

**NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL  
REPORT**

<b>To:</b> POLICY & RESOURCES (REGENERATION & INFRASTRUCTURE) SUB COMMITTEE		<b>Subject:</b> Business Engagement
<b>From:</b> EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES		
<b>Date:</b> 16 May 2013	<b>Rep:</b> 1726/GR	

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This purpose of this report is to outline the marketing plans for the Council's Youth Investment Programme (YIP) and other business support services and seek support for the approach being developed.

**2. Our Business Targets**

- 2.1 In 2013/14, the Council has a target to support 600 business start-ups each year and a further 900 existing SMEs through support via the Business Gateway contract, and Council employability and business support services.

- 2.2 Specifically with regard to North Lanarkshire's Working, including the Youth Investment Programme, the programme compares well in scale to Glasgow's Commonwealth initiative which has been established for 3 years. We are on target to achieve our goal of supporting 5,000 unemployed into work over 3 years. To date, 500 businesses have signed up for YIP and we have a target to engage with a further 200 businesses in 13/14. We expect to achieve all our targets this year and our focus should be on building on our success and strengths to improve take up and success year on year.

- 2.3 Business start-up services and advisory support to small to medium sized businesses are delivered primarily through the Lanarkshire Business Gateway contract and augmented through business support programmes and sectoral development led by the Business Services team within Regeneration and Infrastructure services. The responsibility for marketing of the Business Gateway service is with a team based within the Business Gateway National Unit in COSLA. A new marketing plan is being produced that should reflect an increasing desire to see more effective national marketing and increased local marketing campaigns and resources. We have also agreed to invest additional local money in marketing and plans for this are being developed.

**3. Marketing to Businesses**

- 3.1 Despite being on track to deliver on very ambitious targets, businesses do report being confused and not knowing what support is available to assist them to set-up and grow. This was the feedback given by a couple of businesses at recent events during Lanarkshire Business Week. There are a multitude of agencies and projects that target businesses and it is often a confusing market place for businesses. This results in some businesses "switching off" and they often do not listen to messages or get confused about the "offer". In

response to feedback received this service is assessing our approach and indentifying areas for improvement.

- 3.2 Within North Lanarkshire, we have a strong public sector partnership in place and our objective is always to work with relevant agencies to try to provide a joined up service offer for business. However, there are other private sector training, business support and employability service providers who are operating in a free market and will be competing for business which can add to confusion.
- 3.3 This can also be true with other parts of the Council that are out in local businesses every day delivering services and regulatory functions. We need to maximise referrals for YIP and business support services amongst relevant Council services, licensing, planning, environmental health, business rates, etc, as well as generating referrals from other agencies that work with local business.
- 3.4 However, given the limited resources available, it should be noted that not every business is eligible for all elements of our business support services and there is a danger in putting out a message that raises expectations that cannot be met. Blanket campaigns and messages that one size fits all do not always generate the best enquiries. We want to work strategically with those businesses that offer the greatest opportunities for sustainable jobs within our communities. We need to look at those sectors which are assessed to provide the greatest opportunity for growth and we need to develop links to the key employers within those sectors.
- 3.5 The service also needs to manage demand levels in line with our resources and that is why we have allocated officers to specialise in certain sectors and build relationships with those key employers.
- 3.6 In summary:
  - Confusion among businesses is both a local and national issue
  - We need to work in partnership with other parts of the Council and other agencies that work with business in order to generate business referrals
  - A one size fits all type of approach can generate the wrong enquiries
  - A targeted approach will allow us to work with those businesses that have the greatest opportunities of growth

#### **4. Raising awareness amongst local business to generate 200 new employers**

- 4.1 This is a very ambitious target, and is in addition to the 350 businesses that have already created opportunities through the YIP and who may continue to recruit through YIP. We will do this by continuing our advertising campaigns aimed at employers (radio, public transport, roundabouts, etc). Our Autumn/Winter campaign resulted in 1000 hits and 62 direct enquiries.
- 4.2 We will continue to target specific sectors that are growing and can offer the most sustainable employment for young people. We will do this mainly through closely targeted events, direct mail and follow up contact such as the sector specific breakfast briefings held during 2012/13.
- 4.3 We have secured and agreed an advert to be included in all the non-domestic rate notices that go out in April 2013. This will be sent to 6,000 non domestic rate payers. We will monitor the response to this.
- 4.4 The service will seek to increase its PR activity and would like to see more local and national coverage on what North Lanarkshire Council is delivering and achieving, and see

this as offering the greatest potential. A new PR plan is being developed that will set out how this can be achieved.

4.5 The success of the first year of YIP will be highlighted at a conference at Motherwell Concert Hall on 16 May 2013. The Minister for Local Government, Derek McKay will deliver the keynote address and will be joined by over 200 delegates. The conference should attract additional positive publicity for the services offered.

## **5. Increasing the number of business referrals from partners other organisations, and Council services that deal with business**

5.1 Services such as banks, accountants, other Council services, Scottish Enterprise, Chamber of Commerce, and Federation of Small Businesses deal with businesses every day. We need to target these intermediaries and increase their awareness of the services and support available so that they can refer appropriate businesses. We will do this through a series of events and presentations.

5.2 Lanarkshire Business Week has just completed its 2<sup>nd</sup> year. This year we had 30 free events take place, 474 people attended the Lanarkshire Business Show, 400 attended the Business Awards Dinner and we had good coverage in the Herald before and during the week. We are currently surveying 500 participants from various events across the week and will use this data to evaluate and plan next year's Lanarkshire Business Week. This will remain a key part of our marketing strategy and supports our joint working with partners and presenting a joined up approach to business.

5.3 We will continue to work with Council departments and other public sector bodies to achieve community benefits from procurement. We have completed new guidance for services and impressed on the need to agree community benefits early on in the procurement planning process. There will be other suppliers that the Council work with who are not bound by community benefit clauses in contracts but are local companies that could be referred. However, it needs also to be recognised that our priority is to secure sustainable jobs and that may not be best achieved with some Council suppliers that are experiencing reductions in contract value due to overall fall in budgets.

## **6. Increasing the number of business to business referrals**

6.1 Word of mouth among the business community is the most effective endorsement of our services. That is why we have created the Ambassador programme as part of YIP so that businesses can speak first hand about the benefits that the programme has delivered for them. We will use the Ambassadors at our events and in our PR activity.

## **7. Conclusions**

7.1 We will continue to build on the success of our marketing campaigns to date that helped us achieve good first year results for the YIP, and to influence local and national marketing of the Business Gateway contract. We do recognise the need to address any confusion and low awareness perceptions and we think this is best done by targeting businesses directly, targeting their advisors and intermediaries and by using other businesses to sell the benefits.

7.2 Our approach will include:

- Advertising campaigns
- A new six-month PR campaign
- Industry networks
- Ambassadors
- Sector events

- Cold call/direct mail marketing
- A new email marketing campaign
- Advert in the letters with all the non domestic rates notices
- Leaflets
- Officer networking
- Partner and Council Service referrals
- Social Media
- Procurement

7.3 We will review results every month and quarter, and our marketing plans will adjust according to what brings us the strongest results.

## 8. Recommendations

8.1 It is recommended that the committee notes the content of this report and approves the marketing plans as outlined.



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Local Government Access to Information Act: for further information please contact Caitriona McAuley Regeneration and Infrastructure Services at Tel 01698 302282