

Cornwall Economic Downturn & Recovery **LA Potential Actions & Examples**

Extracted from LGA and SW Councils documentation

Leading & Communicating

Embracing their community leadership role, councils should work with local partners to plan an integrated and comprehensive local response. In the face of such a serious economic downturn, councils should bring together partners to design and implement a rigorous response with the responsibilities of each partner set out clearly. The response should extend beyond the focus on supporting businesses and tackling unemployment, looking at the wider impact on residents and communities. Councils should also develop and communicate a regularly refreshed and updated narrative about the impact the recession is having on the area, the steps the council and its partners are taking to respond to it in the short term, their vision for the future and the action they are taking to maintain and work towards that vision

Examples:-

- Hold economic summit with local leaders (Cambridgeshire and Devon)
- Hold "Credit crunch " Conference with local businesses and banks (Cheltenham)
- Use the LSP to ensure the response is co-ordinated and backed by the full resources and capacity of the local public sector (Teignbridge), including establishing sub groups such as 'tackling debt' bringing together councillors and officers with the Citizens Advice Bureau, the local credit union, college, Jobcentre Plus, advice agencies and building societies (Sandwell).
- Dedicate a section on the website to guide people to local support services (Gloucestershire).
- Produce and distribute simple leaflets, such as Council's 'Credit Crunch: how we can help' that signposts the support available for people and businesses (Ipswich BC)
- Convene open days for local businesses providing information and advice to help them through the recession (Harrow).

Gathering Intelligence

The collation, analysis and interpretation of the data and subsequent dissemination of findings and intelligence require adequate resourcing and careful co-ordination. Councils should agree with partners the mechanisms for doing this, either through a managed network of existing information providers. Importantly, roles and responsibilities should be clear and protocols established to enable data to be shared. Business and community engagement have crucial roles to play in gathering more immediate intelligence about the impact of the recession on local firms and residents, and ensuring timely and effective interventions.

Example:-

- Work with local Chamber of Commerce (Brighton & Hove)

Building the Local Action Plan

For Residents

Housing support, children's services and social care will also be increasingly involved as the financial strains on households begin to show in, for example, family breakdown and substance abuse. Social care teams will play a key role in providing information, advice and guidance, for instance by giving advice on debt management, benefits entitlements, reducing fuel and heating costs. Indeed, it is crucial that plans are connected to front-line social care workers, who work daily with those who are most vulnerable to the effects of the downturn.

- 'Money Matters' advice leaflet sent to every household (Exeter)

- Employ a dedicated debt and money advisor (Basingstoke)
- Provide additional support to Citizens Advice Bureau (North Wiltshire)
- Provide interest-free loans for people who have missed mortgage payments and could lose their homes (Wakefield)
- Encourage house buying by providing shared ownership schemes, whereby a local council or housing association shares the cost of the mortgage and recovers its share when the property is sold (Chester)
- Encourage increased benefit take-up amongst residents which should be as part of a wider enhancement of information, advice and guidance for vulnerable households by public sector partners. (Ipswich)
- Supporting Housing Association partners to buy completed units where developers are currently unable to sell (Plymouth)
- Consider supporting low-income families with additional financial assistance (Essex).
- Increase support to Credit Unions (Essex and Teignbridge)

For Business

Planning and development control, regeneration, housing and economic development teams all have a direct role to play in supporting and stimulating the local jobs and housing markets and underpinning recovery.

Examples: -

- Reappraise economic development project priorities and projects (Devon)
- Work with local press to promote local business success (Cheltenham)
- Actively signpost the small business rate relief scheme (Essex)
- Explore the scope for altering the criteria for the award of contracts to take into account the value added by local firms, for example, quicker response times and greater responsiveness to local requirements (Essex)
- Establish an interactive website to help local businesses tender for Council contracts (Derbyshire)
- Change the terms of invoice payments to 10 days for small and medium-sized businesses. (Slough).
- Explore the potential for local housing associations to buy out completed or partially completed units (West Berkshire Council)
- Provide greater flexibility over the phasing of planning obligations or even foregoing developer contributions where it is threatening the viability of a scheme
- Support a scheme to improve business in waste management and sustainability (Somerset)

Responding to the Pressures on the Council

Recent research and news reports have shown that the credit crunch and recession are beginning to hit local government finances as declining incomes combine with the increasing financial demands caused by the recession. Councils have to respond as an organisation to ensure effective use of public money and maintain quality of service delivery.

Examples: -

- reduce consumption of gas , electricity and transport fuel
- recruitment freeze for specific departments
- ensure the developing younger workers through apprenticeships is continued and enable existing employees to remain economically active through skills initiatives