

Economy and Enterprise Block Overview

for end of year 2006/7

Business and Enterprise

- The business base of Kirklees has continued to expand and there was strong growth in the number of new businesses established in Kirklees. There was a higher than average level of new business growth in the most disadvantaged parts of Kirklees.
- The development of the creative economy has been a local priority for some time and progress to date has been positive and outstrips the regional performance.
- An increase in the total rateable value of Kirklees businesses of over 7% was well beyond expectations and a solid indicator of a buoyant and growing business base – essential for economic well-being and sustainable communities.
- An important innovation led by Kirklees Economic Development Service was the Single Business Account, which is an e-government initiative. This IT-based development pioneered by Kirklees Council, aimed to improve the co-ordination and delivery of council services to the local business community. Take-up by local firms exceeded expectations to such an extent that targets have been revised upwards.

Jobs, Income and Worklessness

- The number of Kirklees residents in work is growing (on target), but a significant minority of those in employment commute out of the District to secure a sustainable job. This figure also continues to grow (not on target).
- Both the growth in the proportion of Kirklees adults with higher level qualifications and those working in higher level occupations are on target. Despite this, wage levels in Kirklees companies have fallen. Data sources suggest that the majority of out-commuters from Kirklees work in higher level occupations and are well qualified.
- Over the period covered by the Local Area Agreement, the trend in the numbers of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance has been upwards. Targets aimed at a reduction in numbers have not been met, despite the best efforts of Jobcentre Plus and other key players.
- Continuing decline in manufacturing, competition from growing economies in developing countries and a shift towards service sector jobs are major factors in growing unemployment. Those in disadvantaged areas are hardest hit and one of our most challenging Targets is to close the gap between the Wards with the highest and lowest levels of unemployment – Newsome and Kirkburton.

Economy and the Environment

- There are clear links between economic activity, employment and the environment. Commuting in particular has a significant impact. We are committed to developing the option of home working as an alternative to daily travel to work. However, the results of the annual resident Tracker Survey show a significant year-on-year fall in the proportion of Kirklees residents working from home.
- We are also monitoring through the Tracker Survey the proportion of Kirklees residents working outside the District. As mentioned earlier, the level of out-commuting has increased over the year. There may be a number of explanations for this - personal preference, lack of local jobs or geographical proximity to neighbouring Districts (as in North Kirklees for example).
- We must continue to work with partners and local employers to increase the supply of quality jobs in local firms, which will have a knock-on effect in reducing pressures on wider environment.