

FINANCIAL INCLUSION STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 14 July at 10.00 am
St George's Centre, Great George Street

1.0 Present

Name	Representing
Angela Rai	City Development, Leeds City Council
Ann Richardson-Greaves	Burley Lodge Centre Advice Services
Dave Rickus	Aire Valley Homes Leeds
Dave Roberts	City Development, Leeds City Council
Denise Carpenter	St Vincents
Dianne Lyons	Leeds CAB
Jacqui Atkinson	Yorkshire Bank
Jillian Eames	Ebor Gardens
Jo Rowlands	City Development
John Battle	West Leeds Debt Forum
Joy Wetherill	Welfare Rights Team, Leeds City Council
Katherine Doherty	RBS
Katherine Hougham	Burley Lodge Advice Service
Lorna Richardson	West Yorkshire Joint Services
Mark Rutherford	Regeneration Manager, Leeds City Council
Nick Morgan	Chapelton CAB
Philip Bee	Leeds Faith Forum
Rowena Hall	City Development, Leeds City Council
Shaun Kelly	Leeds City Council
Shirley Humphreys	WNW Homes
Sophia Ditta	City Development, Leeds City Council
Yvonne Craggs	ENE Homes

2.0 Apologies

Name	Representing
Adrian Jellicoe	Affinity Sutton
Ann Day	City Development, Leeds City Council
Alex Hannant	Equality Team, Leeds City Council
Gillian Tiffany	Yorkshire Housing
Janet Miller	ENE Homes Leeds
Lee Welsh	Leeds Federated Housing
Linda Davis	West Yorkshire Joint Services
Mike McAughtrie	Illegal Money Lending Team
Pria Bhabra	Adult Social Care
Rob Mathews	Money Advice Service
Simon Betts	Job Centre Plus
Sue Jennings	Leeds Federated Housing
Susan Wood	Advice Leeds

3.0 Minutes of the meeting held on 24 March and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March were approved.

The two research studies – 2010 Comparative Research and Income Maximisation and Health - were launched at a successful conference in May.

4.0 Progress Reports

(a) Debt Advice/Telephone Gateway – Dianne Lyons

Face to face debt advice will continue to be delivered until March 2012 – funding beyond that date is not yet known. Money Advice Service (MAS) are currently providing telephone and on-line services. There may be a small amount of money available for face to face advice – this is being explored. Cuts to legal aid are also on the horizon and a £20m fund has been announced but it is not yet known how this will be allocated. DL is liaising with Rob Matthews and it is hoped that MAS will be able to influence the decision making process.

The telephone gateway project has been funded by the LCC City Development. A coordinator is being recruited and will hopefully be in post in August.. Partners are the Welfare Rights Unit, Law Centre and hopefully Burley Lodge and Ebor Gardens.

(b) Leeds City Credit Union – Chris Smyth

Update on activities to be given at the next meeting.

(c) Corporate Debt Policy

In Roger Smith's absence, DR stressed the importance of making sure that the Policy remained effective. There was some concern expressed that the regular liaison meetings have not been taking place and these were felt to be useful. CAB have put together a report on the importance and good work of the Corporate Debt Team. **DL to send to DR for circulation.**

(d) Data on increase in shop units offering log book loans/pay day loans, etc Nick Morgan

Nick has had several meetings with Chris Smyth to progress this work. Trading Standards had provided a list of those given licenses in the last 12 months. Although the information was useful, it was felt that this whole area was impossible to control as there are numerous internet / TV loans being offered daily and the only way forward is to educate consumers.

John Battle reported that he had seen business cards for logbook loans on lamp posts in West Leeds and that in the past the CU had promoted their services outside some of the cash converter shops in Armley.

(e) Welfare Rights review – Joy Wetherill

Steve Carey, the Council's Chief Revenue and Benefits Officer has recently undertaken a review.

SC noted the establishment of Advice Leeds and recognised the need to support and continue provision of advice and make every effort to continue funding at the current

levels – but over a longer period of time. It has been recommended that:

- Merger of Social Care team with the WRU
- CAB share the OSC – to support joint working and provide services around different communities and break down barriers to service users
- Advice Leeds provide an annual report regarding demand of services

WRU and Advice Leeds are currently having meetings to take things forward.

Many of the recommendations made as part of this review were put forward by the advice sector and the review has been seen as quite effective and re-focused the issue of local support.

DR reported that he attended the Children's Trust Board on 11 July, which Steve Carey also attended. SC pointed out that there will be potential problems for the Council and ALMO's about Universal Credit being paid directly to the claimant.

ENE indicated that they have concerns regarding the new under occupancy ruling as it will effect many of their tenants in high rise blocks within their area.

There was some discussion regarding fuel poverty and the high percentage of pre-payment meters in social housing. It has proved difficult to extract clear figures from the major suppliers on charges for meter installation, tariffs, etc. DL indicated that CAB have some information which she will circulate to the group via DR. **DL to send to DR.**

5. Leeds Casino

Rowena Hall, who is leading on this project, tabled a progress update.

The revised Gambling Policy went out to public consultation in May and over 450 organisations and other interested parties have been sent letters. The consultation ends on 29 July at which stage agreed amendments will be incorporated and the policy will then go to the Council's Executive Board, Scrutiny, then back to Executive Board before final approval by Full Council on 18 January 2012.

The application pack is the document that will be used by interested parties in applying for the licence. The process is in two stages, the first is very much a form filling exercise and at Stage 2 the applicant will be required to demonstrate that their application provides the 'greatest benefit' to Leeds. The application pack is also out for consultation and ends on 29 July.

Stage 2 has been developed to ensure equality, fairness, transparency and in particular to ensure that the following principles are achieved:

Financial – to seek to maximise the financial return

Social – to use any financial return accrued to facilitate the delivery of programmes and projects that support the Council's social and economic inclusion agenda

Economic – to secure a positive and significant economic impact for the local economy.

An Advisory Panel will be set up to work through details of the documentation. The licence will be granted around the first quarter 2013, and whoever gains the licence will then need to secure planning, which is a completely separate process.

All the above documentation is available – www.leeds.gov.uk/gpc

DL asked if there were any known social funds for other local authorities.

Rowena reported that Hull have been through the process and there was only one applicant, who were then automatically awarded the licence. In this situation the applicant is not required to go through the Stage 2 process so there was no discussion around socio-economic benefits.

Newham however, received a one off payment of £5m followed by annual contributions and stipulated various employment training schemes which are guaranteed each year.

Philip Bee then circulated a suggested draft response from the Steering Group, which was originally put together on behalf of the faith groups. The response states that:

- That applicants for a licence should not be encouraged to assume implicitly or explicitly that locating a casino in or close to a regeneration area is a social good.
- That the licence should be awarded on the basis of demonstrating how social costs will be mitigated as well as demonstrating intended benefits.
- If the Social Inclusion Fund is the key means whereby social costs are mitigated, then the Council have an obligation to indicate that this will be used to mitigate the social costs of having a casino, especially if it is located close to or within an area where levels of debt and financial illiteracy are known to be high.

The meeting agreed to endorse these proposals and submit this as the response of the steering group. It was agreed that Philip Bee represent the Steering Group on the Advisory Panel.

6. Capping the total cost of credit – John Battle, West Leeds Debt Forum

JB talked about the importance of promoting CUs and the need to displace doorstep lenders/loan sharks. Various initiatives are taking place around the city which target high cost legal lenders. JB stated that:

- A third of families in Leeds have no savings so would not have money in an emergency
- 40% take out pay day loans and are earning less than £15,000
- Perhaps a meeting should be sought with some of the high cost lenders to discuss changes in their policy
- 14 European countries have some sort of capping
- There has been a Finance Bill amendment to ask that capping be considered and there will hopefully be an announcement around Party Conference time
- MPs should continue to be lobbied

7. Any other Business

The new 'Overcoming Financial Difficulty' leaflet is now ready and includes updated information on the CU branches and legal aid. An electronic copy will be available on the FI website shortly and hard copies will also be available for those that require them. **SD from the Economic Policy team** will contact all members of the group to check the numbers of hard copies required.

9.0 Date of next meeting

The meeting will take place at the St George's Centre, Great George Street on:

10.00 am 16 November 2011