

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Hampshire Economic Board
Date of Decision:	25 February 2010
Decision Title:	Engagement with Business
Decision Reference:	1368
Report From:	Director of Economic Development

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1. Executive Summary

1.1. The purpose of this paper is to inform the Hampshire Economic Board about the business support agency network in Hampshire as part of its consideration of how to engage with business.

1.2. This paper seeks to:

- summarise the range of business support services available in Hampshire;
- summarise the current financial support of Hampshire County Council to the key agencies;
- suggest options for strengthening the links between the Board and the business support agencies; and
- summarise other options open to Board Members to further engage with business.

2. Contextual information

2.1. There are around 51,016 businesses in the Hampshire County Council area. Of these some 0.4% (around 200) are large employers accounting for 34% of the Hampshire workforce of 867,000. A further 10.5% (5,410) of businesses are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) employing between 10 and 250 employees. The remaining 89% (45,406) of the firms are termed micro business, with between 1 and 9 employees.

- 2.2. It would not be possible to have a direct relationship with all businesses and hence one approach is for the Board to concentrate initially on developing its relationship with business representative organisations. The major employers do not tend to be part of these organisations and there is an argument for the Board to seek to build direct relationships with the major employers in Hampshire, particularly as these have a large impact on employment. However, the largest employers have, in the past, been difficult for the public sector to engage except where there is a need for specific support – eg a major development proposal or redundancy situation. The County Council does not provide services itself which impact on these ‘life events’ although its services are very important in providing the economic context in which these businesses operate. In order to build a deeper relationship with major businesses, the public sector as a whole will need to collaborate to share its major business contacts and establish the ‘offer’ that might attract major employers to better engage. Addressing specific issues which have a relevance to a particular business may be the most effective mechanism for getting engagement.
- 2.3. Hence in the short term, apart from personal contacts with major employers, the most effective mechanism to establish general links with the business community and build on current relationships, would be via the main business support agencies operating in Hampshire which represent the interests of Hampshire business.
- 2.4. Appendix 1 lists the main agencies which are currently promoted and to which the County Council's Economic Development Office currently signposts specific enquiries and has links. The business support agencies focus either on sector, location or on a particular size of business.
- 2.5. Since 1994, as part of its effort to support the local economy, it has been the practice of Hampshire County Council to actively support the work of the business support agencies in Hampshire. The Council has always been keen not to duplicate effort by undertaking similar activities to the work of these agencies.
- 2.6. Historically, the Council has given further impetus and support to several key agencies’ efforts through regular annual grant support. It only provides financial assistance to a small number of key agencies.
- 2.7. The main business support agencies that have been helped are:
- (i) The Hampshire Economic Partnership
 - (ii) Chambers of Commerce
 - (iii) Enterprise First
 - (iv) Wired Wessex.

3. Summary of Activity and Hampshire County Council support of these Business Support Agencies

The Hampshire Economic Partnership (HEP)

- 3.1. HEP was established in 1992 and brings together business and local government. It aims to influence Government policy and support the economic prosperity of Hampshire and its cities by:
- (i) identifying and championing the needs and priorities of Hampshire business;
 - (ii) providing an authoritative economic voice for business; and
 - (iii) ensuring that the best decisions are made to deliver sustainable economic prosperity for the area.
- 3.2. It has eight trade sector task groups which are led by leading business experts representing industry sectors across the county. Hampshire County Council has always been closely involved with HEP and has demonstrated its commitment to the organisation through representation on, and support for, many of the task groups, having a place on the HEP Board and Executive Committee, and by an annual grant. This annual grant of £15,000 has been a general contribution to the work of HEP.

Chambers of Commerce

- 3.3. There are currently three main Chambers of Commerce in Hampshire: North Hampshire; Portsmouth and South East Hampshire; and Southampton and Fareham. They have recently collaborated to form one Hampshire Chamber and this is jointly owned by the three main Chambers of Commerce in Hampshire but they also still operate independently. Hampshire County Council has, for many years, only grant aided the North Hampshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry. This is an independent, not-for-profit, and politically impartial business support agency. It comprises businesses and organisations from all areas of commerce and industry and believes its strength lies in being owned and managed by business for business.
- 3.4. It offers business services, runs networking events and lobbies Government on business issues. It represents the voice of business at local, regional and national level and like all Chambers is part of a regional, national and global network.
- 3.5. Hampshire County Council has historically awarded the North Hampshire Chamber an annual grant of £2,750. The grant is acknowledged by the Chamber as a major contribution to its work and gives the Council membership to the Hampshire Business Alliance - a group of members who provide the highest level of support for the Chamber and, by extension, for the Chamber's effort to help smaller businesses to grow, bringing knowledge and skills that are vital to future economic success.

The County Council will review its support to the Chambers as they merge and become one single Hampshire Chamber.

Enterprise First

- 3.6. Enterprise First was established in 1981 and assists clients seeking to start up a new business or develop an existing small business in Hampshire, Surrey and Kent. It is a not-for-profit company with sponsorship from the public and private sectors, so offers either free support or help at a nominal cost from a team of experienced and accredited business advisers at a range of locations across Hampshire. Enterprise First is a member of the National Federation of Enterprise Agencies and supports its Small Business Advice Service via its email support system.
- 3.7. Hampshire County Council has historically awarded Enterprise First an annual grant of £15,000. In more recent years, the Economic Development Office has entered into a service level agreement with the agency for specific training, for example in VAT, or for specific business start up courses in Hampshire.

Wired Wessex

- 3.8. Wired Wessex is a business support organisation based in the University of Winchester. It has around 1,000 members and offers a programme of training and networking events. Topics covered include marketing, search engine optimisation, use of social media for business, etc.
- 3.9. The County Council gives Wired Wessex an annual grant of £5,000 towards core costs, and this is matched by the University and Business Link.

Future Support

- 3.10. The Economic Development Office is currently in discussion with each of these agencies, reviewing the past year's activity and considering support for 2010/11. It is felt that these agencies are professional, have clear objectives, and make a major contribution to the economic prosperity of the county. It is anticipated that the County Council will continue its current level of grant funding for the financial year 2010/2011.

4. Business Support Agency Links with the Hampshire Economic Board

- 4.1. Currently officers from the Economic Development Office have links with most of the business support agencies in Hampshire and meet regularly with their representatives. There are, however, no formal links between Members of the Hampshire Economic Board and these agencies.
- 4.2. It is suggested that it would be useful for the Board to establish a working relationship with the key business support agencies in Hampshire and this may be the most effective method of engaging with business in Hampshire initially.

- 4.3. This enhanced relationship could provide the Board with:
- (i) first hand briefings on the activities of each agency;
 - (ii) first hand updates on current business issues and market intelligence; and
 - (iii) ideas for future collaboration to further support the local economy.
- 4.4. There are several mechanisms that could be explored for developing the relationship, including:
- (i) each agency Chief Executive or Chairman to attend one meeting per year of the Hampshire Economic Board to brief Members;
 - (ii) the Board to hold six monthly business breakfasts or lunches where all agency Chief Executives and Chairmen are invited; and
 - (iii) the Board to receive regular reports incorporating regular updates from the Chief Executives of all the key agencies.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1. That the content of the report be noted.
- 5.2. That options for future increased engagement with business through the business support agency network be considered.
- 5.3. That the Board considers other mechanisms for engaging with business.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	no
Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	no
Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate):	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

1.1. An impact assessment was undertaken in August 2009.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. No impact.

3. Climate Change:

a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

No impact.

b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

No impact.

Appendix 1 – Business Support Agencies in Hampshire (February 2010)

Organisation	Description
Business Link South East (to be replaced by Serco from 1 April 2010)	<p>Provides generic business support, online and through a network of advisers.</p> <p>Services include: business information and advice; help with business planning; finance; marketing; business events, etc.....</p> <p>Area: Regional (national initiative)</p>
Enterprise First	<p>Enterprise First is the biggest enterprise agency in the region, helping businesses in Hampshire (and beyond) to start up and develop.</p> <p>Services include: free business advice from impartial advisors; workshops lead by business professionals; Blackwater Valley Business Network (BVBN) .</p> <p>Area: County-wide</p>
Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) Wessex Region	<p>The Federation of Small Businesses exists to promote and protect the interests of the self-employed and owners of small firms through lobbying, events and advice to its members.</p> <p>Area: County, Regional and National</p>
Institute of Directors (IOD) South	<p>Aims are to provide the services required by members, support the development of corporate Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, and be the voice of business leaders in the area.</p> <p>Area: Regional</p>
Hampshire Chambers of Commerce	<p>Hampshire Chambers is a newly-established organisation owned by the three main Chambers of Commerce in Hampshire, namely North Hampshire, Portsmouth and South East Hampshire and Southampton & Fareham Chambers of Commerce</p> <p>This partnership provides one point of contact with which to engage some 2,500 plus Chamber Members throughout Hampshire.</p> <p>Services include: lobbying and representation; events; skills and training</p> <p>Area: County-wide</p>
Hampshire Economic Partnership (HEP)	<p>The Hampshire Economic Partnership brings together business and local government to influence Government policy and support the economic prosperity of Hampshire.</p> <p>HEP works through 8 trade sector task groups which are led by some of Hampshire's business representatives.</p> <p>Area: County-wide</p>
Harbour Economic Development Forum	<p>The Harbour Economic Development Forum is the business development and inward investment agency for South-East Hampshire, working on behalf of the local authorities of Fareham, Gosport, Havant and Portsmouth.</p> <p>Services include: business start-up advice; financial assistance; Invest in Southampton and Invest in Portsmouth – commercial property databases; local economic data provision and fact-sheets</p> <p>Area: Fareham, Gosport, Portsmouth, Havant</p>

Organisation	Description
Business Southampton	<p>Business Southampton is an independent business led organisation that provides an influential voice for businesses within the city region. It aims to further Southampton as a city of excellence for business and economic growth on the South Coast. Has recruited over 100 key Southampton employers as City Champions.</p> <p>Area: Southampton</p>
In-Biz (South East)	<p>InBiz exists to promote, develop and support individual and group enterprise and initiative amongst all sectors of the community</p> <p>Services include: 3 stage programme for business start-ups; focussed enterprise support programmes; general business advice and support</p> <p>Area: Region-wide</p>
South East Innovation and Growth Teams	<p>South East Business Innovation and Growth provides focused innovation support for companies in the South East, regardless of size or nature of business. Support is available through locally based Innovation and Growth Teams (IGTs); in Hampshire, these are West Surrey and NE Hants, Solent (South Hampshire, Winchester, East Hants, Test Valley) and Thames Valley (includes Basingstoke)</p> <p>Services include workshops, on-site consultations, seminars and training programs in the areas of securing new business and access to knowledge and research, etc.</p> <p>Area: South East Region</p>
European Information Service Centre/ Enterprise Europe Network	<p>The European Information Centre assists companies in developing their business in the EU and is part of a network of more than 280 EISCs. The Southern Area European Information Centre offers a range of services that can benefit the one-person band as well as the bigger companies.</p> <p>Services include: help in seeking business contacts in Europe; tender search service; funding opportunities; help with EU legislation</p> <p>Area: County-wide</p>
Southern Entrepreneurs	<p>Southern Entrepreneurs is intended to benefit micro businesses and sole traders. Services include: training; peer support network; networking events; access to professional advisors; analysis of training needs; help with business needs</p> <p>Area: Eastleigh and surrounding area</p>
South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)	<p>The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), as the Regional Development Agency for the South East, is responsible for the sustainable economic development and regeneration of the South East of England - the driving force of the UK's economy.</p> <p>Services include: funding; strategy; global competitiveness; smart growth; sustainable prosperity; 2012 Games; European initiatives</p> <p>Area: Region-wide</p>
Education Business Partnerships	<p>Educational Business Partnerships (EBPs) supply and deliver educational support to schools and colleges through a variety of creative programmes which bring business and education together. There are four main EBPs in Hampshire: Basingstoke Consortium, First Partnership (covers NE Hampshire), Solent Skillsquest (covers SW Hampshire) and Portsmouth (covers SE Hampshire)</p> <p>Services include: careers events; enterprise activities; mentoring; work experience</p> <p>Area: County-wide</p>

Organisation	Description
Farnborough Aerospace Consortium - FAC	FAC is the aerospace and defence trade body and aims to make a significant contribution to sustaining a prosperous aerospace and defence industry in the UK. It supports and champions the cause of the aerospace and defence industry and provides a brokering service to help members win new business Area: South East
learnirect	learnirect is a national e-learning network and delivers a range of products: free independent careers advice over the phone, online and by e-mail; centres with courses to improve your maths, English and IT skills; off-the-shelf and bespoke work-based e-learning programmes Area: Nationwide
Skills Funding Agency	The Skills Funding Agency will be the single funding provider for adult skills in England outside of higher education from April 2010. The SFA's main function will be to direct funding to further education colleges and other skills providers, supporting skills development in areas of strategic importance to the economy.
National Apprenticeship Service	The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) is a new agency with overall responsibility for promoting and supporting Apprenticeships.
Train to Gain (Business Link Skills Advisors)	Train to Gain is currently being embedded within the Business Link (SERCO) service portfolio. Skills Advisors provide impartial, independent advice on training to businesses across England. The service carries out a needs analysis of training within a business and help assess what skills the business has now and what it will need in the future. Area: County-wide
Sustainable Business Partnership	The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Sustainable Business Partnership (SBP) is a partnership network of representatives from organisations and businesses across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. It is based in the Economic Development Office. Services include: practical help and support to the businesses in the area in subjects such as resource management, energy efficiency and environmental management systems; Sustainable Business Network; Sustainable Business Awards; training & events Area: County-wide
Envirowise	Envirowise delivers a valuable Government-funded programme of free, confidential advice to UK businesses. This assistance enables companies to increase profitability and reduce environmental impact. Services include: dedicated, free helpline; Information resources from case studies to best practice guides; over 200 events a year, from small seminars to major exhibitions. Area: Nationwide

Organisation	Description
Carbon Trust	<p>The Carbon Trust Helps Businesses and the Public Sector to cut carbon emissions, and supports the development of low carbon technologies,</p> <p>Services include: research grants; technology acceleration; business development incubator programme; carbon management help</p> <p>Area: Nationwide</p>
Environment Centre	<p>The Environment Centre is a one-stop shop for environmental information in Southern England. The centre provides practical support for companies, schools, community groups, public sector bodies and individuals. Services include advice on renewable energy systems, environmental consultancy, green travel plans, training; environmental management systems; fact sheets; research & reports.</p> <p>Area: Nationwide</p>
EnviroBusiness	<p>EnviroBusiness strive to drive the growth and success of the environmental technologies and services sector. This is done by creating access to new business opportunities and promoting EnviroBusiness members to the global market.</p> <p>Members opportunities include: business development; knowledge sharing and partnering; research and development; supply and procurement; training and expertise.</p> <p>Area: Nationwide</p>
Business in the Community	<p>Business in the Community is a movement of over 700 of the UK's top companies committed to improving their positive impact on society and the environment.</p> <p>Resources include: leadership training; reporting and benchmarking tools; employee volunteering information; case studies</p> <p>Area: National</p>
Groundwork Solent	<p>Groundwork supports communities in need, working with partners to help improve the quality of people's lives, their prospects and potential and the places where they live, work and play. Each Groundwork Trust is a partnership of the public, private and voluntary sectors with its own board of trustees.</p> <p>Includes: partnership working; employee volunteering; corporate sponsorship</p>
The South East Centre of the Built Environment (SECBE)	<p>The South East Centre of the Built Environment is a key strategic consortium that exists to inform policy and drive business-to-business learning and networking.</p> <p>SECBE's mission is to improve the business performance of the built environment sector to deliver world-class facilities and infrastructure to its customers and end users.</p> <p>Area: South East Region</p>
eHampshire Partnership	<p>eHampshire is the body responsible for 'driving forward the use of ICT and high speed communications in Hampshire'. eHampshire aims to provide independent, advice to improve availability, access and take up of broadband services in the County. It is based in the Economic Development Office.</p> <p>Services include: Smarter Working Centres; workshops; E-commerce training; lobbying government and providers; plus focus on IT skills and accessibility.</p> <p>Area: County-wide</p>

Organisation	Description
Wired Wessex	<p>Wired Wessex is a network organisation that aims to help small firms in Hampshire by giving help and support to start-ups and growing businesses, particularly in the creative and ICT sectors.</p> <p>Services include: regular networking events; opportunities for collaboration; free promotion through the online members directory; signposting to skills and training; support with marketing and PR</p> <p>Area: County-wide</p>
Hampshire Fare	<p>Hampshire Fare represents and promotes local producers of food, drink and craft based in Hampshire. It is based in the Economic Development Office.</p> <p>Services include: trade development by assisting with public sector procurement contracts; Hampshire Food Festival - the UK's biggest food festival; Local Food Procurement Initiative; events; guide to Producers of Food, Drink & Craft in Hampshire.</p> <p>Area: County-wide</p>
National Farmers Union (NFU)	<p>The National Farmers' Union represents the farmers and growers of England and Wales. Its central objective is to promote successful and socially responsible agriculture and horticulture, while ensuring the long term viability of rural communities.</p> <p>Services include: business guides; lobbying; farmer and grower membership; legal assistance scheme</p> <p>Area: County, Regional and National Networks</p>
British Marine Federation	<p>The British Marine Federation is the trade association for the British boating industry which aims to create, develop and maintain high quality services, benefits and commercial activities to promote the marine industry and its products.</p> <p>Services include: technical advice; health & safety guidance; legal service; statistics and market research; training services and courses</p> <p>Area: County-wide</p>
Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS) South East	<p>The leading advisor for manufacturing in the region, MAS provide practical, hands-on support to businesses in the sector, focused on improving productivity and efficiency.</p> <p>Services include: information & downloads; events; training and mentoring programmes</p> <p>Area: South East Region</p>
Marine South East	<p>Marine South East is the regional marine initiative of the South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA) developed to address the needs of the marine sector in the South East region.</p> <p>Services include: database including over 2500 marine businesses in the region; information & downloads; events; tender opportunities</p> <p>Area: South East Region</p>

Organisation	Description
Purple Door (University of Portsmouth)	<p>Purple Door is the co-ordinating body for all the business support services available from the University of Portsmouth. Its aim is to support development, enterprise and innovation, and to enhance workforce skills, by providing access to the facilities, knowledge and expertise of the University, its academic staff and its students.</p> <p>Services include: research; student and graduate employment; workforce development; events</p> <p>Area: County-wide</p>
Segensworth Business Forum	<p>The Business Forum (part of the Segensworth Business Improvement District) represents the interests, concerns and issues of businesses on the Segensworth Industrial Estates.</p> <p>Area: Segensworth Business Park</p>
Andover Mutual Business Group	<p>Andover Mutual Business Group (MBG) is made up of small businesses from the Test Valley area. The group meets monthly to exchange ideas and discuss business problems and solutions as well as networking and is supported by Test Valley Borough Council</p>
Basingstoke Business Partnership	<p>The Partnership enable businesses and regulators within the Basingstoke and Deane area to work closer together. The aim is to make it easier for the business community to comply with regulations, by ensuring they are given clear information and good user-friendly advice.</p> <p>Area: District-wide</p>
Winchester Business Improvement District	<p>Run by Winchester City Centre Partnership, the Winchester BID aims to make the city centre a better place for businesses and includes members from a number of the city centre's businesses. Hampshire County Council has a place on the Board.</p> <p>Area: Winchester City Centre</p>
New Forest Business Partnership	<p>The Partnership aims to improve relations between business and local government, promoting better business-to-business, building a stronger economy and bringing greater prosperity to the local community. Hampshire County Council has a place on the Board</p> <p>Area: District-wide</p>

Compiled by Hampshire County Council Economic Development Office
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