

News and Assignments - March 2008



Paul Hammond

2008 is almost a quarter over and the end of the financial year is rapidly approaching. It's been a busy 3-4 months for **Meridienpure**... not least for our principal consultant Nick Clay who was party to a home delivery of his second child. Congratulations to Nick, Caroline, new arrival Oscar and sibling Max.

Our work on the implications of Business Support Simplification Programme (BSSP) continues. We remain in support to Tower Hamlets as they reflect on the enterprise challenges faced by a London Borough. ***The area is one of extremes - the average salary at Canary Wharf is £100,000+ but we estimate that less than 10% of the earnings generated in the Borough go to residents.*** Only 61% of the working age population are economically active adding to the Borough's position at, or near the bottom, of the index of multiple deprivation. We are working with the Council on what this contrast means for economic and regeneration priorities.

In London the usual business issues are compounded by the pressure on land from residential development and the consequent shortage of affordable business premises. There is a view that these firms should be allowed to drift toward the outer London Boroughs. ***Surely this will detract from the place making efforts of the town planners and remove much of the dynamism and ethnic and commercial diversity that gives***

Boroughs like Tower Hamlets their bohemian edginess?

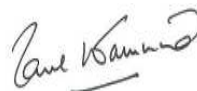
We are back on Merseyside with an assignment for Business Liverpool to ***research the needs of family owned businesses*** (FOBs). Some 70% of firms are FOBs – though admittedly there are some definitional issues – and Business Liverpool wants to know if BSSP services are meeting their needs from succession planning to launching portfolio business empires. The new Littlewoods could be out there!

Within the last few days the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills has begun the process of a new "University Challenge."

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has been requested to launch a consultation on how proposals for new higher education centres can fully reflect the benefits that can flow from such investment by unlocking the potential of places, people and businesses. In this CSR period the Department has £150m to spend on this agenda.

Higher education is estimated to be worth in excess of £50 billion to the economy each year and it provides this direct economic benefit in many towns and cities as well as improving access to HE for the resident population. Student populations provide a youthful and cultural buzz that adds to place making and HE provides the skills and knowledge transfer that offers opportunities for businesses to grow and it attracts new investment to the area. ***Access to the University Challenge will be dependent upon proposals maximising the economic impact of HEFCE investment and innovative proposals will no doubt be required – so get your thinking caps on!***

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Hammond". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Paul Hammond
Managing Director, **Meridienpure**

News and Assignments - March 2008

Evaluation of CDFI - Yorkshire Forward

For YF we evaluated community development finance supported by the agency (Phoenix Fund transition). Following a detailed desk review of the loans issued, interest rates and terms and the status of the beneficiaries (ethnicity, gender, age, place of residence, extent of financial exclusion), we interviewed beneficiaries and held delivery partner workshops. Our recommendations for the future improvement of the programme and its alignment with a region-wide access to finance portfolio have been accepted by YF. In evaluation terms the challenge for the programme is to eliminate deadweight. In general terms the programme will benefit from better targeting and outreach across the region.



Business Support and HEI Impact – University of East London

We have just committed to a 12 month engagement to monitor and evaluate UEL's Business and Higher Education Project. The project goals are:

- To engage businesses and enterprise support activity with higher education expertise and resources;
- To maximise uptake of HE expertise and resource by local businesses, entrepreneurs, inventors, etc;
- To provide access to flexible hot desk space for new start businesses (in particular, inventors, students, BME residents and women).



Evaluation of SRB 5 & 6 – Tame Valley Partnership

We originally evaluated SRB5 in Tameside at the mid term some six years ago. It was therefore a pleasure to return and deliver the summative evaluation of the combined SRB5 & 6 programmes. SRB5 concentrated on places and people with a commitment to community development and access to support services. In this respect our work with community groups highlighted a success with many SRB5 projects laying the foundations for later policy and service innovations including Children's Centres.



Perhaps more interestingly, our community focus groups – a replication of the mid-term research methodology – show that youth facilities and nuisance remain outstanding issues, yet community groups are now more articulate and more interested in being part of

News and Assignments - March 2008

future positive solutions. SRB6 has made the difficult process of brownfield site development look easy through robust and effective management and the physical enhancement of the Borough's employment sites is taking shape.



Delivery Plan Review – Barking and Dagenham Enterprises (BDE)

BDE is the private sector led partnership and delivery vehicle for enterprise and business support in the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham. Given CSR 2007's commitment to further Local Enterprise Growth Initiative funds and the arrival of Working Neighbourhoods Fund in the Local Area Agreement BDE wanted a refresh of its delivery plan. **Meridienpure** facilitated the board's review of future priorities and delivery and our final report provides ideas for future programme activity based upon an updated economic analysis of the Borough, project level performance, review of recent business surveys and good practice in enterprise and business support from across the UK.



Improving Access to Information and Services to Support Enterprise amongst Businesses and Communities - Peak District Rural Action Zone (RAZ)

The RAZ commissioned **Meridienpure** to evaluate its work to deliver improved access to business and community support as part of its response to the Government's Rural Strategy. Our approach has involved consideration of business and community views, cost-benefit analysis of projects and partner views on performance and forward strategy. The Pathfinder has emphasised that the Peak District as a sub-region is unique: Though it is administratively complex, it is recognisably a 'single area' with an identity which resonates among its stakeholders.



The Pathfinder has added value to the mainstream. It has not tried to compete with it or invent its own (duplicate) services; rather it has adopted a complementary, supportive and influencing role and has sought to provide a focal point for the Peak that:

- Provides a synthesis of policy from a variety of cross-boundary and thematic service delivery and strategic partners;
- Promotes understanding and co-ordination between these agents;
- Offers a forum for this dialogue and the associated design of demonstrator activities;
- And therefore provides customer focus and service rather than partner interest as a true measure of public service and accountability.