
Executive Summary

This document reports on the achievements of year 1 of the OWL local business engagement project which is a pilot programme within Leeds. It provides information on how objectives were achieved, highlights successes and challenges and identifies the potential for future development.

Aims and Objectives

The purpose of the OWL project was to build on previous Town Centre Management work by broadening engagement with local businesses across outer West Leeds by extending the territory and areas of focus of the previous work. Introducing the wider capabilities of the Leeds Ahead team, the project was designed to support local businesses in their growth, and stimulate their investment into local education, skills, environment and community.

A menu of activity was created under five thematic headings with business engagement fronted by the former Town Centre Manager, Nigel Conder.

Enterprise

The purpose here was to help businesses become more sustainable by signposting relevant support. The signposting service has reached over 500 businesses regularly through a series of dedicated newsletters. The reward card scheme which was successful under the Town Centre Manager scheme was also continued for part of the year.

Education and young people

Local businesses have a direct interest in the skills developed by young people within their area and in partnering with schools to raise awareness of what employers are looking for. This part of the project has been particularly successful and yielded very high levels of both return and innovation.

The creation of a Make the Grade education business partnership in Crawshaw School was identified as an early priority within the OWL project and has been led by Leeds Ahead's education team. We have significantly raised business awareness of the need for more active and sustained involvement in local schools. Make the Grade programme has helped the school to form more committed relationships with a much larger group of businesses. To date, 825 hours volunteering hours have been committed or donated by volunteers this academic year. 400 pupils have already been supported and the financial value of the support that will be provided this year is in excess of £55,000. In addition, businesses have contributed an additional £12,000 in cash towards the costs of running the partnership this year with a further £5,000 invested by the school. This partnership will continue for a minimum two further years which means that the investment leveraged through this part of the project will exceed £200,000.

Skills and employment

We have promoted the need to improve and invest in skills primarily by raising awareness of the Leeds City Region 5-3-1 pledge. We secured 77 pledges from Outer West Leeds businesses to improve the skills of their own staff, mentor new start-up businesses, take on an apprentice, offer a work placement or get involved in a local school partnership.

Transforming the environment

The intention here was to make local environmental groups aware of the scope for business volunteering and to make effective links between businesses that have staff time to donate and projects that need volunteering input. 352 hours were donated to green space projects across the area with 44 staff engaged from three different businesses.

Strengthening community

The purpose of this part of the menu was to help businesses understand that they can bring their expertise to help community groups and lend support in other ways.

Activity under this theme was dependent on participation of Community First panels. Although applications were made to Community First panels, no funds or projects were forthcoming and so only limited signposting support could be provided under this theme. Various businesses offered to mentor community groups or share facilities which were shared with Community First.

Achievements Against OWL Targets	
Target	Outcome
Support for up to 500 businesses	512
Engage 25 businesses in delivery of education activities	29 businesses engaged; 825 hours volunteering time delivered or to be delivered this year
Secure 40 pledges from business	77 Pledges received
Bring 30 volunteer days from business	44 Days delivered
To support 5 initiatives & leverage £10,000 of support	£65,000 cash and/or in-kind evidenced investment leveraged in year 1
Investment already committed over next 2 years irrespective of funding	£150,000

The pilot project has made a promising start in bringing together local businesses around a place-based agenda. In certain areas, notably education, it has been very successful and the work done this year will ultimately yield a return on investment of at least 10:1 through the

Crawshaw partnership alone. The potential for consolidating and developing the progress in this area is clear, for instance by extending the education business partnership activities to more secondary schools and/or introducing activity into primary schools.

Business support for SMEs is more important than ever and expert resource must continue to be dedicated to this if businesses are to survive what now appear to be many years of difficult trading conditions.

The project has proved popular with businesses because it has made local engagement easier and more accessible. Larger local businesses have enjoyed the opportunity to work with smaller businesses and both have benefited from increased connections with businesses based in the city centre.

There is potential to extend the business network further and introduce events to encourage local trading and greater take-up of activity.

In areas where less progress has been made over the last 12 months, more dedicated project time and resource will need to be earmarked, for instance to the community agenda, to ensure that groups can fully benefit from the support that local businesses can provide.

The pilot project funding paid for 60 days of frontline business engagement which were provided by the former Town Centre Manager. Additional days spent by the wider Leeds Ahead team have significantly exceeded this figure and introduced considerable extra investment into the area.

Purpose of This Report

The report will review achievements against the targets set out at the beginning of the contract. It will detail how each area of work was approached, highlight results and demonstrate the rationale for the project and why it is still needed.

2.0 Project Background

The project was designed to extend previous Town Centre Management work to leverage greater value for Outer West Leeds by:

- extending activity to all businesses in Outer West Leeds(Farsley, Farnley, Wortley, Pudsey & Calverley) rather than focusing solely on Pudsey town centre retailers;
- providing advice and signposting to initiatives that would be of value to businesses, particularly smaller businesses, to help them to survive and grow;
- providing a practical mechanism to “integrate” local businesses into local delivery and enable them to invest back into and improve their local areas in a wide variety of ways eg by supporting local schools.

Our initial proposal detailed the menu of support and opportunities and outcomes proposed.

It was agreed that the Leeds Ahead team would be fronted by Nigel Conder, who was already known to area management and local councillors, having previously acted as Town Centre Manager in the area for 3 years and having some business contacts as result. Nigel has been supported by Leeds Ahead's wider team who have facilitated the practical involvement of the businesses identified through Nigel's outreach and introduced additional city centre-based businesses to the area.

This approach was thought to be efficient because one business outreach function could leverage value for the businesses and wider area on several fronts. Not only does it deliver advice and signposting to help businesses survive and grow, it also promotes the different ways in which businesses could themselves support the wider area and enables their immediate practical involvement in those initiatives.

Precisely what was promoted and facilitated through the outreach role was to be tailored to meet local needs to ensure that the "menu" remained responsive to new initiatives and priorities as they arise.

This approach differed from the previous Town Centre Manager role funded by Leeds City Council because it required working across a broader geography, broader strategic issues (such as business growth, education and community). It also introduced for the first time the involvement of the wider Leeds Ahead team and the broader leverage of engagement and funds that their involvement would bring to the area.

3.0 Project Methodology

In order to determine how the project would be delivered and understand local priorities, Nigel had regular meetings with different local councillors to discuss what was needed by local businesses and other groups. Councillors at all times had a prominent and influential role in steering how Nigel spent his time. By way of example, Councillor David Blackburn raised a concern about manufacturing. From this discussion Nigel linked in with LCC business enterprise team who were developing a way of supporting manufacturing companies and in particular the textile industry. Councillor Coulson and Councillor Wood both introduced Nigel to businesses they thought would be excellent advocates for this scheme. From these meetings Nigel was able to discuss support from businesses such as Gaunts.

Nigel started off by developing a business engagement strategy. He made contact with local banks and established relationships with managers who deal with small businesses. Information on business support available was provided by Anne Salisbury of Leeds Ahead, who runs access to the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses scheme.

Nigel kept abreast of any sources of information or new support on offer by subscribing to information services, meetings with Leeds City Council Economic Development team and through regular support from Anne Salisbury.

In order to try and reach as many businesses and organisations as possible it was agreed that a monthly newsletter would be introduced from September 2012. The

newsletter template, which is in electronic format, was designed by other team members at Leeds Ahead. The newsletter contains local business news, links to funding and business support and the latest activities under the OWL project, including upcoming events at Crawshaw School.

The strategy also involved face-to-face meetings with businesses in Outer West Leeds. Nigel was able to draw on business contacts from his Town Centre Management project but as these focused largely on retail and were in the Pudsey area, further work was required to build the business base.

He was firstly able to tap into Leeds Ahead's own business information in order to target businesses. He supplemented this with additional business information that he found available through free on-line directories. He cold-called businesses and went to networking events and generally got out and about in the Outer West Leeds area. He has spent a not inconsiderable amount of time understanding the needs of local businesses in terms of support and what issues many of these businesses are facing.

Making contact across Outer West Leeds with businesses was time-consuming so Nigel looked at developing other approaches. For instance, he has instigated a relationship with commercial retail parks and the landlord or management companies who look after these sites. This would enable connection with more businesses in a less time-intensive way. This approach also benefits the landlord or management company in that it adds to their business offering to their clients, enhancing their profile to show a more or increased consideration for their tenants. This element of the strategy has only just commenced and the first event for tenants will not take place during this funding period.

4.0 Enterprise

4.1 Signposting to business support networks

Through the experience of meeting new businesses and engaging with them on a face-to-face basis, there is a clear need for a dedicated focus on business support that can provide up-to-date information quickly and effectively without requiring businesses to search and waste valuable time.

Nigel has collated the details of over 512 businesses and they are provided with business support information by means of a monthly newsletter. A list of the businesses appears at Appendix 1. So far, five newsletters have been sent out to these 500+ businesses and the statistics make for interesting reading.

The newsletters were designed in a way that makes it possible to identify how many businesses have opened it and any business support links that they have clicked on. These statistics are shown below:

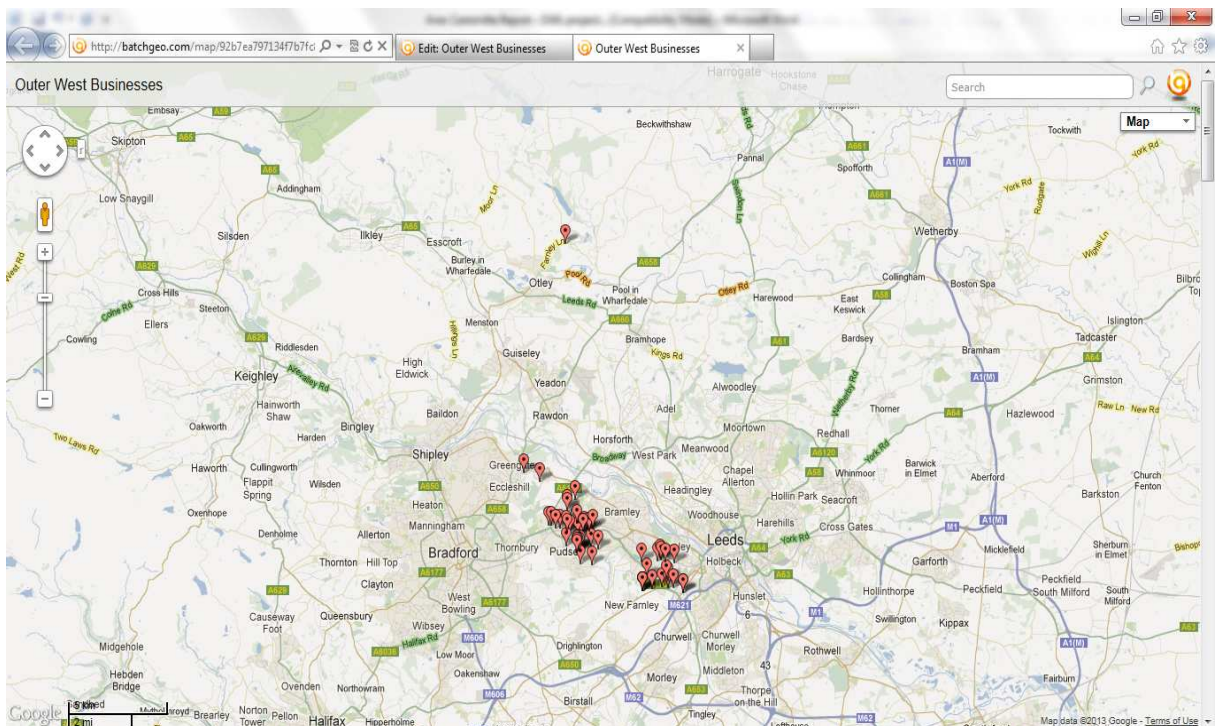
Of the 500 emails regularly sent to businesses

Statistics / results of News Letter email				
September	71% Opened			
October	66% Opened			
November	69% Opened			
December	31% Opened			
January	44% Opened			
1% Have opted out				
43% On average have clicked on links to business support / funding				

On average across the five months of newsletters the number of businesses who have clicked on the links that relate to business support has been 43%. This is highly illuminating because it means that one quarter of the businesses that were mailed the newsletter every month took the trouble to follow links through to the business support options that were profiled. This is a high figure.

A key area for future development will lie in networking businesses more effectively together to encourage local trading, which has been very successful for one local law firm.

Map of Businesses Involved in Signposting Service



During the course of his visiting and engaging with businesses Nigel has promoted the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Growth Programme. This is a fully-funded business management programme that helps businesses to improve their performance and catalyse growth. The programme is offered by Goldman Sachs and administered by Leeds Ahead and the programme itself is delivered by Leeds University Business School.

Whilst a number of businesses have shown an interest only one has applied for the scheme to date, citing lack of time to undertake the application process as the main reason. This programme has been very successful in delivering jobs growth and so any future extension to the OWL project should consider how we can increase the uptake from Outer West businesses and whether some 1:1 support could be provided through this project to help particularly promising businesses with the application process. Outer West businesses, such as Adept Engineering Ltd and Hopkins Catering Equipment Ltd, who have both previously been on the programme could host an event to explain the scheme.

4.2 Networking events / Business forums

Pudsey Business forum has continued to have a very low turnout although Nigel has linked into the much better attended Farsley forum which runs every other month. Nigel has updated businesses on new initiatives and business support. Nigel has also attended regular networking events held by Business Desk, banking and legal networking events and Yorkshire-wide events such as Venturefest.

4.3 Reward card scheme

This scheme had been running within Town Centre Management for the last three years and was continued during the first part of this year. The scheme operates where an individual will use their reward card to collect a stamp from a participating retailer when they spend money with that particular store. The aim of the scheme was to encourage shoppers to shop at different stores within the town; therefore they could only collect one stamp from each retailer. Once they had collected six stamps they were then eligible to enter the once-monthly draw to win £50 of shop local vouchers to spend at any participating store.

Following dwindling numbers of participants each month it was agreed that the scheme would cease at the end of December 2012. Whilst the scheme has been successful, it does depend on shop-keepers promoting the scheme which they have not consistently done. This has resulted in a decline in entrants.

Over the three years it has been running local residents have received **£1800** in Pudsey shopping vouchers which have been spent at local stores who participate in the scheme. This money has stayed in the local economy and has benefitted local retailers. The costs involved in setting up the initial scheme including designing and printing of the card and vouchers was **£450**. The legalities were undertaken pro bono by solicitors Eversheds through their relationship with Leeds Ahead.

The shopping vouchers were effectively funded out of the Well-Being budget. It is therefore more interesting to look at the statistics around entrants to measure the local spend that the voucher scheme has encouraged.

Whilst there is no minimum amount to secure a stamp on the card, six separate purchases are required each time a card is submitted. The total number of entrants in 2010-11 was 1131. In 2011-2012, the figure was 762 and in 2012-13 (until discontinued), there were 230 entrants. Multiplying each entrant by six provides a figure for the potential total spend.

Historical figures Reward Card Spend

2010 - 2011	No. Cards	@ £1	@ £5	@ £10
	X 6			
2010 -2011	1131	£6,786.00	£33,930.00	£67,860.00
2011 - 2012	762	£3,906.00	£19,530.00	£39,060.00
2012 - 2013	230	£1,380.00	£6,900.00	£13,800.00
Possible spend over last three years		£12,072.00	£60,360.00	£120,720.00

Whilst these figures are based on different assumptions and it is not known what the total spend on the cards was, it is likely that customers spent considerably more than £1 per visit and so the scheme would appear to have succeeded in encouraging local shopping, providing a very respectable return on the council's initial investment of £2250 and the time and effort involved in running the scheme.

5.0 Education and young people

5.1 Create a new Make the Grade education business partnership

The education business partnership established at Crawshaw School has been a big success. The businesses, school, head and staff have all been fully committed to the partnership which has helped the programme to get off to an excellent start.

Make the Grade brings together 4 lead businesses from different sectors to form a close partnership to work with a secondary school over a minimum 3 year period, with the option of extending activity into their partner primary schools. In the case of Crawshaw School the lead businesses are:

Zenith – Vehicle leasing business based in Calverley
 Pudsey Law – legal services firm based in Pudsey
 Asda – retailer based at Owlcotes Pudsey
 Baker Tilly – accountants based in the city centre

The Leeds Ahead team facilitate all the activities to ensure quality of experience, impact and continuity and the activities selected within the programme reflect the priorities of the school. An Appendix showing the activities that have been delivered or are planned for delivery in the academic year 2012-13 is attached at Appendix 2.

The total number of hours that have been spent or committed by businesses to Crawshaw School this academic year will be a minimum of 825 hours. This includes time spent by a large number of smaller businesses who were drafted in to support the lead businesses, many from the locality. Applying a DFE recommended figure of £60

per hour this provides a value to volunteer time leveraged in the initial year of around £50,000.

A list of businesses that have been involved to date appears at Appendix 3.

We have included some photographs of activities undertaken overleaf.

In addition to the activities at Crawshaw, a Christmas Book Collection was organised and provided a free book, donated by businesses, to every pupil in Year 5 in each of Crawshaw's feeder primary schools.

Crawshaw's first Market Place Event (Careers Fair)

It was really good because the stalls were the jobs you would want to do - you could ask loads of questions.
Yr 9 pupil



I thought it was very useful and interesting, as it gave us an insight into what qualifications we need and how we need to act as people to get good jobs.
Yr 9 pupil



The school, businesses and Leeds Ahead (Sally Wright and Sophie Nesworthy) hold regular steering group meetings to track progress and discuss new ideas. The school and businesses are delighted with the quality and range of activities offered and rate Leeds Ahead's facilitation highly.

Two innovative projects involving the lead businesses are profiled below:

5.2 Pudsey Law – Mock Legal Trial

This event will involve a mock trial hosted within the old court rooms in Pudsey Town Hall. This event will be held on 22nd March from 9am till 11am. The activity will familiarise pupils with careers in law and introduce them to legal processes and the rule of law. Councillor Coulson has been appointed the judge in the case

5.3 Asda and R&R Ice-Cream - Ice Cream Challenge

The retail giant ASDA has been working since December 2012 with three schools involved in Make the Grade (Ralph Thoresby, Cockburn and Crawshaw), setting pupils in each school the challenge to come up with an idea for a new flavour of ice cream. The Ice Cream Challenge is designed to help students understand the processes required to bring a concept idea to market. Each school team presented their idea to senior Asda and R&R Ice Cream staff at an event held at Asda House in central Leeds in January. Prior to that, each team had been through a process of product design and testing within each of their schools. The best flavour from each school was then entered into the competition and went before the panel.

Three year 9 pupils from Crawshaw School won their school heat and then had the opportunity to present pitch their concept to the Chairman of R&R Ice Cream along with the winning teams from the two others schools. The Crawshaw team was declared overall winner and enjoyed significant coverage in the Yorkshire Evening Post.

They have now been invited to the R&R Ice Cream factory to see what is involved in bringing their flavour into actual production.

Crawshaw Ice Cream Challenge



The winning flavour created by Crawshaw School pupils was “Orange Fusion” which is a combination of chocolate ice cream, chunks of real orange and shortbread biscuit.

6.0 Skills and employment

6.1 Promote Leeds City Region 5-3-1 pledges

The target here was to secure 40 pledges to support the 5-3-1 campaign as part of the Leeds LEP. We have managed to secure commitments from 45 different businesses which collectively made 77 separate pledges. A list of businesses that made pledges is attached at Appendix 4.

The 5-3-1 initiative has been developed by the Leeds City Region local enterprise partnership (LEP). The basis for the scheme is to boost investment in skills within Leeds. The aim of the campaign overall was to attract 1,000 pledges from across the city region. Outer West Leeds has thus been a significant contributor to this campaign.

The campaign aims to encourage businesses to invest in skills, boost links with education providers, offer work placements to the unemployed, provide apprenticeships and mentor budding entrepreneurs. Businesses interested in supporting education have been connected to Crawshaw School.

	Pledges
Invest more in upskilling staff	40
Mentor a budding Entrepreneur	8
Build links with education	20
Placements to unemployed people	7
Offer an apprenticeship	2
Total	77

6.2 Promote apprenticeships and work trials

Nigel has provided signposting support to three local businesses that have showed an interest in employing apprentices. Grants of £1500 are available to SMEs that take on an apprentice. Businesses that have shown an interest are;

Datong
Apex roofing
Engineering GM

All businesses who get involved in any such schemes or activities are recognised in the monthly newsletter.

The number of businesses making 5-3-1 pledges to take on an apprentice was low. Now that the Leeds Apprentice offer has been launched, more must be done to promote this across the area. Employing apprentices through the new ATA which will reduce the burden on SME's very considerably. Erol Erturan, at Adept Engineering Ltd based in Outer West Leeds, is a Leeds City Region apprenticeship ambassador. We could consider inviting him to lead an event around the benefits of employing apprentices.

7.0 Transforming the environment

7.1 Local greenspace projects

Several businesses have undertaken projects at local parks by helping clear litter and leaves from the ground.

Getting stuck in

Businesses from Direct Line help out at Upper Moor Pudsey



There have been four days worked so far and the businesses involved have been

Direct Line
Baker Tilly
Britvic

Areas that have been worked in area;

26th October Farnley Park 6 volunteers
18th September Upper Moor Pudsey 18 volunteers
30th August Rodley Park 7 volunteers
25th September Rodley Park 5 volunteers

Total hours worked 352
Number of staff engaged 44.

The in-kind value of this support valued at @ £10 per hour is £3520.

8.0 Strengthening community

8.1 Bringing businesses to support community first panels

Part of the project's purpose was to develop relationships with local community groups and provide them with support from businesses. Nigel developed contacts with Pudsey Wellbeing Centre and the local Community First Panel and has attended local Residents' Forums.

There has been low interest amongst businesses to date and greater focus will be required in this area. Scoping needs and making effective links with community groups can take some time and linking them up with appropriate businesses requires patience and skill. There is a particular opportunity around the Community First work and in promoting eg the Endowment match Challenge to raise funds for local projects which are then matched by the Cabinet Office.

A number of businesses offered in-kind support and the use of their facilities such as meeting room space for any local groups or businesses. These offers of support were included in the newsletter and communicated to any groups Nigel met.

Companies who have offered space include:

Pudsey Legal
Direct Line
Zenith
Gaunts
Engineering GM
Datong
Quay Plastics
Pudsey medical centre

9.0 Onward strategy

The last twelve months have trialled a new approach to engaging with businesses which has successfully played in the strengths and resources of the wider Leeds Ahead team.

Some activity initiated this year will continue for a further two years. For instance, the lead businesses and Crawshaw School have each entered into a three-year commitment in respect of their Make the Grade partnership.

In other respects, the project has laid valuable groundwork which should now be developed further in order to generate full value. These areas include:

- Further development of business engagement strategy
- Increasing the number of businesses within the network
- Reviewing the local menu and adding new initiatives
- Improving the business support offer
- Proactive outreach around 10,000 Small Businesses programme and the new LCC-led Regional Growth Fund grants schemes
- Proactive promotion of apprenticeships and the ATA
- Stimulating more interest from business in local community and cultural activity
- Building on the Crawshaw School success by introducing business engagement to other schools across the area

Much remains to be done and the project will lose momentum if there is no continuation. This would undoubtedly cause disappointment to the many businesses that are helping to deliver a 10:1 return on the council's own investment. For instance, one local SME has engaged every one of its 13 staff in education projects at Crawshaw School.

Lessons learned over the first twelve months will inform the development of our approach over the next twelve months. These can be summarised as follows:

1. It is not easy to secure resources from businesses in the current climate. Approaches to business must be intelligent and skilful and demonstrate a thorough understanding of business challenges and opportunities, as well as the benefits of getting involved. The success at Crawshaw School shows that this is possible.
2. There is no shortage of partners that have information or support of potential value to business; the challenge lies in how it is targeted and communicated. The purpose of the OWL project is to take on this task and present it to local businesses in a way that is easy for them to access. In order to achieve this, we need to demonstrate a proactive approach and constantly update our own intelligence on relevant support and partner initiatives.
3. In order to streamline our approach to businesses, we need strategies that involve targeting specific groups of businesses about programmes or support on the basis of relevance to them. We could also make more use of local advocates to connect with other businesses.
4. Overall, the project would benefit from a greater connection with Economic Development within Leeds City Council and we will need to track emerging agendas within the Local Enterprise Partnership.

10.0 Legal and Resource Implications

There are no legal implications relating to this report.

11.0 Conclusions

This project was a pilot project and was ambitious in its intent. This year's project will result in a 10:1 return on councillors' investment, having regard to investments committed that will be made outside of the funding period. Some elements of the project delivery have been more immediately successful than others but the project overall has delivered far more than it set out to achieve and has, we feel, more than proved its rationale. The approach is highly innovative and has attracted national and government attention.

The interest shown by small businesses in the business support information indicates that there is both an appetite and a need to provide this service.

Businesses have responded superbly to the call to action around the education and skills agendas. Given the high levels of return, this area should certainly be considered for further development. As youth unemployment is such a serious issue across the city, the city's new apprenticeship offer should be the subject of more active engagement with businesses.

Finally, whilst environment projects have seen some success, some work remains to be done around the community agenda. VCS organisations have lost a lot of funding

of late and many would benefit from businesses supporting their work in some way. Making effective links does take time however.

12.0 Recommendations

The project has made a very good start, leveraged substantial investment from the private sector and introduced a broad range of support. The model has the potential for wider application across the city, where it could complement locality working and provide a vehicle through which to champion Civic Enterprise.

There is a need to maintain momentum and Leeds Ahead are ready to explore the second stage of development of this initiative. We recommend the continuation of the project into 2013-14 potentially around the following areas subject to area committee priorities:

1. Extension of employer engagement to other schools, including the creation of another full Make the Grade partnership if business funds can be secured. Well-Being funding could act as a catalyst to this.
2. Continued support to the existing Make the Grade programme at Crawshaw School.
3. Development of business engagement strategies to reach more businesses more intelligently and leverage more support from them.
4. Develop closer links with community groups to be able to communicate their needs to possible lenders of support.
5. Further development of the business network and encouragement of local trading
6. Continuation of the newsletter as a means of communication.
7. A local event, such as a business support event in the area which could be done with Leeds Chamber and local business advocates such as Adept Engineering and Hopkins Catering.
8. Developing the business support offer to ensure quality and relevant signposting

The recommendation is that members note this initial report and consider at a later date a further extension.

13.0 Members are asked to note and comment upon this report where necessary.

14.0 No background papers were used in compiling this report.