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**CORPORATE SERVICES & PARTNERSHIPS
POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**

2009/10

REVIEW SCOPING REPORT

Proposed review title:

**THE SUPPORT THE COUNCIL & PARTNERS CAN GIVE TO SMALL AND
MEDIUM ENTERPRISES AND TOWN CENTRES (PARTICULARLY SMALL
SHOPS WITHIN PARADES) DURING THE PRESENT ECONOMIC
RECESSION**

Aim of the review

To review the support the Council provides to businesses, particularly SMEs and small shops within parades of shops within the Borough's district town centres and to look at other measures the Council and the Borough's Chambers of Commerce and other retail partnerships can take to help businesses.

Proposed outcome

A report summarising the Committee's findings would be completed and presented to the Council's Cabinet. The report will present recommendations on the measures and help the Council can give to the business community during the present economic climate.

Terms of reference

1. To look at the extent of the impact of the recession on local businesses (SMEs) by examining the data collected by Hillingdon Partners which contains information on some of the important indicators on the economy and the recession.
2. To examine the measures undertaken by the Council and its key Local Strategic Partners aimed at supporting local businesses and residents during the present economic climate and to look at other areas or measures the Council and its partners could be doing.
3. To examine the role of the various Chambers of Commerce and other retail partnerships within the Borough and what could the Council do to support them in their role of creating a cohesive business community in the Borough and helping the town centres in the Borough.

DRAFT

4. To examine and understand the planning, property and licensing policies, together with the application of business rates, which relate to town centres and businesses and to investigate where there is any scope to vary these policies to ensure the minimum of shop premises being vacant.
5. To examine the impact of the recession on the Industrial Units in the Borough and to look at what measures the Council could introduce to help these businesses.
6. To make recommendations from the above investigations, in relation to the support the Council can give to these businesses.

Reasons for the review

The world is presently in the grips of an economic recession which is having a major impact across the whole of society. The Council with its key strategic partners has a role to play in mitigating the impact of the recession on local businesses and ultimately the residents of the Borough. The Council needs to provide a strategic role to respond to the challenges brought on by the economic recession.

The Council and its key strategic partners have undertaken a wide range of measures aimed at supporting residents and businesses and this review will look to establish if there is anything more the Council and its strategic partners can do.

Particular emphasis of the review will be on SMEs and looking at measures the Council and its partners could introduce to ensure the business units across Hillingdon's smaller town centre areas are not left vacant which impacts on the local community.

Key issues

1. What is the extent of the impact of the present economic recession on the Borough's business community, particularly SMEs and businesses in the Borough's smaller town centre areas and in the business units of the Borough?
2. What measures are the Council and its key strategic partners performing for the business community during the recession?
3. What is the role of the Chambers of Commerce and other retail partnerships (e.g Uxbridge Initiative, Northwood Street Traders) in supporting the business community and what could the Council and its partners do to facilitate this support?
4. What flexibility is there in the planning, property and licensing policies and guidelines to help in the letting of empty business units/shops in the Borough's town centre district centres?

DRAFT

5. What is the situation with regard to the Borough's Industrial Units and what could the Council do to assist these businesses?
6. To gain a broad understanding of department wide activities of the Council which impact on local businesses
7. What role could Uxbridge College and Brunel University play in helping residents and businesses?

Methodology

A review of the relevant literature and websites.

Witness sessions to potentially include:

Ian Edwards and Nigel Cramb– Partnerships, Business and Community Engagement
Representatives of Hillingdon and Ruislip Manor Chambers of Commerce
Representatives of Uxbridge Initiative and Northwood Street Traders
Representative from Business Link
Jales Tippell – Head of Planning Policy
James Rodger – Head of Planning & Enforcement
Town Centre Managers??

Kevin Byrne – Head of Policy, LBH

Consideration of Economic Data, E.G. National Statistics, Confederation of British Industry, GLA etc

Economic Impacts Dashboard – **Appendix 1** – This document has gathered data from across the Council to track yearly and monthly changes and highlight potential economic impacts.

Stakeholders and consultation plan

As many stakeholders as possible would be invited to give evidence to the Committee in person. In addition to those outlined above, further stakeholders could be invited to give written evidence to the review. For example, the Council's Corporate Communications Team could be used to undertake consultations for the review. In addition the Council's website and/or *Hillingdon People* could be used to engage with stakeholders and to invite views on the review.

Connected work (recently completed, planned or ongoing)

In undertaking their work, the Committee will need to be aware of the work which is currently being undertaken with the Credit Crunch Group which is comprised of key Council services and key LSP partners. This group regularly meets and drives activity in response to the economic recession and ensures

DRAFT

the Council and partners are able to do everything possible to support residents and businesses.

The Credit Crunch Group, along with Hillingdon Partners Executive, maintains and overview of the key indicators of the impact of a recession using data from across the partnership. This 'Economic Impacts Dashboard' could provide the review with details of the full extent of the impact of the current recession.

Proposed timeframe & milestones

Meeting	Action	Comments
20 January 2010	Consider draft scoping report and to give consideration to the witnesses the Committee would like to invite to give evidence	Comment on the draft scope for the review and discuss preferred witnesses. Provide information on the 'Economic Impacts Dashboard', details of what the Council and its partners are presently doing for businesses and town centres
10 Feb 2010	First witness session	
17 March 2010	Second witness session	
21 April 2010	Third witness session	

Final report to be submitted to Cabinet in May/June 2010

Risk assessment

The Council not providing a strategic lead to businesses during the present economic climate would increase the risk to residents and businesses

Information Updates

Due to the present economic climate and its impact on businesses and residents in the Borough, it is important that the POC receive regular updates on the economic position out in the Borough. It is proposed that in addition to reports to the Policy Overview Committee, email bulletins will be sent to POC Members to keep them up to date on the current position.