
Urban Environment Scrutiny Committee, Thursday 12th December 2013

Report of the Lead Officer for the Directorate of the Urban Environment Scrutiny Committee

Support to Local Businesses (Area 2 – Business to Business)

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Committee Members with an overview of the findings of the TORCh Group (Action Learning Set 6) in order to support the scrutiny of *Support to Local Business* (Area 2 – Business to Business)

Background

2. On the 14th August 2013, the Working Group of this Committee endorsed the process for scrutinising the three sub-areas of ‘Support to Local Businesses’, namely:
 - Area 1: Dudley Business Loan Fund;
 - Area 2: Business to Business; and
 - Area 3: Dudley Business First initiative
3. Participants from the Council’s TORCh Programme have led a review of Area 2 (Business to Business) and prepared a list of recommendations and considerations to inform the scrutiny process. As agreed, the specific remit of the Torch Group has been:
 - (i) To scrutinise the effectiveness and local economic of the Dudley Business First Business to Business Portal on the Dudley Business First website; and
 - (ii) To agree practical recommendations and timescales for delivery to encourage and enable intercompany trading and promote opportunities to develop local supply networks across Dudley.
4. TORCh stands for **T**ransforming **O**rganisation, **R**eal **C**hange and is a Council-wide initiative introduced in January 2013 to develop talent management and leadership capacity and capability. A requirement of participants on the TORCh programme is to promote development opportunities through real and specific assignments. Six key project groups have been identified by the Council and allocated to participants on the Torch Programme. In addition to supporting local businesses other projects include commissioning, apprenticeships/work placements, employment deal, welfare reform and community engagement.
5. TORCh participants who have reviewed the area of support to local businesses and will present to this Committee are as follows:

Name	Directorate
Ian Gardner	Adult, Community and Housing Services
Wayne George	Urban Environment
Fay Hayward	Children's Services
Kimberley Rickards	Corporate Resources
Sam Webb	Corporate Resources
Project Sponsor /Assistant Director Ron Sims	Adult, Community and Housing Services

6. For clarity, Business to Businesses activity refers to business activities that are conducted **between companies** (namely, buyers and suppliers) rather than between a company and a consumer.

7. The review process undertaken by the TORCh Group has been guided by the definition above and comments raised by Members at the Working Group held on 14th August 2013. Further advice and guidance has been provided by the Group's allocated Project Sponsor, Ron Sims. To summarise, key point raised by Members in relation to Business to Business included:
 - Marketing and communications;
 - The current Business to Business landscape faced by local businesses (in particular, at a Black Country level);
 - Identification of best practise;
 - Feedback from existing users of the B2B portal;
 - Alternative branding other than B2B;
 - Recommendations on how to improve or develop existing provision;
 - Mechanisms (projects or policies) which could improve business to business activities; and
 - Current resources

8. The research undertaken by the TORCh Group has drawn of the following evidence:
 - Review of the latest Business Needs Survey;
 - Review of existing Business to Business Portals across the Black Country and at a national level;
 - Identification of best practise;
 - Feedback from local businesses;
 - Review of the Council's current Procurement Strategy (2009-2014);
 - Review of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012; and
 - Examples of business friendly practises.

Recommendations

9. A suite of recommendations and considerations have been identified by the TORCh Group and these will be presented to Scrutiny Committee.

Finance

10. The cost of operating the revised scrutiny arrangements is delivered within existing budgetary allocations.

Law

11. Scrutiny Committees are established in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 and the requirements of the Council's Constitution, which was adopted under the Local Government Act 2000, subsequent legislation and associated regulations and guidance.

Equality Impact

12. Provision exists within the recommended scrutiny arrangements for overview and scrutiny to be undertaken on the Council's policies on equality and diversity.

Recommendation

13. It is recommended that:-

Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the presentation by the TORCh Group.



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List of Background Papers

Urban Environment Scrutiny Committee Working Group (14th August 2013) Report of the Directorate of the Urban Environment Scrutiny Committee Lead Officer – Support to Local Businesses