


REPORT TO ECONOMY SKILLS, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY BOARD

8 November 2018

Subject:	Growing what we have got and supporting local businesses
Cabinet Portfolio:	Councillor Paul Moore - Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Investment Regeneration and Economic Investment
Director:	Director – Regeneration and Growth – Amy Harhoff
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer(s):	Tammy Stokes

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That: Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board

It is recommended that the Scrutiny Board note the content of the report and the level of support provided to the Sandwell Business Community by the Regeneration & Growth Team through initiatives including Sandwell Ambassadors.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report seeks to provide an overview to the Scrutiny Board on the Business Support services provided by the Regeneration & Growth Team through work such as the Sandwell Business Ambassadors initiative.
- 1.2 Detailed information into the services provided by the Regeneration & Growth Team is captured in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 1.3 Detailed information pertaining to the Sandwell Business Ambassador initiative is captured in Appendix 2 of this report.

2 **IMPLICATIONS FOR SANDWELL'S VISION**

- 2.1 The Regeneration & Growth Team serves Sandwell businesses by providing information, support and expertise to help them achieve their growth objectives; increase job creation opportunities; and grow the economy in Sandwell. The team has fostered working relationships with the Sandwell business community which has built the council's reputation for getting things done, by being supportive and understanding the growth objectives.
- 2.2 The work of the team enables the council to achieve its objectives of creating a prosperous place to live, work and invest, by supporting inward investment, job creation, and enhanced training opportunities to local residents and young people. In addition, the team supports the development of Sandwell's excellent business stock to continually make Sandwell a business destination of choice.
- 2.3 The team has a key role in the co-designed development of the Regeneration and Inclusive Growth Strategy, to ensure that local businesses and the economic growth of Sandwell is central to the Strategy. The work of the team is integral to ensuring that Sandwell business and communities continue to grow and prosper, by bringing opportunities to all Sandwell residents for training, skills, employment and economic prosperity. The team works closely with the business community along with training and education partners to highlight the diversity of job opportunities to local residents, including young people. The team encourages them to take up the wide range of employment and training opportunities that are available to them through Sandwell's strong business stock.
- 2.4 The work of the team encourages local businesses to work with local schools', community groups and voluntary agencies etc. in order build the aspirations of Sandwell's young people. The team work closely with Sandwell Council's the Area Employment Team to link employers, initiatives and local people together, ensuring all have the opportunity to benefit from Sandwell's economic prosperity and growth.
- 2.5 Sandwell Business Ambassadors initiative comprises senior management representatives from across both Sandwell's Strategic and Sandwell's Growth companies. The Ambassadors initiative was established for the council to engage with the wider business community and to help facilitate solutions for bridging the skills gaps and raising aspiration levels of young people entering work.
- 2.6 The Sandwell Business Ambassador initiative is a method by which the team can work closely with the business community, reinforcing the

council's reputation for getting things done and ensuring a continued understanding of the growth needs and objectives of the local economy.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 The report will now provide an overview of the range of business support services and initiatives delivered by the Regeneration & Growth Team.

3.2 The team as a whole provides Business Support and Advice to Sandwell businesses, from start-up advice through to funding and procurement. The team provides the expertise and knowledge to help address business needs. The Think Sandwell Business Growth initiative makes doing business in Sandwell easier by offering a wide range of support and guidance. The team provides a business friendly, one point of contact platform, through the provision of the Think Sandwell website. The website makes it easier for businesses identify and access the support they need from the council. Any business, regardless of size, trading history or any individual considering starting a business in Sandwell, can contact Think Sandwell to determine what support is available from the team and the council as a whole to help their business grow. These include:

- Location and relocation service - free property searches and accompanied site visits to help businesses with their expansion plans.
- Development Ready – pro-active planning to give confidence in securing consent for appropriate development with provision of dedicated planning officer support.
- Free recruitment and training service to help attract the right staff for business operations. Working with the council's Area Employment Team (AET) and partner educational organisations allows the team to offer a wide-ranging service to employers whilst supporting local residents and young people.
- Social Value and Community Benefits – the team is committed to capturing these benefits arising from economic growth and physical regeneration. Such benefits are conditions written into planning conditions, Employment & Skills plans, and procurement contracts.
- Through comprehensive aftercare and account management the team make sure local business operations continue to receive the support to grow.
- Local Supply Chain Development – the team supports the development of supply chains and awareness of procurement opportunities, ensuring local business can competitively tender for such opportunities. These can

include large scale regeneration projects such as the Aquatic Centre and the Midland Metropolitan Hospital.

- Relationships with Strategic Partners affords the team the ability to identify and establish key contacts and networks to fast track business growth plans, including providing companies with a skilled workforce and raising the aspirations of Sandwell's young people. The teams' technical expertise also links to strategic partners with Universities, Industry networks, innovation hubs/forums and the professional sectors.
- Through the Sandwell Business Solutions Centre **partnership project the team helps companies improve their business performance and offer a drop-in facility for businesses support services.**
- Access Finance – the team identifies sources of gap funding for business ventures, including any available grants, loan finance, equity partners and venture capital.
- Black Country Transformational GOLD project helps businesses to capitalise on growth opportunities and add to the value of economic activity within our borough. The team supported the delivery of the Black Country Transformational GOLD (BCTG) project, helping businesses to capitalise on growth opportunities and add to the value of economic activity within Sandwell. This project gave 29 Sandwell companies £302k in grants to support £1.1m worth of projects to help to grow Sandwell. BCTG is also designed to help local businesses create new employment opportunities by match funding projects that help companies to transform and grow.
- Growing Priority Sectors (GPS) Regional Growth Fund is a business investment programme funded through the Black Country LEP's "Black Country Growth Deal". The four year £8.63 million programme helps to strengthen the capacity of Black Country businesses to take advantage of new market opportunities by providing grants to support the tangible capital investment in plant, machinery & property. The funding programme opened in March 2015 and is due to end March 2019. The GPS programme is managed by the team, supporting businesses from their initial Expression of Interest funding application to their final claim of funding. The current forecast is that by March 2019 the team will have supported 60 businesses; generated £38.8m in private sector match funding; and enabled the creation of 940 new jobs and 87 apprenticeships.
- AIM (Advice, Investment and Market Development) is a Black Country wide project, which currently part funds the activities of the team that helps in the delivery of local business support activity. The project

currently funds 2 Business Navigator roles that essentially deliver local business support activity and feed into the enhanced co-ordinated approach for the Black Country. More broadly, in addition to business navigation, the team co-ordinates Sandwell's business advice services with partners and co-ordinates local supply chain activity and procurement engagement.

- 3.3 Sandwell Business Ambassadors is supported by the team to promote Sandwell as a dynamic and innovative business location. The programme offers Sandwell's key strategic businesses the opportunity to engage with the council leadership and other senior business representatives to discuss key issues, topics and policies etc. that directly affect the growth aspirations of businesses within Sandwell and the wider region.
- 3.4 The Ambassadors engage with the wider business community, establish links between different sectors and to help support solutions for bridging the skills gaps and raising aspiration levels of young people entering work as well as promoting Sandwell and the council as a place to invest. Sandwell Business Ambassadors are key to raising the aspirations of Sandwell's young people by telling the story of what it is like to work with different sectors and highlight the diversity of opportunity available to all.
- 3.5 The links between the Business Ambassadors and the council, facilitated by the team enables the Ambassadors to access the recruitment and training advice and support Sandwell Council's Area Employment Team offers.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Growing Priority Sectors will conclude in March 2019 with the final 5 applications for funding currently being processed by the team.
- 4.2 Sandwell Council is awaiting the outcome of a BCLEP led bid for further funding for **AIM for GOLD** which will allow Sandwell to continue to support Sandwell businesses to achieve their growth objectives by enabling access to GOLD of funding to help grow and transform their business. A decision from the BCLEP is expected December 2018.
- 4.3 The team currently has a number of KPIs in order to meet the contractual requirements for AIM and GPS. The table below shows the KPIs and targets and current achievements rates. The table also shows the KPIs for the awaited AIM for GOLD project which are yet to be confirmed.

		2030 Ambition	Year End 18/19 Target	Year End 18/19 Outturn	Year End 19/20 Target	Year End 19/20 Outturn
Growing Priority Sectors	Jobs Created	# 9	75	75	27	27
Growing Priority Sectors	Apprentice Starts	# 9 #3 #1	5	5	5	5
AIM for the Black Country	3-hour business assists	# 9	188	190	0	0
AIM for the Black Country	12-hour business assists	# 9	88	44	0	0
AIM for Gold	3-hour business assists	# 9			45 TBC	-
AIM for Gold	12-hour business assists	# 9			15 TBC	-

4.4 The Sandwell Business Ambassadors initiative is currently being revitalised which has entailed the appointment of a new chair and the ambassador membership being updated. The Ambassadors are looking to progress and develop the initiative in order to engage with the wider business community, establish links between different sectors and to help support solutions for bridging the skills gaps. The work of the Ambassadors, with the support of the team will help to promote projects and work to help raise aspiration levels of young people entering work, promoting Sandwell as a great place to live, work and do business.

4.5 **The Ambassadors initiative will also support and compliment the council's regeneration plans and 2030 Vision for Sandwell by forging stronger links between different business sectors and the council, showcasing the business benefits of Sandwell and the wider region to create awareness of Sandwell's business proposition. They will also celebrate the breadth of commercial talent Sandwell has as well as promoting the business activity and achievements. This will highlight the impact Sandwell has on the regional and national economy.**

4.6 The work of the Sandwell Business Ambassadors aligns to the Vision 2030 as well as the development of the Regeneration and Growth Strategy. They will be working to identify skills gaps, with support of the team and partners, to devise how those gaps can be plugged. In turn this will encourage Sandwell's young people to take up these opportunities, offering them a pathway into the diverse and strong industries within the borough.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

5.1 The work that the team delivers supports and links to the work that the Black Country Growth Hub does and we are a delivery partner for the AIM project, as previously mentioned.

5.2 The AIM for GOLD project has been assessed by Sandwell's Strategic Finance Team. The Business Growth Team was part of the initial discussions to help to shape the new programme and its application.

5.3 Funding support for the Sandwell Business Ambassadors' PR & Marketing was approved by council in September 2017 and then procured fairly and transparently – contracting with Superdream from January 2018 for a 24-month period.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1 There are no alternative options applicable to this report.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Regeneration & Growth Team Resources partly supported by the match funding of the AIM project.

7.2 Sandwell Business Ambassadors marketing budget has been committed up to Dec 2019.

7.3 Possibility of accessing further funding through the BCLEP amongst others.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Sandwell Business Ambassadors marketing and PR is contracted through Procurement and monitored by the team. Contract was set and written by the council's Legal Services Team.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 The support delivered by both the Regeneration & Growth Team and Sandwell Business Ambassadors is open to all businesses.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1 The Think Sandwell services and website are fully GDPR compliant and have undertaken all of the required steps to ensure that their activities and retention processes meet required standards.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 There are no crime and Disorder issues arising from these activities.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS.

12.1 Seeking future funding from BCLEP and other appropriate sources.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

13.1 The Regeneration & Growth Team supports ongoing initiatives aimed at workforce and employee wellbeing and this is reflected in the Think Sandwell's dedicated webpage.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

14.1 There are no direct implications on the Council's managed Property or Land although the team do support the sale and or rental of these through the Business Support services and they advertise as appropriate through the Think Sandwell website and Sandwell Business Ambassador initiative.

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 The overview provided in this report it is considered that Sandwell's support to businesses is adequate given the resources currently available. Every effort will be made to maximise resources where appropriate, through applying for grant provision to support service delivery.

15.2 The role which the team has in the development of the Regeneration & Inclusive Growth Strategy stands to highlight future priorities for the team and ways to improve and sustain service delivery going forward. This Strategy will need to align to wider strategies of our partner organisations such as the West Midlands Combined Authority and the BCLEP.

15.3 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Board note the content of the report and the level of support provided to the Sandwell Business Community by the Regeneration & Growth Team through its initiatives including Sandwell Business Ambassadors.

16 BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 None.

17 APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Regeneration & Growth Team services overview

Appendix 2 – Sandwell Business Ambassadors overview



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