

## ITEM 8

### RURAL AFFAIRS CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY

24 FEBRUARY 2000

#### EMPLOYER TRANSPORT/RURAL RECRUITMENT FAIR

In December 1999 there were 2050 registered unemployed people in Milton Keynes (a rate of 1.7%). At the same time there were 2754 registered job vacancies. It is forecast that more than 4500 new jobs will be created in CMK this Summer due to the new shopping and leisure developments.

This disparity means employers will either have to import staff from outside the sub-region - there is anecdotal evidence staff are being collected from as far a field as Birmingham and London - or recruit people currently not in paid employment but not registering as unemployed.

For the future success of Milton Keynes employers, new sources of labour need to be attracted. People currently not registered as unemployed but capable of participating in the workforce may include: people with disabilities; the early retired; people from minority ethnic communities; parent returners.

Since the 14 October 1999 Assembly meeting the Employer Transport/Rural Jobs Fair concept has been moved forward:

1. cost implications to employers of providing staff transport have been established (see **Annex**);
2. a large City Centre retailer has commenced a survey of staff to determine reactions to the provision of transport to and from work and the perceived difficulties in access to work; and
3. a survey, conducted by the Economic Development Unit and the Employment Service, commenced this month. All registered unemployed people will have a one-to-one interview to explore barriers to employment. It is hoped that evidence may highlight specific issues in certain areas, including rural areas. Although focused on the registered unemployed, it will also give an indication of barriers to employment facing people not registered unemployed wishing to work.

The Economic Development Unit has also discussed with Milton Keynes and North Bucks Chamber its difficulties in recruiting adults aged 25+ on to training schemes. Training schemes are currently available and funded but under-utilised. Many available training programmes have been designed to support people wishing to return to work and are available, with employer support, to new employees.

Further work has stopped due to difficulties in locating sizable concentrations of non-registered unemployed people. This situation has arisen due to the nature of the collection and presentation of employment statistics.

The last survey looking at numbers of the economically- inactive was the 1991 Census. Local populations and the economic situation are very different to 1991. There are figures produced nationally and locally for people unemployed and those employed. However, simply subtracting one from the other does not highlight the non-registered unemployed due to a variety of classifications such as disabled being ambiguous.

There is a great deal of anecdotal evidence of a large number of non-working people who would consider paid employment if barriers are removed. However, for the Economic Development Unit and partners to progress the project substantive figures need to be found to justify the spending of public money.

Officers are designing publicity materials to circulate via rural focal points such as: shops; schools and village halls to seek expressions of interest for rural recruitment events linked to employer-provided transport.

Officers would like to gauge the opinions of the Assembly as to the validity of this approach.

If the Assembly feels this to be a worthwhile process then Officers would like to request assistance with the dissemination of publicity materials.

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