

North East Derbyshire District Council

Cabinet

29 June 2023

Engagement with Business Scrutiny Review

Report of the previous Administration's Growth Scrutiny Committee

Classification: This report is public

Report By: Damon Stanton – Senior Scrutiny Officer

Contact Officer: Damon Stanton – damon.stanton@ne-derbyshire.gov.uk
01246 217011

PURPOSE / SUMMARY

To ask Cabinet to approve the recommendations of the Growth Scrutiny Committee's Business Engagement Review.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Simplify access to available business support in the District, such as through a business advisor or dedicated responsibilities within existing teams to improve uptake;
 2. Introduce initiatives and projects such as networking events that increase business engagement across the District; and
 3. Improve online engagement with businesses, ensuring available information and support is easily accessible and up to date such as through improvements to the website or the creation of a dedicated microsite.
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IMPLICATIONS

Finance and Risk: Yes No

Details:

This will be determined if Cabinet decide to accept the Scrutiny Review recommendations as part of the Lead Officer response.

On Behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Legal (including Data Protection): Yes No

Details:

This will be determined if Cabinet decide to accept the Scrutiny Review recommendations as part of the Lead Officer response.

On Behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

Staffing: Yes No

Details:

This will be determined if Cabinet decide to accept the Scrutiny Review recommendations as part of the Lead Officer response.

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

DECISION INFORMATION

| Decision Information | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds: NEDDC: Revenue - £100,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £250,000 <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i> | No |
| Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In) | No |
| District Wards Significantly Affected | None |
| Consultation: Leader / Deputy Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Cabinet <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SMT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Members <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes Details: |

Links to Council Plan priorities, including Climate Change, Equalities, and Economics and Health implications.

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REPORT DETAILS

1 **Background** *(reasons for bringing the report)*

- 1.1 At its meeting on 24 January 2022, the Growth Scrutiny Committee agreed to conduct a Review into how the Council engaged with local business.
- 1.2 The overall purpose of the review was intended to improve the Council's service offered to local businesses in order to improve the offering to businesses within North East Derbyshire and contribute to the District's economic growth. An understanding of the Council's current relations with local businesses was therefore essential to understand engagement, and thus the review aimed to:
- Review how the Council had engaged with local business;
 - Determine what had worked well, and what not so well;
 - Listen to the views of local business; and
 - Suggest improvements to achieve better engagement with business in the District.
- 1.3 The Committee recognised that Economic Development and general business support provided by Local Authorities was a discretionary service and subject to the resources available.
- 1.4 Initially, Members intended on conducting the Review as a Spotlight Review. This was an intensive and short review where a briefing paper and other supplementary documents were considered, evidence gathered and triangulated, and recommendations considered in one meeting. This meeting took place on 14 March 2022.
- 1.5 The Committee then subsequently agreed to extend the review and consider additional evidence. Members agreed that the ways in which the Council engaged with business was often complicated, and extended into a number of different services. Additional evidence was considered at meetings on 09 May 2022, 31 October 2022, and 16 January 2023. The full report attached at **Appendix 1** sets out in more detail the evidence gathered and a synopsis of the views expressed.

2. **Details of Proposal or Information**

- 2.1 The recommendations are:

That the Council

- 2.1.1 Simplify access to available business support in the District, such as through a business advisor or dedicated responsibilities within existing teams to improve uptake;

- 2.1.2 Introduce initiatives and projects such as networking events that increase business engagement across the District; and
- 2.1.3 Improve online engagement with businesses, ensuring available information and support is easily accessible and up to date such as through improvements to the website or the creation of a dedicated microsite.

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 The Review Panel heard from a number of stakeholders including external businesses, a business advisor, a business consultant, and internal officers. Members considered a wide scope of opinion to assess how the Council engaged with businesses in the District. The Review process highlighted what the Council was doing to support business and how this was being communicated.
- 3.2 It was, however, determined that a number of changes could be made to improve business engagement such as improvements surrounding image and perception and the way the Council defined and communicated its support. It was apparent that businesses were not fully aware of what the Council offered.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 N/A

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

| Appendix No | Title |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Engagement with Business Scrutiny Review |
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| Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet you must provide copies of the background papers) | |
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