

# Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Agenda  
Item:  
A.4

Meeting Date: 19th January 2017  
 Portfolio: Economy, Enterprise and Housing  
 Key Decision: No  
 Within Policy and Budget Framework: YES  
 Public / Private: Public

Title: Progress Update to Business Support Task and Finish Group  
 Recommendations  
 Report of: Director of Economic Development  
 Report Number: ED 03/17

**Purpose / Summary:**

To update the panel on progress made regarding the recommendations of the Business Support Task & Finish Group (Report dated October 2015)

**Recommendations:**

To note the update on progress made.

**Tracking**

Overview and Scrutiny:	19 <sup>th</sup> January 2017
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## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Environment & Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel previously commissioned a Task Group to look at Business Support as they had concerns about the provision in the District. The Task Group were asked to look at the roles of the different agencies and how they work in partnership. The Group presented their findings and recommendations at the Economy & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel in October 2015. The four recommendations of the Group were as follows:

### ***Recommendation 1: Audit of networks***

*An audit of the business support and business start-up networks, both formal and informal, should be undertaken. This audit will provide current content for a refresh of the business support pages on the new Carlisle.gov.uk website and help to ensure that the Council plays a role in signposting those looking for support. The monitoring of the performance of these pages will further aid the understanding of the need for business support in Carlisle.*

### ***Recommendation 2: Rebranding the Enterprise Centre***

*The Enterprise Centre is renamed and rebranded to represent its current use as managed workspace. The centre is no longer the epicentre of business support in Carlisle; it does however continue to offer a range of affordable workshops, studio and office units in a City Centre location. To continue to present the space as an Enterprise Centre risks ongoing confusion about its role in the business support offer available in Carlisle.*

### ***Recommendation 3(a)(b): Business support and devolution***

*(a) The group seek reassurance that any new deal that includes business support will be influenced by and therefore responsive to Carlisle's needs.*

*(b) The group seek reassurance that any new deal that includes business support will be structured in such a way to enable local scrutiny.*

### ***Recommendation 4: Communications and marketing strategy for business support***

*A communications and marketing strategy should be implemented to support all the recommendations adopted. This strategy needs to include key players such as the Job Centre, BIC, Growth Hub and banks.*

1.2 Implementation of the above recommendations was initially delayed for a number of reasons including:

- the December 2015 floods – all available resources to help flooded businesses were deployed, with Cumbria Chamber of Commerce and Growth Hub business advisors taking the lead in supporting the business community to apply for flood recovery and resilience grants and provide advice on getting back up and running efficiently. City Council officers supported these efforts as well as leading on directing and supporting businesses to alternative available premises to enable them to keep trading during this time;
- the key post tasked with taking forward these recommendations, the Economy & Enterprise Officer post, remained vacant until an appointment was made in April 2016. The post holder, Angela McDougall, being new to the role was afforded an appropriate induction period to get familiar with the role and responsibilities.

## **2. PROPOSALS**

### **Update Recommendation 1: Audit of networks**

2.1 Recommendation 1 states that an audit of business support and business start-up networks, both formal and informal should be undertaken to provide content for a refresh of the business support pages on the new Council website and to ensure that the Council plays a key role in signposting those looking for support.

2.2 Since moving into post in April, the Economy and Enterprise Officer has been actively engaging with local businesses and partners to reenergise contact and find out what support is on offer externally for businesses as well as how the Council can help to support them. This includes meeting with formal support networks such as: Cumbria Chamber to discuss the business support they offer; Federation of Small Businesses; and representatives from the Job Centre who outlined the support available to people looking to start their own business through the New Enterprise Allowance. Whilst informal networks are, by their nature, more difficult to identify, Carlisle Ambassadors has helped to contribute towards expanding business networks, highlighting the emphasis the Council places on business engagement and recognising the SME's as well as the large employers that contribute vitally towards the economy of Carlisle District. This networking opportunity instigated by the City Council provides a valuable platform for like-minded business owners and third sector partners to engage and forge links to enable future working.

- 2.3 Good progress has also been made with regards to the business website, [www.carlisle.gov.uk/carlisle-business](http://www.carlisle.gov.uk/carlisle-business) (Appendix 1, Figure 1 - landing page) which was launched in early 2016. Since April, the Economy & Enterprise Officer has continued to add content to the site which has a whole range of information for those currently located in Carlisle District as well as prospective employers looking to locate in the area. There is also a detailed section covering Business Support from the Council and our Partners which includes signposting to external support from the LEP, Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses and the University of Cumbria (Appendix 1, Figure 2 – partner support). The website has received 11,785 views between February 2016 and January 2017 with hits continuing to rise.
- 2.4 The website is also providing an up to date and easily updatable tool for signposting to funding opportunities or support available for businesses, for example, the latest news section draws attention to the latest advice and events etc. (Appendix 1, Figure 3 – Latest News). It also provides the opportunity for more informal business support to be highlighted, including for example work that Carlisle Library is undertaking with Google Digital Garage to help small businesses get online.

### **Update Recommendation 2: Rebranding the Enterprise Centre**

- 2.5 This recommendation is concerned with renaming and rebranding the Enterprise Centre (EC). The rationale behind this was that continued use of the name risked ongoing confusion about its role in the business support offer available in Carlisle. Whilst the proposal to rebrand the EC is theoretically sound, further exploration of the issue has indicated that practical implication could be complicated.
- 2.6 In terms of background, the EC comprises of 60 individual units which are made available for let on the open market, with no restrictions in terms of the size or age of business which can occupy them. Each of the units also has a unique postal address, within which explicit reference is made to the unit number and 'Carlisle Enterprise Centre' as a key component.
- 2.7 Discussions with existing business tenants at the Centre has highlighted that their address is regularly replicated on promotional and other business related material. For some their address is also that used with regards to their company house registration and other official purposes such as banking. Concerns were raised by tenants that any rebranding would give rise to a number of implications and 'burdens' including for example the rebranding and reprinting of their own materials,

livery, insignia etc. as well as updating details with suppliers, banks etc. Whilst the rationale for any rebranding was explained, tenants by in large sounded unconvinced that the inconvenience (for them) it would give rise to was truly necessary.

- 2.8 In terms of third party organisations it must also be recognised that any rebrand and consequential address change would have implications for established systems of billing and invoicing. This reflects that beyond a small number of exceptions the tenant for each unit is responsible for entering into a contract with an electricity provider of their choice. Tenants for each unit are also liable for a United Utilities commercial levy linked to water and drainage and beyond this business rates liability. From an administrative perspective the City Council already encounter problems with regards to the appropriate unit identification and any further change could risk amplifying this and undoing good work which has been undertaken to alleviate issues on this front.
- 2.9 It is therefore not considered prudent to progress a rebranding of the Centre at this time. Whilst it is accepted that the existing name can give rise to a degree of confusion, this problem is not of a scale which it is considered would robustly justify a rebranding at this time and the resources required to support this, including support for tenants. Clearly however this situation needs to and will be kept under review.
- 2.10 Rebranding aside the Enterprise Centre continues to attract interest from new and existing businesses, with a number of recent lets aided by enhanced marketing efforts which have sought to better utilise the Council's website and for the first time social media to promote opportunities at the Centre. The opportunity was also taken to advertise space at the Centre through an advert in Carlisle Focus resident's magazine which has also led to a number of what remain active enquiries. A key theme of this promotion has been making clear that the space is available for old and new businesses alike.

#### **Update Recommendation 3(a)(b): Business Support and Devolution**

- 2.11 This recommendation was forthcoming at a time when negotiations in relation to a devolution deal for Cumbria were at their most active. Given any devolution deal is now unlikely; no new deal for business support is likely to be forthcoming in the short term. Notwithstanding this the Executive have resolved, despite this matter being out with their hands, to endeavour to ensure scrutiny of any future new deal would occur.

- 2.12 In terms of the current arrangements two key strands of support are those delivered through the Chamber of Commerce as follows:
- The Growth Hub supports existing businesses looking to develop and grow through taking on staff or increasing sales and growing the business. Support on offer includes one-to-one time with a business adviser, access to online resources and portals, Cumbria Forum intensive development programme, Family Business network, free a match funded subsidy for specialist consultancy support and much more.
  - The BSUS programme gives free advice and training to anyone looking to start their own business or in the first three years of trading with support including one-to-one time with a business adviser, help with a business plan, a three day business training course and other free training, seminars and workshops. There is also a match funded subsidy for specialist consultancy support once the business is up and running, with any new business that starts as a result of support receiving a year's free Chamber membership.
- 2.13 Both of the above programmes are part funded through the European Regional Development Fund and are on the basis of match funding. Owing to a shortfall in match funding the Chamber have recently approached each of the Cumbrian Districts with a view to contributions to help address the shortfall. This potentially presents an opportunity to exert greater control over the allocation of this funding as well as putting in place robust arrangements for non-eligible sectors. Discussions with regards to Carlisle are ongoing.

#### **Update Recommendation 4: Communications and Marketing Strategy for Business Support**

- 2.14 As described above, the business website is vital in delivering an effective strategy. It provides advice regarding the support offered by Carlisle City Council in terms of the free use of the Carlisle Story branding and access to Carlisle Ambassadors and the range of associated benefits.
- 2.15 The site also signposts to our partners' support including Cumbria Business Growth Hub, Cumbria LEP, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses and the University of Cumbria. This enables users to directly access partner websites and receive the most up to date information on support and grants available. In addition to this, the Latest News section provides an opportunity for the Council to share funding opportunities, opportunities to exhibit products/services and details of relevant studies published that may be of interest.

2.16 As the website develops further, there is the opportunity to further enhance its content and ensure that it provides an effective service for people looking to grow their business, relocate their business or set up a business.

### **3. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 As highlighted within this report, good progress had been made to date in relation to the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group. The key thrust of the recommendations relate to business support, which is regularly evolving. As such, the valuable resource of the business website will allow all parties to remain up to date with what support is available.

3.2 Members of the Panel are asked to note the 2016 updates to the recommendations identified within the Business Support Task & Finish Group Report (October 2015).

### **4. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES**

4.1 The recommendations of the Task and Finish Group and the updates provided within this report contribute directly towards achieving the vision of the Carlisle Plan – ‘To improve the...economic prosperity of the people of Carlisle’, and its Priority ‘Support business growth and skills development to improve opportunities and economic prospects for the people of Carlisle’.

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**Economy & Enterprise Officer**

**Appendices** **Appendix 1: Carlisle City Council Business Website**  
**attached to report: Screenshot Examples**  
**Appendix 2: Business Support Task & Finish Group Report**

**Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:**

- **None**

**CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS/RISKS:**

**N/A**

**Appendix 1:** Carlisle City Council Business Website ([www.carlisle.gov.uk/carlisle-business](http://www.carlisle.gov.uk/carlisle-business)) Screenshot Examples

Figure 1

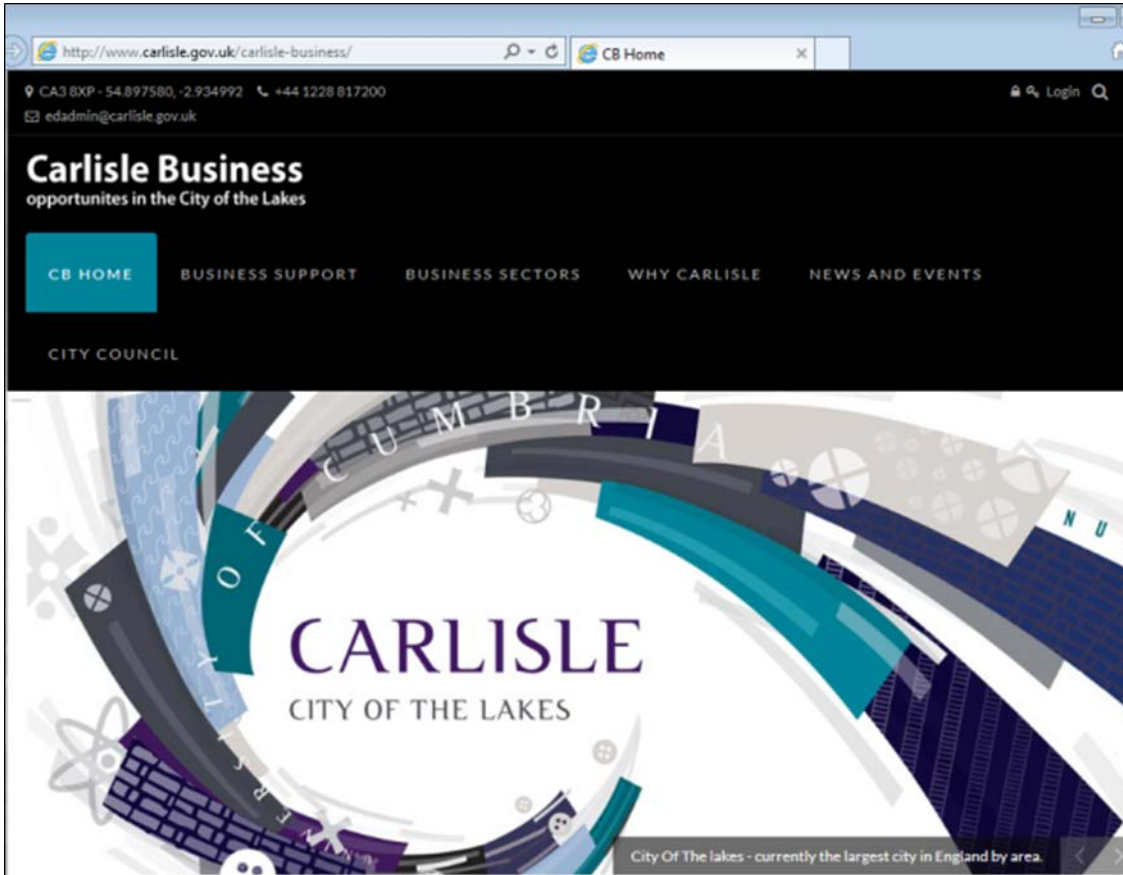




Figure 2

Partner Support

www.carlisle.gov.uk/carlisle-business/Business-Support/Partner-Support

CA3 8XP - 54.897580, -2.934992 +44 1228 817172  
edadmin@carlisle.gov.uk

## Carlisle Business

opportunities in the City of the Lakes

CB HOME BUSINESS SUPPORT BUSINESS SECTORS WHY CARLISLE NEWS AND EVENTS

ENTERPRISE ZONE

Different types of support is available to all businesses. Support could include recruitment and marketing, planning, growth, along with other options.

Cumbria Business Growth Hub  
Cumbria Business Growth Hub aims to help your business unleash its potential. A focal point for businesses looking to increase their Competitiveness and grow, it offers a great choice of advice, training networking and more, all tailored to your needs.

Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership  
Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership provides a strategic lead in all activities

Other pages in this section

- Space in Carlisle
- Our Business Support
- Partner Support
- Finance
- Procurement
- Property Search

Useful Links

Figure 3

Keep track of **events** and the latest **news** in Carlisle Business

Search

« January 2017 »

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5

Archive

- 2016, December (2)
- 2016, November (2)
- 2016, October (2)

**Are you a food and drink producer? Exhibit at this year's Local Food Show!**

AngelaM / 15 December 2016 0 14 Article rating: No rating ★★★★★

You are invited to exhibit at The Local Food Show. This event will give you an opportunity as a food and drink producer in Cumbria, Northumbria and South West Scotland to exhibit your produce to an audience of tourism, catering and hospitality professionals. Locally produced food is of such a high quality in our area it is important that local businesses and organisations are aware of the quality of produce on our doorstep. We have something proud to shout about.

The event will be held on 23rd March 2017 at H & H Exhibition Hall, Rosehill, Carlisle from 12noon to 5pm. The exhibition will be followed by a dinner. It's a fantastic opportunity to showcase your products to (local private and public sector buyers: from hotels, restaurants, cafes and retailers, to institutions and tourist establishments), network and celebrate our Local Food offer. A range of masterclasses will be offered on the day. Further details of these and booking arrangements will be disclosed nearer the event.

Please click [here](#) for more information or if you have questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact The Local Food Show on 07576 229773.

READ MORE

**Farm Productivity Call for Projects Launched!**

Are you involved in processing, marketing and/or development of agricultural products? A new funding opportunity may be available for you!