

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	11 October 2017
Subject:	Better Business for All Initiative (Regulatory Advice)		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Communities & Neighbourhoods		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	None		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval to participate in a 'Better Business for All' (BBfA) initiative which would focus on regulatory advice, in partnership with other regulators across Gloucestershire that would support local businesses.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that -

- (1) The City Council participates in the Gloucestershire 'Better Business for All' (Regulatory Advice) Partnership, and
- (2) Authority be delegated to the Head of Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities & Neighbourhoods, the s151 Officer and the Council Solicitor to approve the fees and charges in respect of the advice & support packages to be provided by the City Council as set out in the report and to enter into any necessary documentation to implement recommendation (1) above.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 The BBfA initiative was established by the Better Regulation Delivery Office (BDRO); part of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and within Gloucestershire is delivered through the Growth Hub which is a partnership between the Gloucestershire First Local Enterprise Partnership (GFirst LEP) and Gloucestershire University.
- 3.2 Complying with legal requirements or red tape is often considered a burden by businesses and business representatives and central government has over

the last several years sought to reduce the amount of legislation but also influence how legislation is enforced at a local level. The main objective of the BBfA initiative is to open a dialogue between local regulators and businesses to ensure that regulators support compliance, thus helping businesses to reduce costs and prosper, supporting local economic growth.

- 3.3 It is considered that offering regulatory advice & support in this manner will develop new relationships between regulators and businesses, that will reduce both real, and perceived, regulatory barriers to business growth.
- 3.4 BBfA aims to show our local businesses how working with your local regulators can save them time and money, improve their competitiveness and help grow the business. It is also about encouraging more businesses in Gloucester to seek advice from local regulators by highlighting the benefits of regulation to business, without fear of enforcement activity. From the Council's point of view it's equally about gaining a better understanding of how businesses operate and the pressures they face.
- 3.5 This report proposes that the Council offers advice and support in the areas of Licensing, Food Safety, Health & Safety, Environmental Protection and Building Control (subject to agreement with Stroud District Council under the s101 delegation arrangement).
- 3.6 The proposal would in practice enable the Council to provide businesses with more in-depth advice and support in a consultancy type capacity as opposed to the more formal but light touch provision of information and direction we currently provide often following a formal inspection, complaint or service of legal notices.
- 3.7 With the technical expertise available within our Council and across partner Councils we are able to offer this more specific in-depth assured advice service for businesses based in Gloucester. Providing detailed advice, including how legal requirements are applicable to different types of business for particular products or services. This can also include undertaking inspections and audits, provision of training and sampling.
- 3.8 Although a significant amount of assistance to businesses will be available on a free of charge basis it is proposed that the Partnership markets its services via a set of indicative fees & charges for certain types of advice covering the range of regulatory services we provide. In addition it is proposed to offer (if practical) tailored advice to meet specific needs based on officer time.

4.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Consideration has been given to providing such a service in isolation and not in partnership with other local Council's under the banner of The Growth Hub. This does not seem prudent however as The Growth Hub's existing business audience would allow them to advertise our services extensively. It will also be consistent with other BBfA partnerships across the country.

5.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 Supporting BBfA would allow many of our traditional regulatory services to build positive relationships with our local businesses and grow our reputation as supporters of growth.
- 5.2 Delivering business advice in a non regulatory framework has the potential to deliver more sustainable improvements that would in turn reduce the amount of formal intervention by our Regulatory Officers in the future.
- 5.2 Although the fees and charges will be set on a cost recovery basis it is anticipated that the proposal has in the short to medium term the potential to generate an income for the Council without introducing additional resource to deliver it. This type of advice and support is currently offered by a variety of consultants and we would be simply providing business with another option should they wish to consider it within that market place.

6.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 6.1 Across the Council Lead Officers have been identified for BBfA and these will be the main points of contact should a business wish to discuss receiving our services. These Lead Officers will also be charged with cascading BBfA information amongst relevant staff and delivering BBfA training and updates.
- 6.2 Subject to approval communications will be undertaken in respect of our BBfA offer through our website, social media, relevant literature and where applicable on Council letter heads and business cards etc.
- 6.3 On the 17th October The Growth Hub at Gloucestershire University are holding a media launch event at which, subject to Cabinet's approval, the Council will be represented by relevant Cabinet Members and Senior Officers.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 At the outset this project is built upon the Council providing regulatory advice outside of a regulatory framework and delivered by existing staff. No additional resource would be required to deliver this work unless business demand at some stage in the future required it. If this situation was reached a business case would be submitted to the Senior Management Team for additional resource.
- 7.2 If the scheme were to prove successful it may result in an income being generated and this has not been budgeted for in 2017/2018 as it would prove difficult to forecast.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report)

8.0 Legal Implications

8.1 The arrangement between the participating councils is likely to be set out in an agreement so that a co-ordinated approach can be taken to the delivery of the service to the business community.

8.2 Any fees and charges will be set on a cost recovery basis in accordance with the various legislative powers.

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation of this report)

9.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

9.1 N/A

10.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

10.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

11.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

11.1 N/A

Sustainability

11.2 N/A

Staffing & Trade Union

11.3 N/A

Background Documents:

None