



North Area business support pilot



Kevin P Steel, Business Development Manager

Background and Introduction

Area Councils within BMBC are responsible for developing plans to improve services for local people and reviewing the way in which services are delivered at a local level. The North Area Council has identified economic regeneration as a priority for the area. Vibrant economies engender healthy communities where residents enjoy a high quality of life.

The North Area Council does not have the resources to address the development needs of all businesses that operate within the North Area. However, there is the aspiration to ensure that all businesses prosper with the aim of increasing trade in the area and creating vibrant commercial hubs at the centre of the community.

Following on from initial meetings in the Spring of 2016, Barnsley Business and Innovation Centre (BBIC) has been asked to quote for the delivery of a small pilot project to help ascertain the business development needs and requirements of the independent business community within the North Area, and identify any further development opportunities.

Identifying if there is an appetite (both a need and a want) for the provision of specific business support before committing to a larger scale project makes business sense. The North Area has already seen the success of pilot projects working well with their recent Community Support advice sessions project delivered in conjunction with Barnsley Citizens' Advice Service and DIAL now being accessed by over 800 people to date. (See Barnsley Chronicle 08.07.2016)

BBIC has significant and very successful experience of working on business support projects with both the South Area Council and with BMBC in recent years, more specifically on the delivery of the highly successful Smart-Start and Genesis business start-up programmes.

Kevin Steel the BBIC's Business Development Manager has recently worked on the Enterprising Barnsley programme providing a wide variety of brokered support into SMEs across retail, services and manufacturing. (see attached pdf for background)

Project Design.

Barnsley Business and Innovation Centre is proposing to ask local business owners and managers in the North Area for their input about the challenges their businesses are currently facing and what type and level of support they would like to receive. We will utilise our knowledge of the business support landscape to ensure a match between the envisaged problem and proposed solution. If the required support can be provided by a third party without the need for North Area Council involvement then we will signpost accordingly.

We plan on identifying these challenges and support requirements by carrying out both field and telephone based research from a diverse sample Micro-businesses (less than 50 employees) in the area.

Data from BMBC suggests that 232 new businesses started up in the North area in 2012. A useful starting point would be to establish if these new businesses are still trading, and if so, what are their current business support requirements to develop further?

We are proposing a series of telephone and/or face to face discussions with business owners in each ward in the early part of August 2016 across these four sectors of business.

- Retail
- Manufacturing
- Services
- Social Enterprises

Using a simple diagnostic form, a clear and concise picture will be built to help determine the type of support business owners and managers in the North Area feel would benefit them and the best way this could be delivered.

Our target for face to face calls is a minimum of five per day, this will be supplemented by telephone calls and emails both before and after where field visits are not possible. A core sample in the region of 25-35 businesses is anticipated to give us a fair reflection of feedback.

It is envisaged that not everyone will be prepared to divulge as much information as we would like but we will be asking businesses for:

- Name of business.
- Nature of business.
- Number of years trading.
- Number of employees.
- Current turnover. (Not essential)
- Are your premises leased or owned?
- Do you have a business plan?
- How do you market your business?
- What are your business goals?
- Have you previously had business support, if so what?

Ideally any recommendations for follow on business support funded by the North Area Council would be provided to businesses who haven't previously been eligible for support via the Enterprising Barnsley programme. This may be because the business was in an unsupported sector or were too small to qualify for support both then and now under the current Sheffield City Region Growth Hub.

It is likely that any follow on work would need to be put out to tender by the North Area Council.

Cost

It is envisaged that this project will require seven to eight days to complete. This is based upon:-

- Two days of desk top research and pre-planning including exploratory telephone calls to business owners;
- Four days of field based activity across four wards –pre-arranged meetings with business owners, and cold calls to collect relevant information;
- Up to two days to analyse the information collected and provide a report of the findings including recommendations for future support work.

A fixed price of **£2,250** (net of VAT) will be charged for this work.

An initial start date would be confirmed, but ideally we would like to start week commencing 8th August 2016 with an anticipated completion date and delivery of our report and findings by week commencing 29th August. Should desk top research suggest that we need to extend the completion date then we will seek permission from the North Area Council Manager. This is only likely if school holidays prevent the collection of enough information in the time available.

Kevin P Steel

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