

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL****SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ECONOMY  
6 SEPTEMBER 2012****PROGRESS REPORT: UNEMPLOYMENT IN EXETER****1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To update Members on progress to reduce the level of unemployment within Exeter.

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 In May 2012 this Committee received a briefing report on trends in unemployment within Exeter as measured by those claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and also the nature of support available to help people into work.

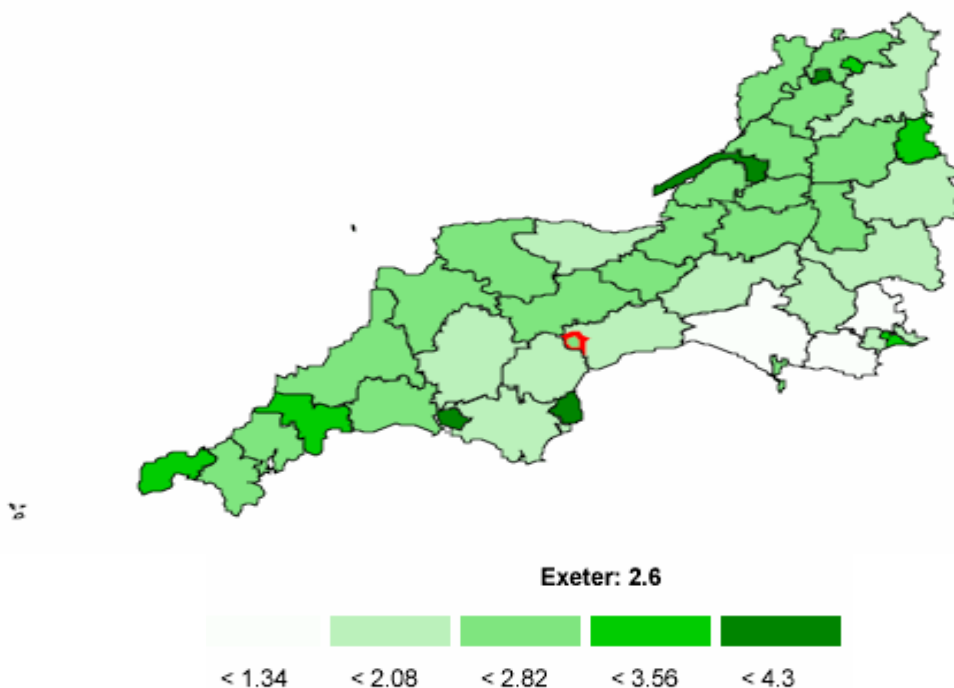
- 2.2 In summary the report highlighted that:

- JSA claims increased significantly from the low levels seen in 2007, rising from 927 people in November of that year to 2,358 claimants by April 2012
- the JSA rate for men continued to remain higher than for women; in April 2012, these stood at 4.0% and 1.7% respectively
- the number of people claiming JSA for more than 6 or 12 months had continued to rise over this 5 year period
- young people aged 16-24 years had experienced the largest increase in numbers claiming JSA over 6 and 12 months respectively
- a range of support is available in the city to help people into work, including:
  - apprenticeships and/or work experience with local employers
  - voluntary work with local voluntary organisations
  - work clubs providing support in for example – CV writing, interview techniques and job applications
  - an enterprise club to help people start up a small business.

- 2.3 The report proposed a series of activities that officers could undertake with partners to encourage a reduction in unemployment in the city. The following sections highlight recent unemployment trends and progress made.

**3.0 UNEMPLOYMENT**

- 3.1 Figure 1 illustrates JSA claimant rates as a percentage of the working age population for the South West. In July 2012, Exeter's rate stood at 2.6%, this represents a decrease from that reported for April of 2.8%, a reduction of 242 people.



**Figure 1 – JSA Claimant Rates for the South West – July 2012**

3.2 Table 1 below highlights the change since April 2012 in JSA claims over the past 3 months of available data. The results illustrate the following:

- The total number of JSA claims has continued a downward trend
- Claim rates remain higher for men
- Fewer young people are claiming JSA for 6 to 12 months. However, the numbers claiming for 12 months plus has increased

<b>Table 1: Exeter JSA Claimant Data for 16-64 year olds from May – July 2012 (including Plymouth, South West and England and Wales for July only)</b>						
	May	June	July	Plymouth	SW	E & W
* <sup>1</sup> Total no. of JSA Claimants	2,256 (2.7%)	2,136 (2.6%)	2,116 (2.6%)	6,514 (3.7%)	86,434 (2.6%)	1,362,885 (3.8%)
No. of Males	1,582 (3.8%)	1,467 (3.5%)	1,450 (3.5%)	4,416 (5.0%)	57,796 (3.5%)	896,051 (5.0%)
No. of Females	674 (1.6%)	669 (1.6%)	666 (1.6%)	2,098 (2.4%)	28,638 (1.7%)	466,834 (2.6%)
No. 16 – 24 years	715 (3.2%)	670 (3.0%)	640 (2.9%)	2,260 (5.1%)	25,335 (4.1%)	390,385 (5.9%)
No. 25 – 49 years	1,190 (2.8%)	1,115 (2.7%)	1,120 (2.7%)	3,350 (3.9%)	46,070 (2.8%)	752,305 (3.9%)
No. 50+ years	345 (1.9%)	345 (1.9%)	345 (1.9%)	890 (2.0%)	14,825 (1.4%)	217,545 (2.2%)
* <sup>2</sup> Claiming 6 to 12 months	480 (165)	450 (150)	405 (120)	1,345 (525)	17,685 (5,595)	278,955 (85,960)
* <sup>2</sup> Claiming 12 months +	480 (100)	505 (105)	520 (110)	1,715 (410)	19,105 (3,585)	362,935 (63,480)

\*<sup>1</sup> Figures in brackets indicate the rate of JSA claimants as a percentage of the working age population; \*<sup>2</sup> Figures in brackets represent the number of young people aged 16-24 years claiming JSA

## 4.0 PROGRESS

- 4.1 Progress on activities raised in the last report to this Committee is set out below under each of the recommendations made.

### **Apprenticeships**

- 4.2 Recommendation – *develop a Council apprenticeship employment strategy, and explore the financial viability of employing up to 10 young people as apprentices within the Council.*

**Progress made** – The Council has launched its Apprenticeship Scheme this year and is currently looking to recruit 6 apprentices to work across Parks and Gardens, Museums, Civic Support and Environmental Health. The Human Resources team lead this work and are working with Exeter, Bicton and Plymouth colleges on this scheme, appointing young people who live in the Exeter area.

The aim is to start small and develop the scheme over the coming year. It may be possible to roll out other opportunities within the Council over the coming months. There is a need to ensure the Council offers a quality scheme which really offers scope for young people to develop work skills in the public sector environment and also provides them with support to study as part of their training.

- 4.3 Recommendation – *work to influence local major employers to establish a recruitment programme that employs collectively upto 100 new apprentices suited to business needs*

**Progress made** – the Council has built on the foundations of the existing, Employment and Skills Board led “Get Devon Working” campaign, dedicating officer time to generating new referrals.

Since 1 June 2012 the Council has contacted 30 local businesses to discuss skills and recruitment pathways, as a result, there are:

- 4 additional apprenticeship positions being created
- 5 additional referrals for Graduate/Student internships.

In October 2012, the Get Devon Working Campaign will draw to a close and the partnership will review outcomes and determine whether the Campaign, with the Council’s support, has resulted in a sufficient increase in apprenticeship take up.

- 4.4 Recommendation – *explore with the Employment & Skills Board and NAS how small local charities may be enabled to employ local people on apprenticeships*

**Progress made** – NAS have commissioned research across the South West to examine good practice in the support required to assist local employers within the voluntary and social enterprise sectors to take on apprentices.

Upon completion of the research, NAS have agreed to set up a small working group to progress this activity, which will look to include Exeter CVS, Exeter CAB, Age Concern and the Fruit Tree for Business (representing social enterprise interests).

## Planning Process

### 4.5 Recommendations –

- *within the Council, develop an approach that aims to secure agreement and achieve agreed outputs (expected jobs, work experience, skills, and apprenticeships) through procurement and planning activity over which it has an influence*
- *develop a policy with NAS that secures increases in employment, skills development, and apprenticeships arising from the procurement of major projects through the Council's approval of planning developments*

**Progress made** – it has been agreed with officers in the City Development Unit:

- that pre-application discussions around proposals for development will involve a referral to the Project Co-ordinator of the Employment and Skills Board on discussions with developers about local employment and workforce skill development and, where possible, result in the development of proposals to be included in planning applications
- to propose an addition to planning application requirements specifying the need to submit an employment and skills strategy and secure commitments to local employment and workforce skill development; this proposal will be included by the City Development Service when they carry out consultation on an updated list of requirements (expected October)
- to seek to strengthen the Council's influence to secure employment and skills training for local people, officers will prepare information for inclusion in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (Council's Core Strategy policies CP10 and CP18 refer), an update to the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document and also in the Site Allocations & Development Management Plan, which should support policy DM6 aimed at improving "access to jobs".

## Work Experience

### 4.6 Recommendation – *seek to establish a work placement strategy for up to 25 job seekers within the Council*

**Progress made** – work has concentrated on establishing the apprenticeship scheme and now officers will discuss the potential timing of this work with Human Resources and update Members on progress at the next Committee.

Recommendation – *work to influence local major employers to provide work placements for at least 300 Exeter resident job seekers*

**Progress made** – officer time committed to the "Get Devon Working" campaign, as mentioned earlier, has only just started and thus far, no additional work experience placements have been secured.

## Supporting Volunteering

### 4.7 Recommendation – *work with the Employment and Skills Board and voluntary sector to explore ways of enabling local charities to recruit and support more volunteers of working age*

**Progress made** – work has yet to commence on this proposal, officers will update Members on progress at the next Committee.

### **Work Clubs**

- 4.8 Recommendation – *explore with Forward 25 Careers and other providers of work clubs how unemployed people can be supported on 8 week projects enabling them to go onto further training, apprenticeships, employment or self-employment*

**Progress made** – agreement has been reached between 3 work clubs: Forward 25 Careers, Exeter YMCA, and Westward Pathfinders to adopt, enhance, and seek to expand the 8 week project model and also expand the bank of friendly employers who can provide work for their clients.

The agreement to work together enables Exeter YMCA to secure opportunities for their clients to find work placements and Westward Pathfinder, which has funding to provide NVQ training, to provide additional training that will improve the skills of unemployed people participating in the work placements.

### **Raising Awareness**

- 4.9 Recommendation – *work with partners to facilitate support and stimulate awareness [of support available to recruit unemployed people] which addresses the gaps in provision identified by the Work Programme Providers (as mentioned in the previous report)*

**Progress made** – officers working together with Working Links (one of the Work Programme providers), Job Centre Plus, Devon County Council's Access to Employment Manager and Exeter CVS's 'Business for Exeter Communities Group' (BECG) co-ordinator have initiated the following activities:

- Working Links and the County Council will brief the private sector employers involved in Exeter CVS's business group on the provision of support available to help unemployed people (able and disabled) into work, and seek comments from business on what qualities and skills employers want/need, in particular, from young people as potential employees, with a view to reshaping their services to better meet employer expectations
- BECG employers will be holding an all day event for JSA claimants in October with Job Centre Plus, which aims to reduce local unemployment; it is anticipated the event will address how to read a job description, preparing a CV, preparing for an interview, practise interviews and feedback
- to help stimulate awareness of the support available to recruit unemployed people, a leaflet summarising the support available will be produced for distribution by email to local employers
- officers will explore with the County Council a proposal that arose, namely 'Project Search' – an American model for helping 8 to 12 young people per project with a learning disability get into work. Plymouth's Derriford Hospital took part in Project Search and 80% of participants found paid jobs as a consequence, not all within the hospital. The County Council have funding to establish 3 Project Search sites in Devon, one being within Exeter. There is a

need to secure an employer in the city able to offer a range of departments and internship situations.

## **5.0 NEXT STEPS**

- 5.1 Officers will progress activity outlined in section 4.0 and report back to the January 2013 meeting of this Committee.

## **6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report.

## **7.0 RECOMMENDATION that:**

- 6.1 Members comment on progress made.

**RICHARD BALL**  
**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ECONOMY**

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

*Background papers used in compiling this report:*

'Unemployment in Exeter', 31 May 2012 Scrutiny Committee – Economy, Exeter City Council