

Committee(s): Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee	Date: 9 March 2022
Subject: Click It Local Extension	Wards Affected: All
Report of: Phil Drane, Corporate Director (Planning & Economy)	Public
Report Author/s: Name: Laurie Edmonds, Corporate Manager (Economic Development) Telephone: 01277 312500 E-mail: laurie.edmonds@brentwood.gov.uk	For Decision

Summary

In the face of lockdowns and restricted access to retail businesses during COVID-19, the council has signed up to the Click It Local platform to help generate sales for local retail businesses. This is in line with 2021-22 key objectives to encourage people to do business in the borough as part of the wider corporate priority to grow the economy. Click It Local allows customers to purchase from multiple independent businesses in one place, make one payment and have one consolidated delivery or collection. The platform is currently supporting 32 local independent businesses.

The contract with Click It Local ends in March 2022. This report provides an update on the impacts that the platform is having with regard to economic growth, as part of regular updates to the committee.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

R1. Endorse extending the council's Click It Local contract by six months.

Main Report

Introduction and Background

1. Throughout 2020, retail businesses saw their footfall severely impacted by COVID-19 regulations. In response to the changing shopping habits of local residents during the pandemic, the council sought a solution to enable local independent shops to be able to compete with the likes of Amazon on convenience and choice.

2. The council evaluated several “shop local” platforms, such as Click It Local, ShopAppy and Totally Locally. Click It Local was chosen as the preferred supplier for several reasons, including the ability to purchase from multiple independent businesses in one place, make one payment and have one consolidated delivery or collection – either on the same-day, next-day or a date of the customer’s choice.
3. Click It Local launched in the borough on 9 March 2021 as part of an initial 12-month contract.
4. The initial contract value totalled £35,000. The contract included:
 - a. Access to the Click It Local platform;
 - b. Four months of 0% store fee, 8 months of 7.5% store fee;
 - c. Onboarding of businesses, including shop site visits, uploading products and taking photos;
 - d. Delivery infrastructure;
 - e. Marketing and social media support for participating shops;
 - f. Dedicated area manager; and
 - g. Monthly reports.
5. Click It Local is promoting the platform through organic and paid social media, weekly newsletters, pay-per-click Google advertisement campaigns, window stickers and flyers for participating businesses, local PR in the Brentwood Gazette and other publications, paid advertising at Shenfield station and targeted door drop leaflet campaigns.
6. The council has provided further support by promoting through its own social media channels, placing banners on council property and putting a window display in an empty unit on Ongar Road. The Click It Local team had a complimentary stall at The Pop-Up Marketplace on 4 September and attended the 2021 Brentwood Business Showcase to hand out flyers.
7. In addition to Brentwood Borough, eight other Essex districts are signed up to Click It Local: Rochford, Chelmsford, Colchester, Epping Forest, Uttlesford, Braintree, Tendring and Maldon. Chelmsford, Colchester, Braintree, Tendring and Maldon have procured Click It Local through the North Essex Economic Board (NEEB).

8. Click It Local Brentwood currently has 32 businesses on the platform. Participating shops include a mix of high street retailers and home-based businesses.
9. As of 31 January 2022, Click It Local has generated £25,939 from 836 individual orders. Whilst the platform is not performing as well as we would like locally, we have seen comparison figures for Essex that show that we are third best performing area in terms of total sales.
10. The platform currently has a good mix of shops and products. The primary issue facing Click It Local is customer acquisition. Click It Local have trialled different approaches. Currently they are finding that discounts and free deliveries is the most effective method of generating site visits and sales.
11. Click It Local will be launching a crowd funding campaign this spring to raise funds to make further improvements to the platform, including the creation of an app.

Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

12. The current Click It Local Brentwood contract comes to an end on 8 March 2022.
13. The North Essex Economic Board contract comes to an end in September 2022.
14. The council has two options:
 - a. Renew the Click It Local Brentwood contract for an additional six months for £15,000; or
 - b. Not renew the contract. The platform would still be active but with no local door-to-door deliveries and no direct support from the area manager.
15. As part of their COVID “shop local” support for districts, Essex County Council has ringfenced £15,000 for Brentwood Borough Council to support the extension of the Click It Local contract for six months. This pledge to extend Click It Local contracts has also been made to other districts, such as Rochford District Council.

Reasons for Recommendation

16. It is recommended that the Click It Local Brentwood contract be renewed for an additional six months. With the funding from Essex County Council, the extension is risk free. The council will continue to work with Click It Local to help them onboard more businesses, support existing participating shops and develop a higher customer profile in the community.
17. A six-month extension will bring the council's contract into line with Rochford District Council and the North Essex Economic Board, ensuring that our businesses are receiving the same support as neighbouring authorities. Updates on the performance of Click It Local in Brentwood will be brought to the committee in future to inform decisions about the contract beyond six-months.

Consultation

18. None.

References to Corporate Plan

19. Supporting high street businesses across the borough through the Click It Local platform meets the key priority of "growing our economy". 2021-22 key objectives were set to implement a marketing strategy for our local centres as part of reviving the Discover Brentwood brand through encouraging people to visit and do business in the borough, and implementing a 'shop local' scheme. The Click It Local platform contributes to these objectives being accessed online through the Discover Brentwood website and contributing to wider efforts to support local businesses.

Implications

Financial Implications

Name/Title: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Corporate Director (Finance & Resources)

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20. The cost of running the Click It Local platform in the borough has been met from the Economic Development budget, including funding of initiatives to increase spending in high street retailers and home-based businesses. There are no financial implications from the recommendation to extend the contract by six months because of the ringfencing of funds by Essex County Council as part of their COVID "shop local" support for districts.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Amanda Julian, Corporate Director (Law & Governance) and Monitoring Officer

Tel & Email: 01277 312705/amanda.julian@brentwood.gov.uk

21. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Economic Implications

Name/Title: Phil Drane, Corporate Director (Planning and Economy)

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22. Economic implications are contained within this report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

Name/Title: Kim Anderson, Partnerships, Leisure & Funding Manager

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23. The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
- b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- c. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

24. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for b. or c., although it is relevant for a.

25. The proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

None

Background Papers

- Item 288, Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee, Economic Development Work Programme 2021-2025, 2 February 2022
- Item 194, Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee, Economic Development Strategy 2021-2025, 24 November 2021

Appendices to this report

None