

26 March 2015

Business & Town Centres Committee

Future Development of the Brentwood Business Directory

Report of: *Business Directory Task & Finish Group*

Wards Affected: *All*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following the 16 December 2014 Business & Town Centres Committee, a Task & Finish Group was established to review the options for the future development of the Brentwood Business Directory (BBD) to ensure that it is comprehensive and inclusive of businesses across the Borough. The Group was chaired by Cllr Keeble, and included Cllr Hossack, Cllr Newbury, Anne Knight, Elaine Richardson and Susan Adetiloye.
- 1.2 This report outlines the progress to date of the Business Directory and considers the different options for the future development of the Directory.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 **That Members support Option 4b to develop the Brentwood Business Directory.**
- 2.2 **That Members agree that £2,500 of the £6,000 2014/5 budget earmarked for this project is carried forward to the 2015/6 Economic Development budget to enable option 4b to be implemented and to pay for Zoho subscription for an initial two years (2015/6 and 2016/7)**
- 2.3 **That Members support the need and 2015/6 budget request for an ED Apprentice to undertake the maintenance of the Directory as part of their role for 2015/6**

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 Business Directory is an online

listing or database containing company names, sectors, addresses, key contacts, telephone numbers and emails with functionality to interrogate and analyse the data that is necessary to support Economic Development thematic and geographic focused projects and initiatives and to enable us to campaign and communicate with the businesses regarding business support and events.

- 3.2 To date the Business Directory has proved an effective tool in issuing campaigns to invite businesses to the following:
- A Brentwood Funding and Advice Event
 - A Social Media and Marketing Seminar
 - A Business Planning seminar
 - The William Hunter Way Consultation
 - A Business Planning Workshop and
 - A Business Speed Networking Event.
- 3.3 The BBD is also increasingly being requested as a corporate tool by teams across the Council to communicate their offer and services to businesses e.g. Health & Safety Guidance, Planning Consultations and Business Rates.

Progress to date

- 3.4 Pro-actions Ltd were commissioned during the summer of 2014 to compile a business directory utilising a free online CRM database called Zoho to capture the business contact information and in particular email addresses to allow us to send out invites and communicate with businesses.
- 3.5 Due to budget, it was agreed that just under 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 (3,500) would be completed in a second phase. The businesses were contacted via telephone to secure the necessary information. Pro-actions were successful in securing 1186 email addresses. The cost of phase one of the Directory was £6,150 with the majority of this attributed to the telephony exercise to validate the record; confirm the company was happy to be on the Directory and to secure their email address.
- 3.6 To assist with maximising the benefits of the Directory, the ED Team is fortunate to have secured a graduate intern, Susan Adetiloye, for three months (subsidised by the University of Essex) to work on the existing Directory and assist with Business Support Initiatives. Susan is currently assisting with converting leads into contacts after each business event; monitoring the metrics from event campaigns utilizing Zoho Campaigner and the booking system used e.g. Eventbrite; ensuring a monthly back up

of the data on the Directory, undertaking further data cleansing, compiling e-business newsletter and working on our business events.

Future Development of the Business Directory

- 3.7 Following recommendation from the December Committee, a Business Directory Task and Finish Group met in early February 2015 to review phase one of the Directory and discuss the possible options for its future development. It was agreed that to ensure a complete and comprehensive Business Directory for the Borough, a second and final phase of the development is now required. Research has been undertaken into the possible options and these are outlined below, including any resource implications. These options have been considered by the Task & Finish Group and a preferred option is now proposed in the recommendations of this report.

4. Options

Option 1 - Do nothing

- 4.1 If no further development is undertaken, the Directory will remain incomplete representing just under half of the businesses in the Borough registered with Company's House. As a tool it will not provide an inclusive approach to managing relationships and communicating with all of the Borough's businesses and will limit the extent to which we can promote the business support available. It also does not allow us to utilise the Directory in a comprehensive way for data analysis e.g. by sector or geography, which is important to support and implement a range of future ED projects and initiatives and also Corporate communications with businesses.
- 4.2 This option will still require on-going staff resources to maintain and promote the existing Directory to support ED work in particular the business support events. This is estimated to be at least one day a week. The ED team have submitted a request for an ED Apprentice to be funded from next year's (2015/6) budget to fulfil this function as part of their role and currently await the outcome of this request.

Option 2 - Corporate Customer Relationship Management System (CRM)

- 4.3 The option of developing a Corporate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system for businesses and residents for the Borough has been discussed with the ICT Manager and the Business Development

Manager. This would allow the Council to manage its relationships with residents and businesses and the data and information associated with them. A Corporate CRM could also include a “my account” function to allow each customer (resident and business) to update and access an individual online account which would deal with and record all communication and relationships they may have with the Council. Although a Corporate CRM is viewed as the most desired solution, it would also be the most expensive (estimated £0.8m - £1.3m for a full solution) and current budgetary restraints for the Council restrict this option.

Option 3 - Develop In-House Directory

- 4.4 The option of the Council’s ICT team developing a bespoke in-house directory has been discussed with the Business Development Manager. This would require the ability to transfer the data we currently hold on Zoho into the new system; ensuring functions exist to be able to interrogate the data by geography and sector and to add details of contacts/relationships made with each business and to allow a campaigner tool with the Directory to send out invitations to businesses for events and communicate with them on key ED projects. There is currently limited resource within the ICT team to undertake this work, which is estimated to cost in the region of £30,000 to £45,000, so this option would require an additional budget to be allocated by the Council in 2015/6 to enable ICT to develop the Directory.

Option 4 - Purchase additional data and continue to utilise Zoho CRM to develop the Directory

- 4.5 The data from phase one of the Directory is held on Zoho CRM. Zoho, is a widely used and industrial strength application, that is a Software as a Service (SaaS) solution that delivers CRM functionality. With Zoho CRM you can manage all Customer Contacts and Marketing within in a single business system. Zoho Campaigns is currently being used alongside our Zoho CRM to send out the invitations to business events and communications with business. We currently utilise the free version of Zoho CRM and Zoho Campaigns but there are options to subscribe on a monthly basis (£8 to £17 per month; £96 to £204 per annum) to allow further functionality of the system and manipulation of data.
- 4.6 In order to complete the Business Directory utilising Zoho, we would need to purchase the remaining 3,500 company records from a preferred data supplier, and upload this on to the existing Zoho CRM (estimated cost of £1,000 – £1,500). We would need to pay an annual Zoho subscription of

approximately £200 to enable the upload of additional records and better functionality. Finally we would need each business to be telephoned to secure their agreement to be included on the Directory; check their details and secure their email address. This could be undertaken either by:

- 4.7 **Option 4a** - an external telemarketing company (quotes received between £4,500-£20,000) OR
- 4.8 **Option 4b** - by utilising existing in-house resource of the Council's Customer Contact Centre. Discussions have been held with the Head of Customer Service and the Manager of the Contact Centre who have suggested that up to 5 staff could undertake this work and estimated it could take up to 4 months if carried out part-time.

The following table summarises the different options outlined above for developing the Business Directory:

Activity	Option 1 Do nothing	Option 2 Corporate CRM	Option 3 In-house Directory	Option 4 (a) Zoho & external resource	Option 4 (b) Zoho & internal resource
Benefits	None, Incomplete Directory, Will limit ED and business support work	Corporate wide customer relationship management tool for residents & businesses	Bespoke business directory and campaigner owned by Council	Builds on existing, successful, online, free CRM and Campaigner system	Builds on existing, successful, online, free CRM and Campaigner system
Development Cost		Estimated in the region of between £0.8-£1.3m	Estimated in the region of between £30,000-£40,000	Additional data purchase and upload (£1,000-£1,500) Telemarketing (£4,500 upwards)	Additional data purchase and upload (£1,000-£1,500) Utilise in-house resource of Customer Contact Team
On-going cost	Minimum 1-2 days a week of ED staff/apprentice resource to utilize existing system	ICT resource and maintenance	ICT resource and maintenance	£200 per annum Zoho subscription Minimum 1-2 days a week of ED staff/apprentice resource to	£200 per annum Zoho subscription Minimum 1-2 days a week of ED staff/apprentice resource to

				utilize existing system	utilize existing system
Timescale	On-going	1-2 years	1 year	2-4 months	4 months
Summary	Least preferred option	Most ideal option but restricted by budget constraint	Possible option but costly	Second preferred option	Preferred option

Maintenance & Security of Business Directory

- 4.9 For option 1, 4a and 4b, the Business Directory would be maintained by the Economic Development Team who would review the data regularly to maintain a comprehensive directory as possible. Email campaigns and Zoho analytics would be utilised to continue to ensure the Directory has up to date data records. Technical assistance with regards to using the Directory and its associated campaigning tool would be provided via our annual subscription with Zoho and where necessary technical IT support sought from the Council's ICT team. For option 2 and 3, the maintenance of the system would be by ICT and/or any contract they had with the supplier of a Corporate CRM.
- 4.10 Zoho's security is governed by UK Data Protection which ensures that as a user, the Council is within the USA Safe Harbor Scheme. Zoho's privacy policy is compliant with this scheme. Zoho adopts industry appropriate data collection, storage and processing practices and security measures, as well as physical measures to protect against unauthorised access, alteration, disclosure or destruction of personal information, username, password, transaction information and data stored. Access to names and email addresses is restricted to Zoho employees who need to know such information in connection with providing Zoho services and are bound by confidentiality obligations.

5. Reason for Recommendation

- 5.1 The preferred option to ensure a comprehensive business directory for the borough to enable business engagement and to support key initiatives within the ED Strategy is option 4b. This option will continue to utilise Zoho, buy the additional data and undertake the telemarketing exercise in-house via the Council's Customer Contact Team. It is the preferred option because it is the most cost-effective yet fit for purpose method for the Council to ensure a comprehensive Business Directory for the Borough during a period of financial constraints.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 This project supports the delivery of the business competitiveness priority of the Economic Development Strategy which has successfully undergone public consultation.
- 6.2 Various officers and a Task and Finish Group have discussed and considered the options for the future development of the Business Directory.

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

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The first phase of the Brentwood Business Directory cost £6,150. A potential indicative budget of up to £6,000 has been ring-fenced within the 2014/15 Economic Development budget to support further work on this project if required. The recommendation of this report is requesting that £2,500 of the £6,000 earmarked in the 2014/5 budget is carried forward to the 2015/6 ED budget to enable this project to proceed and to subscribe to Zoho for the initial two years (2015/6-2017/8)

Legal Implications

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- 8.1 None.

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

8.2 ICT team's expertise will be sought throughout the further development of the Business Directory project. The Customer Contact Centre has agreed to undertake the tele-marketing part of this project.

9. **Background Papers** (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

9.1 None

10. **Appendices to this report**

10.1 None

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