**INFLUENCING SUPPLY CHAINS**

How can local authorities influence their suppliers to adopt and embed flexible working practices, through 106 agreements and also the wider procurement of goods and services?

Conversation at this roundtable for Timewise public service partners suggested that there is already plenty of good practice taking place within economic regeneration teams, to influence procurement colleagues to better facilitate local employment opportunities. However only a few partners had pushed the conversation beyond apprenticeships to begin encouraging suppliers to consider flexible working when generating local jobs.

It was clear that procurement teams face a range of challenges in supporting this agenda – how to balance getting best market value with facilitating community benefit; and how to find the capacity to engage suppliers in wider conversations.

However everyone attending felt that there was potential value in helping procurement officers to ‘sell in’ flexible working to suppliers as a means to improve their own business performance and workforce development. And there was agreement that this could also help to optimise the delivery of social value – by opening up more local jobs to residents with caring responsibilities.

The issue of part time apprenticeships also came up. The default apprenticeship model still appears to be full time. As partners are now challenging the default employment model of full time, it follows we should dig a bit deeper to understand why part time apprenticeships can’t be more widely available.

The discussion covered a lot of ground and Timewise will be following up with partners individually to take two ideas forward:

* producing some practical workforce guidance on flexible working for procurement teams
* developing a cross-borough offer to larger employers, to support them to recruit local residents who need flexible working.