

# DCP Newsletter



November 2010

We have rounded up a few of the articles and news that may be most pertinent to you and your organisations during this great time of flux and almost daily announcements.

If you discover something we should include or have any feedback please contact [faye.conroy@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:faye.conroy@dudley.gov.uk) or call 01384 814756.

## Growth White Paper Published

On 28<sup>th</sup> October, the Government's new white paper '*Local growth: realising every place's potential*' was published, setting out the Government's role in empowering locally driven growth, encouraging business investment and promoting economic development. As part of the White Paper announcement, the Regional Growth Fund was launched and 24 Local Enterprise Partnerships were approved. More details below.

## Regional Growth Fund goes live

Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, declared the Government's Regional Growth Fund (RGF) open.

Businesses and local communities are now able to bid for financial help to boost private sector growth and create jobs in their area.

The RGF is a discretionary £1.4bn Fund that will operate for 3 years between 2011 and 2014 to stimulate enterprise by providing support for projects and programmes with significant potential for creating long term private sector led economic growth and employment. In particular it will help those areas and communities that are currently dependent on the public sector make the transition to sustainable private sector-led growth and prosperity.

Bids for funding from private bodies and public private partnerships



across England on a challenge basis will be accepted. Bidding partnerships will include a combination of large private sector players, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and social enterprises working with public partners. It is expected that Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) will play a role in bidding for the Fund and coordinating across areas and communities. Lord Heseltine will Chair the Independent Advisory Panel, which will consider all bids submitted to the fund, supported by Deputy Chair, Sir Ian Wrigglesworth and a panel of academics, business and civic leaders.

**BIS** | Department for Business Innovation & Skills

## Local Enterprise Partnerships

Business Secretary Vince Cable revealed the identity of the first tranche of 24 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) from the 62 proposals received. Whilst the Black Country LEP proposal was not short-listed by Government all partners are confident the proposal will receive approval in the next few weeks. Arrangements have been made for discussions with Government officials in the next two weeks.



areas of the country may have a LEP.

LEPs are new bodies that the government has created to replace regional development agencies. They are designed to provide strategic leadership in their areas on local economic priorities. LEPs get no central funding and will rely on local authorities and businesses to sustain them, though they can bid for money from the Regional Growth Fund.



Close to home, Birmingham and Solihull with East Staffordshire, Lichfield and Tamworth LEP and Coventry and Warwickshire LEP were both approved. The government will approve new bids on a case-by-case basis, though not all

## Business rate proposals for councils

The Local Growth Paper also sets out new ways of increasing confidence to invest by creating incentives for Local authorities in England to promote business growth, including looking at proposals for local authorities to keep the business rates they collect locally, reducing central redistribution.

Vince Cable revealed that Ministers may give councils the power to keep the business rates they collect locally in an attempt to stimulate economic growth in the regions. Currently, business rates are collected locally and sent to central government before being redistributed through a complicated grant mechanism.

For more information about the White Paper, Regional Growth Fund and Local Enterprise Partnerships:

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/news/topstories/2010/Oct/local-growth>

## Quango Reforms—new Public Bodies Bill

On 14<sup>th</sup> October, the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Francis Maude, summarised plans to substantially reform a large number of public bodies to radically increase the transparency and accountability of all public services and enable the Government to operate in a more efficient way.

The Government proposes to reform 481 bodies. Of these 192 will cease to be public bodies and their functions will either be brought back into Government, devolved to local government, moved out of Government or abolished altogether. Examples include:

- Devolving responsibility for the work of Development Corporations to local government;
- Bringing organisations under more direct Ministerial control, such as the Renewable Fuels



Agency and Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission;

- Enabling organisations, such as National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) and the Design Council and the to become charities.

As part of the reforms the Government is also announcing proposals to merge 118 bodies down to 57, and to substantially reform a further 171. Examples include:

- Strengthening the competition regime by forming a single competition and market authority
- Substantially reforming organisations such as the Environment Agency and the Homes and Communities Agency working with them to streamline their work.

In those cases where public bodies remain at arm's length from the Government, work will continue to ensure they become more open,

accountable and efficient. All of the retained bodies had to meet one of the three tests: performing a technical function; requiring political impartiality; or needing to act independently to establish facts.

On 29<sup>th</sup> October, The Public Bodies Bill, was published in Parliament aiming to ensure the necessary legal framework is in place for the Government to carry out its public bodies reforms. Some bodies that are due to be reformed were set up in legislation, so new powers are needed to be able to abolish or merge them, transfer or devolve their functions, or reform the way they operate.

The Bill contains a schedule listing a number of public bodies which were part of the review process. The list also includes bodies for which there are no plans to reform to ensure that, if the Government wishes to make changes to these bodies in the future, the necessary legal framework will already be in place.

A copy of the Bill can be found at: [www.parliament.uk/business/bills-and-legislation/](http://www.parliament.uk/business/bills-and-legislation/)

## Big Society strategy—consultation

On 14<sup>th</sup> October, Nick Hurd, Minister for Civil Society unveiled the 'Building a Stronger Civil Society' strategy to support charities, voluntary groups and social enterprises. It is the first step towards helping civil society organisations grasp new opportunities arising from the devolution of power to local communities and reform of public services that underpins the Big Society.

The strategy pulls together ideas and initiatives to give civil society a clear picture of the Government's vision. Plans in the strategy include:

- reducing red tape for small organisations
- giving public sector staff the right to form co-ops or mutuals
- give local communities the right to buy or bid to run community assets
- continue to match fund local endowments to encourage giv-

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- modernisation of public service commissioning

Nick Hurd announced he would consult on proposals for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of support and advice for frontline civil society. Consultation runs over 12 weeks from 14<sup>th</sup> October 2010 to 6<sup>th</sup> January 2011. The consultation document proposes ways in which the government thinks improvements could be made that would support the delivery of the Big Society and invites feedback to 10 questions.

For a link to the Cabinet Office page to download the strategy and the consultation:

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/426258/support-stronger-civil-society.pdf>



## Big Society—The Dudley Approach

The Dudley Community Partnership is holding an event, Big Society – The Dudley Approach on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2010. This event will bring together leaders from the public sector, representatives from voluntary, community and faith sector networks, social media experts and local business people to begin discussing a local response to the Big Society agenda.

The Event will include National and local guest speakers giving perspectives and examples of big society. Delegates will be invited to consider what the Big Society agenda means for them, their role, our partnerships and our Borough. Delegates will have the opportunity to take part in 2 discussion groups.

Through this event delegates will gain an overview of the Big Society agenda, find out about local activity contributing to the Big Society and develop key messages in relation to how, together, we can develop a Dudley approach to the Big Society. Attendance at the event is by invitation only. For further information go to: <http://www.dudleyisp.org/big-society>