

Sub-group Report to OSP

Date: 11th February 2019

Date of previous update: 7th June 2018

1. Brief overview statement

Centre for Cities has ranked Oxford as the second least equal city in the country due to the diverse relative prosperity of its residents. The evidence points to a two over-arching employment/pay and cost of living related issues faced in Oxford, issues that have a knock on economic impact in terms of business growth, staff recruitment and retention.

With this in mind, the Oxford Economic Growth Board, which reports to the Oxford Strategic Partnership, has agreed to set up a task and finish group, to consist of influential public and private sector employers, to pilot practical and innovative actions with the aim of supporting a fairer local economy. The two main areas of focus will include:

- Making Oxford a Living Wage City - a pilot initiative being developed in conjunction with the Living Wage Foundation.
- Widening access to employment - working specifically with organisations such as Aspire and others to develop an 'Inclusive Recruitment Charter' to recognise employers who recruit more inclusively.

Evidence indicates that reducing barriers to adequately paid employment will benefit workers, firms, and the local economy.

2. Progress to date

The Inclusive Economy Task Group has formed and includes both Universities, both councils, Oxfam, Oxford Bus Company, TV Police, the Health Trust, The Westgate Centre, Aspire representatives from John Lewis and Blackwells. It also includes the Living Wage Foundation will be part of the group and lend their expertise. More employers are planning to join the group. Key actions to date;

- **Living Wage Week** - Hosted a number of events during living wage week events which were attended by a number of 40 attended. Range of follow up discussions
- **Real Living Wage City** - Working towards becoming an accredited real living wage city. This will be a formal accreditation by The Living Wage Foundation. The Living Wage City Action Group has now been set up. To become an Action Group member/ employers must be an accredited Living Wage employer, or be on the journey to becoming accredited, and willing to help create and deliver a Living Wage City action plan'.
- **Oxford Inclusive employment Charter** - Work is progressing on developing an inclusive employment charter. A small working group led by Aspire has developed a draft charter identifying a range of good practice already taking place. The group is now testing the self-assessment tool and seeking organisations willing to pilot the process. The aim is to launch the charter and recognise its founder members at the Inclusive Recruitment Conference to be held at Unipart on 23rd May 9am.
- **Social Value** - procurement leads from a number of organizations will be getting together to explore implementing approaches to local social purchasing approaches on a wider scale building on practices within the public on the back of The Social value Act and private sector, particularly in construction i.e. community employment plans . The group will learn from one another and consider adoption of the approaches outlined.
- **Other ad hoc measures** - Individual member organisations are implementing various aspects of this inclusive agenda with measures like for example offering internships or apprenticeships to target groups. We are also exploring with other non-monetary measures designed to ease the cost of living pressures i.e. key work housing, subsidized public transport etc.

3. Challenges and/or blocks to progress

Risks

- Lack of engagement and take up by private sector partners and businesses in the city;
- Businesses being put off by perception of the burden and costs associated with implementing this policy;

Mitigations

- Work hard to ensure the business benefits of this work are front and centre
- Ensure concrete, but focused measures are agreed and carried out by the group
- Take an evidence based approach to the problem and solution, looking at employer need as well as community need (economic and social)
- Ensure wider expertise is on hand from relevant partners.