

AGENDA ITEM NO. 28 NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL
REPORT

To: PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE	Subject: : NEW BUSINESS PUBLICATION FOR LANARKSHIRE	
From: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT		
Date: 1 ST May 2002	Ref: CmcA/CD/845	

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of the launch of a new business publication jointly produced by North and South Lanarkshire Council, Scottish Enterprise Lanarkshire and the Lanarkshire Business Gateways.

2 Background

- 2.1 The new publication has been commissioned by the partners through the Lanarkshire Economic Forum. The Forum made a commitment in its October Action Plan submitted to the Scottish Executive to reduce the number of business publications within Lanarkshire. This is part of an overall effort to reduce confusion in the market place and to improve clarity of service provision. The new publication will replace at least four publications as follows:-

- Business Focus (North Lanarkshire Council)
- The South Lanarkshire Business (South Lanarkshire Council)
- Lanarkshire Enterprise News (Business Gateways)
- Newsround (Lanarkshire Export Partnership)

3. Tendering Procedure

- 3.1 A brief for the development of the publication was produced in agreement with the partners and issued to nine companies although two companies withdrew immediately. Seven submissions were expected to be received by the 18th March 2002. It was intended that of these seven, four would then be invited to present further design proposals. In effect, only four companies submitted proposals and all of these were invited for interview and presentation on the 8th April 2002. At this stage, one other company withdrew. The three companies which reached the final stage were :- 55 North, Insider Publications and Straightline Publishing.
- 3.2 Following consideration of design, production and financial proposals it was unanimously agreed by all partners that Insider Publications presented the best submission for the partners. Insider publications have therefore been offered the publishing contract.

4 Insider Publications Proposal

- 4.1 The new proposal is to produce a 24-page colour A4 sized magazine. It will be issued six times per year. The first issue will be circulated to 10,000 businesses by the end of May. The publication will be known as Business In Lanarkshire and will contain a number of regular features, professional advice columns and general business news for Lanarkshire. The objective is to make the publication as relevant and interesting to the local business community as possible. An editorial committee involving four partners is to be established.

5 Costs

- 5.1 It is intended that some of the costs of production will be offset by advertising. Insider Publications have committed to a target of £21,000 per annum to be generated from advertising. Total publishing costs plus an initial development and design costs are quoted at £84,710. Some of these costs are based on initial quotes from sub-contractors and the publisher has been asked to seek lower production and printing sub-contracting costs. This should reduce the total publishing costs. Three quotes will be provided to the partnership for all sub-contracts.
- 5.1 The net costs to the partnership if the advertising target is achieved is therefore estimated to be in the region of £64,000. The two council partners will pay a maximum contribution of £20,000 each per annum, with the balance being paid for by Scottish Enterprise Lanarkshire and the Business Gateways. The Council's contribution will be funded from existing resources.

6 Financial Impact

- 6.1 Whilst the original desire for a single business publication for Lanarkshire came through the Lanarkshire Economic Forum in an effort to improve communication to local business, the Council also envisaged that a jointly produced publication would produce cost savings for the Council.
- 6.2 Whilst it would seem that the coming together of the partner organisation to produce a single publication would be a more efficient use of resources, in effect the outsourcing to a professional publisher, the overall increase in the publication specification i.e. more pages, more journalists, increased photography etc, has resulted in the cost of this exercise being more than what was originally anticipated.
- 6.3 The Council currently produces Business Focus in house using external contributors at a cost of approximately £20,000 per annum. This does not take into account the staff time which is considerable in the production of this publication. In addition, it is estimated that the Council contributes £7,000 per annum to the production of three issues of the Lanarkshire Export Partnership Newsletter. A further £800 was spent last year on sponsoring a Chamber of Commerce newsletter. It is hoped that the Chambers will also be part of this new publication and therefore reduce the need for their own newsletter. If all of these costs are taken into consideration, total newsletter expenditure by the Policy and Economic Development Service is estimated to be £27,000. Assuming that this new business publication will replace the need for expenditure in the above three publications, it will be a more effective and efficient use of resources.
- 6.4 50 issues of Business Focus have been produced since it was first developed shortly after local government re-organisation in 1996. The last issue was distributed in February and was a special edition to mark its' 50th. Details on Business Focus contractors have been passed to Insider for consideration in the production of the new magazine. Letters have been sent to regular contributors informing them of the change in publication.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Whilst the existing publications, particularly Business Focus have always been well received, it is accepted that there are too many newsletter publications being issued to local companies. The reduction in number of publications and joint investment by all partners in a new and bigger magazine will offer an opportunity to present the Lanarkshire business community in a progressive, dynamic and modern communication vehicle. Professionally written and produced, it will aim to be the leading business publication for Lanarkshire businesses.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 It is recommended that the Planning & Environment Committee:
- (i) note the content of this report.



David M. Porch
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

For further information please contact Caitriona McAuley, Policy & Projects Manager on 01236 616279
Date of Report 11th April 2002