

AGENDA ITEM NO.1.....

To: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE		Subject: REVIEW OF BUSINESS FOCUS
From: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT		
Date: 24 August 2000	Ref: LM/REP726	

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consult the elected members on the proposed changes to "Business Focus", the newsletter of the Economic Development Unit and to invite comments relating to this review of the publication.

2 Background

- 2.1 "*Business Focus*" is the public face of the Economic Development Unit. It has been in existence for four years and acts as the main interface between the Council and the local business community. The aim of the publication is to serve as a promotional vehicle, providing up to date information and advice on the services, programmes and training initiatives offered by NLC to the local business community. After 40 issues the publication has become well established and has achieved a reasonable degree of readership satisfaction.
- 2.2 Owing to staffing restrictions within the EDU over the last 12 months, the publication had been edited by an external agency – Infoserve – at some considerable expense to EDU. This contract has now expired and the Marketing Team has taken this opportunity to review both the design and content of the publication. It is hoped that this review will also serve to identify how the publication could be produced in a more time efficient manner, in particular with shorter lead times between the various production stages.
- 2.3 The EDU also produced a quarterly newsletter "Tourism Matters" aimed at the tourism sector in North Lanarkshire. There are approximately 500 tourism related businesses in North Lanarkshire, all of whom receive "Tourism Matters" and "Business Focus" on a regular basis. The review of Business Focus also considered the duplication of articles between the two publications and aimed to achieve a more effective use of resources for the Tourism Matters readership. As a result, the last issue of "Tourism Matters" was produced in Spring 2000 and future tourism news and features will be integrated as part of the new "Business Focus" publication.

3 Business Focus Present Production

- 3.1 Publication: 8 pages, full colour
 Print Run: 6000 copies
 Frequency: 1 per month approx. – 10 per year
 Distribution: To a database of local businesses (approx. 4000) and other individual contacts
 Target Market: Local Business Community within North Lanarkshire

4. Cost Analysis (April 1999 – March 2000)

NB. these figure exclude the monthly fees paid to Infoserve to edit this publication on behalf of NLC.

Total cost of printing [incl. distribution] (6000 copies)	£26,631.75
Total cost of distribution only (4200 copies)	£7974.01
Average cost per issue (Based on 10 issues p.a.)	£2663.18
Average cost per copy (Based on 6000 copies)	44 pence

4.1 Time Commitment (April 1999 – March 2000)

Total EDU staff commitment (10 issues)	269 hours
Average commitment per issue	26.9 hours
Total EDU staffing cost	£5052.10
Average EDU Staff cost per issue	£505.21
Infoserve commitment per issue	42 hours
Total average time commitment per issue	68.9 hours

4.2 The time commitment required to produce an issue of *Business Focus* is higher than would be expected but can be attributed to a duplication of efforts on the part of EDU staff to ensure that Infoserve delivered the standard of material required. This illustrates that there is no time saving to be made by contracting out the publication.

5 Content

5.1 There are a number of regular features in each issue including:

- The Harry Conroy Interview
- Ian Watson financial feature
- The Bigger Picture with Maurice Smith
- The Hot Seat Interview with a local business personality
- International Trade Update



5.2 In addition to these features, the publication regularly carries articles about new inward investment developments, the advancement of local businesses, (particularly those which have received funding / assistance through one of the NLC schemes), the promotion of industry related events and relevant changes to employment legislation and regulations.

5.3 Following close analysis of the content matter of 10 consecutive issues of *Business Focus*, it would appear that the publication is failing to achieve its key objective ie. to act as a main promotional vehicle for the services of EDU. Over the last 10 issues of *Business Focus* only 10.25 pages were directly given over to the promotion of our own products and services – which averages at just over 1 page per issue, or 12.5% coverage per issue. (Based on the whole 8 pages of the publication).

6 Conclusion

6.1 *Business Focus* is a quality, respected publication and has become well established within the local business community. However, change is necessary in order to maintain the position the publication presently has, but more importantly, it has to be reviewed in order to give more exposure for the EDU and the programmes and services provided by NLC.

6.2 It has been acknowledged that a radical change of format may have cost implications...

Increased Pages  Heavier Publication  Higher Distribution Costs

And there may also be cost benefits....

Fewer Issues  Lower Distribution Costs

Whilst it is recognised that a more commercial approach to the production of Business Focus would be desirable, it should not be to the detriment of the publication or profile of NLC.

7 Publication Proposals

7.1 The review of "Business Focus" has resulted in a number of proposed changes:

- Reduce number of issues produced, bi-monthly – approximately 6 issues per year, but with a flexible schedule. (This recommendation goes against the findings of the last reader survey in which 84% felt that the frequency was about right [10 issues per year] but will serve to create a more substantial publication and will also minimise internal workload problems)
- Increase the number of pages from 8 to 12 and retain the A4 format.
- Maximise coverage given over to NLC services - particularly those of the Department of Planning & Environment (69% of responses from the last reader survey (1998) indicated that readers wanted more features on the services and activities of NLC-EDU)
- Introduction of new regular features including Town Centres and Tourism.

8 Recommendation

It is recommended that the committee note the content of this report and approve the proposed changes to the publication following the review.



David M Porch
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

Date of Report 26th July 2000

For further information please contact Lynne Milne, Marketing Officer, Tel: 01236 616280