

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Economic and Community Development Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
MEETING DATE:	24 th May 2012
TITLE:	Future business support
WARD:	ALL
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	
List of attachments to this report:	

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 In November 2011, the regional Business Link programmes, operated by the Regional Development Agencies closed
- 1.2 Business Link was a free business advice and support service, available on line and through local advisors, to all businesses. In Bath and North East Somerset this was delivered by Business West through a contract worth approximately £6 million a year across the West of England
- 1.3 The offer included free one day start up awareness courses, 3 day start up workshops and 121 advice sessions as well as links into other programmes, such as support for High Growth potential companies
- 1.4 The regional Business Link service has been replaced by a national Business Link website. There is no Government funding currently available for free local business start-up support in Bath and North East Somerset
- 1.5 This report invites the panel to hear options for how support may be provided to people wanting to start in business in Bath and North East Somerset in the future

2 RECOMMENDATION

The panel is asked to agree that:

- 2.1 It receives and comments on a presentation setting out options for providing appropriate support to businesses in Bath and North East Somerset, in particular start ups

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Economic, Enterprise and Business Development Service Delivery Plan contains a small budget allocation to provide a limited business support start up service. There are no additional financial implications from this report.
- 3.2 A recommendation from the Panel to pursue any particular option in addition to the Service Delivery Plan does not cause a financial commitment for the Council to include the objectives within a Service Delivery Plan. Any decision to pursue an additional option will be taken by Cabinet and will follow the appropriate democratic procedure. Any potential new financial commitments will have to be met from savings elsewhere.

4 THE REPORT

- 4.1 The closure of the regional Business Link programmes means that there is no Government funded business start up support available in Bath and North East Somerset.
- 4.2 The panel will receive a presentation which sets out how businesses could be supported to start and grow, including through:
- (1) Promoting access to existing national and sub-regional programmes locally
 - (2) A limited start up service funded by Bath and North East Somerset Council
 - (3) Local business mentors and free professional business services sessions
 - (4) Accessible Co-Working space
 - (5) Support for sector networks

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations will be undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

6 EQUALITIES

- 6.1 Any business support offer will be promoted across all equality groups and specific targeting will be undertaken, where necessary, to ensure those groups and areas with particularly low business start-up rates are able to access appropriate support

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 *Cabinet Member; Strategic Director for Place; Section 151 Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer*

8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

- 8.1 *Sustainability; Human Resources; Property; Impact on Staff;*

9 ADVICE SOUGHT

9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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Background papers	
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	