the most deprived neighbourhoods in England many of which, like EC1 comprise high concentrations of social housing. However, unlike most of the other areas, it lies next to the largest range of jobs in the country, with financial services in the City, cultural industries in Clerkenwell, and the main cluster of voluntary organisations in Islington all within a short walk or bus ride. Less than 30% of dwellings are privately owned, and many of these are rented out to groups of students or professionals working in the City. The blocks are very varied, ranging from 19th century philanthropic housing and early LCC blocks to post war towers and deck access estates. There is also a sprinkling of stylish modern apartment blocks, and pressure to build a lot more.

Our walkabout led by Andy Murphy and his deputy Kirby Swales (Director of Performance & Finance and Deputy Chief Executive) revealed a largely unknown but delightful area, where visible achievements included landscaping the spaces around the estates, providing new children's play areas, and reviving a failing street market with a new streetscape and shop fronts. There were also improvements to many of the blocks. There were plans to redevelop some of the lower rise sports facilities with mixed use schemes, and until recently the Council was expecting finance to be provided through deals with developers. However the most significant work involved targeting households where all the members were unemployed with support to get them into work.

Presentations

EC1 New Deal for Communities

The meeting took place in the attractively refurbished St Luke's community centre, where EC1 have their offices. Andy explained that the real problem was not access to jobs, but the 'walls in people's heads'¹ which stopped many of the residents of social housing considering the options. Many people thought that since the old manufacturing

¹ *Estates: An Intimate History*, Lynsey Hanley, 2007

and warehousing jobs had gone, there were no opportunities for the 'likes of them'. Many of their children leave school without any marketable qualifications, and a significant proportion never work in the formal economy. In London there has been a noticeable change in the people taking jobs that did not require qualifications, with Eastern Europeans displacing those from the former Commonwealth.

In the past a lot of money has been spent, for example on EU or SRB funded training programmes, without making any impact on people's lives. By working with major employers to generate real job opportunities, and acting as brokers and advocates for people who were outside the formal labour market, EC1 has been able to score some real successes. The award winning scheme EC1 Connect (2008 Regeneration & Renewal Neighbourhood Renewal Project of the Year) involved knocking on each house in the area to make contact and therefore not relying on individuals coming into a job centre. The assistance is not limited to helping find work it also helps to deal with any other issues that are happening within the home. Youth outreach schemes have helped to widen young people's aspirations by showing them what it is like to work for a corporate firm and taking them out of the area.

EC1 success seems dependent on first building trust, and then raising people's ambitions and confidence. Andy is concerned that there is such a narrow range of housing available, with little in the way of rented housing or low cost home ownership that would be affordable to tenants, or provide a step up. Indeed past practice has been to concentrate more vulnerable people into areas of Council housing, or to sell off sites to be occupied by people with no local connections.

Haringey Guarantee

Karen Galey provided an account of Welfare to Work activity in Haringey. Statistics showed that though economic activity rates had steadily risen over the last 14 years, particularly among lone parents, it had steadily fallen for the least qualified (see attached PDF). Previous efforts had made little dent on the lives of households in areas of high unemployment, such as Tottenham, so the Council decided to offer 'pathways to employment' through what they called the Haringey Guarantee, which was targeted at four key groups (young people, disabled, users of service and long term claimants). A new programme called Families into Work is directed at 100 families living in Northumberland Park (one of the poorest wards in London) through a multi agency approach over three years costing one million. Because many of the jobs lie outside Borough boundaries, there is tri-borough programme with Enfield and Waltham Forest as well. This combines skills training, in work support, employer engagement, and associated support. A tracking system has now been set up to help monitor the success of these schemes.

Workplace

Margaret Almond explained that Newham had been very successful in negotiating a major Section 106 contribution of over £9 million for use in creating local employment from some of the development schemes underway in the borough, such as Stratford City, Canning Town and the Olympic Games. As part of the S106 developers were obligated to employ local people and to pass this obligation on to contractors etc. Developers in return wanted the process made easier, which led to the Workplace scheme (50% of jobs filled have been in the construction). The first Workplace opened on Stratford High Street and second has recently opened in Canning Town. Workplace provides a one stop shop for all jobs in the borough with its own identity (e.g. no local logo). The initiative was originally open to all but has recently been restricted to Newham residents due to the high number of people coming through their doors. This attracted some criticism from the group as it was felt that we should be looking at London as a whole and working across boundaries 'London won the Olympic Games not just Newham'. The notion of retreating into borough boundaries was seen as a mistake and would lead to a failure to connect places with people who need work.

By employing staff who understood the industry, and creating relationships with some eight major employers, they were able to open up job opportunities, and hence improve people's career prospects. Training is then valued because it leads somewhere. Support is also available in English as a second language, and there is a guarantee that no one will lose out through earning less than they received on benefits, which has not yet been necessary.

Learning from Belfast

David Hennings gave a brief feedback on the study tour to Belfast and the lessons for worklessness. A major measure of success is reducing benefit fraud or what is known in Belfast as 'doing the double'. Despite considerable efforts the results were still disappointingly small and raised the issue that we tend to reinvent the wheel rather than learning from each other.

Planning needs to be linked to prospects for creating jobs and hence needs to be built into designing new schemes and not just as an after thought. This needs to be realistic as modern methods of construction mean many jobs will be done off site. Better connections between departments are needed particularly with the Department of Work and Pensions.

General discussion

The extensive research literature, which had been circulated as briefing material, suggested we know a great deal both about the conditions that breed worklessness, and

also the effectiveness of different forms of intervention. For example, research has shown that most people are reluctant to change bus or travel very far to work². A personal approach is vital and should be aimed at changing people's perceptions of themselves, and where this involves agencies working together, coordination can be difficult. Minority groups face extra problems both in terms of knowing what support is available, and also in overcoming discrimination. The importance of working with children in schools was raised. Many councils are working with secondary schools but it was suggested that working with primary schools could be more effective.

However what is more uncertain is how the kinds of people who currently live in social housing get their aspirations, expectations and values, and what causes them to change. The general impression is that people live in relatively small and isolated worlds, and depend on relations and possibly neighbours for information and expectations. Most are therefore effectively cut-off from the opportunities that exist in London, and the boundaries may be narrowing as a result of concerns about security and gang behaviour. This can be turned into an advantage, so long as the people whose prospects are improved do not then leave to find a better neighbourhood elsewhere.

There was general agreement on the importance of tackling worklessness and avoiding housing estates becoming ghettos. It was also recognised that there is a long-term set of issues, which can only be resolved through expensive and extensive intervention, whereas the sources of funding are essentially short term, and often involve 'funny money'. This raises questions about who should be leading and paying for the work.

Housing managers, particularly RSLs, seemed to be in the best position to identify needs and to offer more than just basic estate management. Their interests should include encouraging people to be good neighbours and avoid anti-social behaviour. Hackney's experience of working with RSLs has been a breakthrough and has led to a more holistic approach tying together physical regeneration with employment. It was noticeable that since the public realm has been improved in EC1 through projects that often involved community engagement, the area has been well-looked after, with far fewer problems reported. However RSLs should not try to run training and employment programmes, other than to complement existing estate maintenance activities. There is consequently a need for organisations who can act as intermediaries.

Newham has gone from relying on intermediaries to running its own programme, and there was general disdain for both the Job Centres, and the Learning and Skills Councils, neither of which seemed to have built up the necessary relationships with employers.

² Research by Pam Meadows

While a 'holistic' approach seems to pay dividends it is expensive, and figures of at least £4,000 per placement, or possibly as much as £10,000 were quoted. However it may be worth the state spending up to £11,000 to get someone back into work. As achieving the government's targets for Haringey alone would involve 25,000 placements, which could cost over £100 million, there is a major issue of what is to be done in the current and foreseeable situation, where the need for help will be escalating and resources falling.

One response would be to drop the focus on the long term unemployed and problem families, and instead focus on the NEET group and helping those who were newly made redundant back into work, for example through training that boosts or updates their skills. However they may be best helped by the existing system. Another will be to support the growth of voluntary organisations that encourage mutual aid and that make full use of IT in helping people to assess their skills and potential. Undoubtedly there is potential to expand the voluntary sector, particularly when it comes to meeting special needs, for example people who suffer from dyslexia and therefore have difficulty completing application forms. There are a significant number of people who are not only claiming benefit but also in receipt of paid earnings (cash) for services such as childcare, cleaning and gardening.

Comparisons with other European countries suggested that like many other services, we have been trying to get adult employment services on the cheap, and are not investing enough local economic development. With the downturn in the economy, the priority is likely to shift from building more homes (and particularly higher density flats) towards intervening where it will reinforce existing employment, and build stronger neighbourhoods where people can support each other (rather than simply depending on consuming services that are costly to provide).

In the end we were able to see that tackling worklessness is bound up with wider task of developing neighbourhoods that are truly sustainable. This means making the most of facilities like education and health, particularly where new buildings are being planned and there is a chance to rethink the way services are managed.

Future meetings

The final meeting of the series will be hosted by Mark and Chris in Redbridge, possibly looking at the new polyclinic, and will be held in late February. The first meeting of the sixth series will be held at the Strategy Park Conference (details attached) on the 28th and 29th of April at Eynsham Hall, Oxfordshire. Marc has secured free places for members including bed and board but members will need to cover their own travel expenses). More details will follow but please put the date in your diary.

Possible topics for the sixth series include:

- Neighbourhood management
- How do we deliver regeneration planning and what are the skills needed
- Sustainable development and post development management
- Rethinking the roles of smaller centres

Possible meetings include:

- Cambridge focussing on housing growth and hosted by Cambridgeshire Horizons and/or Peter Studdert, Joint Planning Director (Growth Areas)
- Manchester/Liverpool focussing on capital investment
- Newcastle/Gateshead focussing on the role of art in regeneration
- Croydon
- Waltham Forest
- Sweden and Denmark (Hammarby, Malmo, Copenhagen and Gothenburg)

These options will be discussed further in the next meeting and do let us have any other suggestions.