Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee

14 April 2010

Minutes



| | Members Present: Councillors Richard Lewis (Chairman), Peter Kemp, Carol Melvin, Robin Sansarpuri and Michael White. |
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| | Apologies: Councillors Sid Garg and Liz Kemp (Peter Kemp substituting). |
| | Officers: Mark Braddock (Senior Democratic Services Manager), Helena Webster (Economic Development Manager – Deputy Chief Executive's Office), Lloyd White (Head of Democratic Services) and Khalid Ahmed (Democratic Services Manager). |
| | Witnesses: Rob Grover (Partnership Manager – Business Link for London) and Neil Impiazzi (Partnership Development Manager - SEGRO. |
| 63. | Declarations of Interest |
| | None. |
| 64. | Minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2010 |
| | Agreed as an accurate record. |
| 65. | Exclusion of the Press and Public |
| | It was agreed that all items of business were considered in public. |
| 66. | Second Major Review - Impact of Public Funded Business Support and the Success of New Business Start up Within Hillingdon and to Review How the Council could Improve Business to Business Support within the Borough's Industrial Estates |
| | Rob Grover – Partnership Manager, Business Link for London |
| | The review was provided with the following information: |
| | Business Link offers free, impartial advice and support service for London's small and medium sized |

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- Business Link received its funding from the London Development Agency and was delivered by Serco plc
- The role of Business Link was to help business start ups and established businesses survive, prosper and grow. This was achieved through the provision of high quality and practical advice and information as well as providing businesses with access to other sources of business support
- In the 12 month period from January 2009 to December 2009, over 3,600 Hillingdon based businesses were helped by Business Link. Support ranged from registering for the newsletter, making use of the on-line support tools, attending an information and networking event, through to receiving intensive personal assistance through a full Business Review
- 70% of businesses the organisation had worked with were micro-businesses but in the present economic climate, Business Link would be pushing to help more SME's, those employing 5+ staff which could grow, employ more staff etc
- Business Link provided introductory start up and business planning workshops. Once these had been attended and a business plan had been prepared they would be referred to the Business London Programme for further workshops and then if appropriate, intensive start up support
- Business Link actively filtered businesses to assess how serious businesses were. This would bring a higher success rate

The relationship with Chambers of Commerce was discussed and reference was made to a number of towns within the Borough that did not have a Chamber. The possibility of Business Link involvement in helping setting Chambers of Commerce up was discussed but Members were informed this would need investment

Discussion took place on the work that the London Development Agency commissioned and whether there were any opportunities for local authorities to influence or shape the nature of this work. An option could be for the Council to lobby the London Development Agency and Members agreed that this could be a recommendation of the review.

Members referred to Business Clubs which would facilitate business to business support, business discounts, collective purchasing of service and goods and possibly mentoring and support from larger businesses to smaller businesses. The Business Link representative explained that the organisation only worked with businesses with a maximum of 249

employees, but the concept of business clubs and mentoring | Action By: and support could be explored.

Members were reminded that a second facet of the review was looking at Industrial Estates and looking at how the Council and its partners could improve links with businesses. Particular interest was in relation to forming business clubs, business to business support and improving the profile of businesses on industrial estates. For the purpose of the review, focus would be on North Uxbridge Industrial Area which had 47 units and an employment number of over 2,000.

Neil Impiazzi - Partnership Development Manager of SEGRO

The review was provided with the following information:

- SEGRO was Europe's leading provider of flexible business space and operated from a network of 16 offices in 10 countries, serving businesses from start ups to global corporations
- On Slough Estate work had taken place with clusters of businesses and SEGRO were building effective relationships with businesses in these difficult economic times and keeping close to their customers
- SERGO had around 80 customers within Hillingdon, with premises ranging from sizes of 500 sq feet to 250,000 sq feet
- Customers in Hillingdon ranged from freight forwarders to aviation, manufacturing to wholesalers and IT to utilities
- Major challenges which faced customers included rent payments not being competitive in the current market. customers requiring less space to manage their liabilities, keeping down overhead costs and a lack of understanding of what support was available
- Engagement with customers was the focus at present, which was important as 40-50% of SERGO's business was repeat business
- Marketing was an issue for businesses and SERGO was looking at working in partnership with customers to provide this
- Building relationships with customers involved customer engagement programmes, a named contact for different issues, credit control, leasing and operations. The emphasis of the message was to change the dynamic from "tenant" to "customer"
- Work was currently taking place with 75 customers who had rent payment plans to help ease their cash flow problems and support the future survival of their businesses

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- The cluster working which had taken place resulted in a renegotiating of building insurance premiums which had resulted in a 20% saving for customers. In Slough, 30-40 businesses working in a cluster had produced savings from jointly purchasing stationery
- Work had taken place with Business Link to engage with industrial estate occupiers but they tended not to be the most interactive businesses
- 6 weekly business to business meetings took place with advisers who gave practical advice
- Events took place in which SERGO participated to help businesses
- Reference was made to the "Slough Aspire" initiative which was a joint venture with Slough Council and was one of the UK's most innovative skills, training and recruitment initiatives which would bridge the gap between employers on the Slough Trading Estate and training and education providers
- "Slough Aspire" would be developed alongside the Slough Estate wide development plan called "Vision for Slough", which would support the estate's regeneration
- SERGO would like to work in partnership with LBH with their businesses in the Borough
- SERGO would continue to drive down occupier cost and improve efficiency by providing the option of leasing office furniture, IT equipment etc. Also further cluster buying initiatives would be undertaken and there would be approved lists of electricians, plumbers. Reference was made to the possible creating of a Hillingdon First for Business card which could be created within Hillingdon.

Members noted the changing dynamic of SERGO from a landlord to a supplier and this approach was supported and seen as the way forward to support businesses.

Reference was made to the possibility of piloting North Uxbridge Industrial Estate with some of the initiatives which SERGO had already undertaken in Slough, particularly those relating to the formation of business clubs. It was agreed that a recommendation of the review would be to ask officers to explore a partnership with SEGRO on the North Uxbridge Industrial Estate to help businesses on this site. This would include using some of the initiatives used in Slough as well as the development of an estate web site for Business to Business marketing and for SEGRO to advertise rental opportunities.

Members expressed particular interest at the possible use of a Hillingdon First Business to Business card which could be used by businesses on Industrial Estates in the Borough. This would enable businesses to source goods and services locally as well

| | as providing discounts. Members asked that further investigations take place into this and it was agreed this would be a recommendation of the review. Discussion took place on the marketing of Industrial Estates and reference was made to promoting businesses through a website. This would prove an important marketing tool and would improve the profile of an Industrial Estate. Members agreed that this be a recommendation of the review and be worked on with SERGO for North Uxbridge Industrial Estate. The Chairman thanked the witnesses for attending the meeting and for sharing their views with Members. Resolved — 1. That the information provided by witnesses be noted | Action By: |
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| | and used to evidence the review's findings.2. That approval be given to the recommendations outlined above and from the last witness session and a draft of the review's final report be produced for the next meeting of this Committee (8 June 2010). | |
| 67. | Work programme 2009/10 Members noted the report and the cancellation of the meeting which had been scheduled for 21 April 2010. | |
| 68. | Cabinet Forward Plan – Democratic Services Restructure 12 months on Members were reminded that at a meeting of this Committee held on 21 January 2009 consideration had been given to a Cabinet report which provided details on the Service Review for the Deputy Chief Executive's and Finance and Resources Directorates. At this meeting Members had sought reassurance that the proposals for the restructure of the Democratic Services Section would not adversely on the quality of service provided to Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committees. | |
| | The Head of Democratic Services and the Senior Democratic Services Manager attended the meeting and circulated a report which provided Members with details on Democratic Services – One Year On, after the restructure. Details of the changes which took place, together with the successes were provided. The successes included increased staff productivity, an increase in Member satisfaction in the support given to Committees (88% of Members were very satisfied – Members Survey) and a positive resident feedback. | |

| staf con offic new Offi the Ref Ove of in targ inst Gro Cha thei perf Cor | c Chairman endorsed and gave his support to the current fing structure within Democratic Services but asked that sideration be given to including in this report, feedback from cers on their satisfaction with the new restructure and the working practices. cers were also asked to provide information to Members on number of completed Resident Feedback Forms for 2009. Gerence was made to the performance targets for Policy erview Committees and concern was expressed at the lack involvement of Policy Overview Chairmen in devising these gets. The Chairman asked that consideration be given to reating the Policy Overview Committee Chairmen Working oup meeting, to enable Policy Overview Committee airmen to monitor the performance of the support given to be formance targets which related to Policy Overview mittees for next Municipal Year. Solved — 1. That the Forward Plan for April to July 2010 be noted. | |
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| | That officers be asked to action the issues outlined above and to provide the information requested. | Lloyd White / Mark Braddock |
| | eting closed at 9.00pm kt meeting: 8 June 2010 at 7.30pm. | |

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Khalid Ahmed on 01895 250833. Circulation of these minutes are to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.