

**15 October 2014**

**Business & Town Centres Committee**

**Business Directory Update**

**Report of:** *Anne Knight, Economic Development Manager*

**Wards Affected:** *All*

**This report is:** *Public*

**1. Executive Summary**

1.1 This report provides an update on the Business Directory project.

**2. Recommendation(s)**

**2.1 It is recommended that Members agree to support the development of a comprehensive business directory for the Borough.**

**3. Introduction and Background**

3.1 In order to support businesses and progress the Economic Development (ED) agenda it is important to have a business directory for the borough and to know who our businesses are so that we can engage and communicate with them effectively. The last listing was undertaken as a hard copy directory in 2008 and is out of date.

3.2 Following extensive research on various options for undertaking this work, Pro-actions Ltd were commissioned to compile an online business listing utilising a CRM database to capture the business contact information. Due to budget, it was agreed that half of the borough's businesses (2,500) in the borough as listed by Companies House would be approached for the first part of this work, and the remainder would be completed in 2015/16. The businesses were contacted via telephone to secure the necessary information including key contact person and email address.

3.3 This database can be updated and used as a tool to help manage our relationships with businesses by allowing us to record our discussions and work with them. It will enable better business engagement supporting the Council to communicate business events, training, funding opportunities, advice and initiatives they would be interested in. It will enable us to filter businesses by size, sector and location as required to support the

different ED and Town Centre projects that we wish to deliver. It is a key tool in allowing us to engage with businesses and support them.

- 3.4 Subject to budget, it is proposed that this exercise is repeated in 2015/6 to secure information on the remainder of the businesses in the borough.

#### **4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 4.1 Significant research was undertaken on the different delivery options to implement this project including the use of other providers e.g. Breeze, Burrows, use of internal revenues and benefits database. After careful consideration and debate it was agreed that Pro-Actions should be commissioned. The cost of the first part of the work (2,500 businesses) is £7,250. The estimated cost for the remainder of the work in 2015/16 is £8,000.

#### **5. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 5.1 To ensure a comprehensive business directory for the borough to enable business engagement and to support key initiatives within the ED Strategy.

#### **6. Consultation**

- 6.1 This is a key project within the Draft ED Strategy Action Plan which has successfully undergone public consultation.

#### **7. References to Corporate Plan**

- 7.1 Economic Development is a key priority to support the delivery of the Corporate Plan priorities of sustainable economic development, promoting a mixed economic base across the Borough, maximising opportunities for retail and a balance night time economy. This includes:
- Facilitating the creation of new businesses
  - Assisting in the provision of advice and guidance for local businesses
  - Working in partnership with the business community and support agencies
  - Seeking inward investment into the Borough
  - Assisting the SE LEP and Heart of Essex Partnership to secure projects and funding to benefit the Brentwood economy

## 8. Implications

### Financial Implications

**Name & Title:** Jo-Anne Ireland, Acting Chief Executive

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- 8.1 The cost of completing the first part of the development of the business directory in 2014/15 is £7,250 which has been met from the 2014/15 ED budget and the cost for completing the directory from the 2015/16 ED budget is estimated to be £8,000.

### Legal Implications

**Name & Title:** Christopher Potter, Monitoring Officer

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- 8.2 None

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

- 8.3 None

## 9. Background Papers

- 9.1 None

## 10. Appendices to this report

- 10.1 None

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