

November 7, 2008.

Economic taskforce created to fight downturn

As the economic downturn continues to take its toll, the county's economic partnership has responded by creating a new group in an effort to minimise the impact of the recession.

At its latest meeting, Gloucestershire First partners endorsed the plan for an economic taskforce to monitor changes in the county economy, to co-ordinate initiatives and provide a unified response to the crisis.

The Gloucestershire Economic Taskforce will comprise 15 members including senior representatives of local authorities and business support organisations in the county.

It aims will be to:

Minimise unemployment

Maintain the skills base, particularly with a view to the future economy

Maintain a mixed economy both by sector and size

Maintain morale

Meeting monthly, the Economic Taskforce will focus on those matters over which it can have some influence, such as urging larger companies to pay smaller companies promptly and encouraging people to holiday locally and support their local shops.

It will also liaise with the county's major organisations including local authorities, colleges, the University and Primary Care Trust to encourage them whenever possible to use their purchasing power in support of local businesses.

“At this serious time for the economy, as well as promoting short term initiatives, it is important we do not stifle investment in our future prosperity,” said Gloucestershire First managing director Stan Jones.

“It means, for example, encouraging employers to make full use of any initiatives designed to give young people training in the type of skills we will need in the future, such as advanced engineering, where there is a demand for people from craft to degree level.”

Gloucestershire First members were told by County Council researcher Karen McDonald that unemployment in the county had risen significantly since the beginning of the year to 6,400 – 1.8 per cent.

“Undoubtedly these are tough times,” said Mr Jones, “but on behalf of our partners we are already managing several important training and return-to-work initiatives designed to minimise unemployment.

“Working with local authorities and other key players such as the South West RDA, the Economic Taskforce will do all it can to maintain morale and encourage continued investment in Gloucestershire until this turmoil abates.”

Ends

Gloucestershire First is the countywide economic partnership established to develop and support the economic wellbeing of the county. It brings together partners in the field of economic development to contribute to an overall strategic plan for Gloucestershire. Further information is available on www.glosfirst.co.uk

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