

Report to the *Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee*

30th November 2016

Stoke and Staffordshire Business Helpline



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Introduction

A request was made by the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee for a performance report relating to use of the Business Helpline by Newcastle businesses.

Background

The Stoke and Staffordshire Business Helpline 0300 111 8002 growthhub@staffordshirechambers.co.uk is the first point of contact for business support across Staffordshire. The helpline provides a central point of contact for a range of free business support which includes Start Up, Growth, Finance, Regulation, People and Contacts.

The helpline is part of the Business Growth Hub, which is funded through Regional Growth Fund to help drive strong, sustainable business growth across Staffordshire.

Questions to be addressed

How can we encourage Newcastle Businesses to access the Business Helpline to help them strengthen and grow their business?

Outcomes

After a meeting with the Business Helpline Advisor 14 September 2016 it is clear there are number of ways that we can help our local businesses to access the helpline. Improvement areas to consider:

- A more prominent position within the business pages on the Council website

- Distribution of the Business Helpline newsletter to all Cllrs, link on business pages and BID website
- Pop up banners at the Civic Offices and Guildhall
- Leaflets for all Councillors, Locality Action Partnerships, Business Centres and Industrial Parks
- Information on the digital screens at the Guildhall
- Include a feature in The Reporter
- Use our social media to help raise the profile
- Ensure our Customer Services have the Business Helpline number
- Promote through Business Boost
- One off events with partners to raise the profile of the helpline
- Invite to the BID Business Connects events
- Develop a database of our Newcastle businesses including those in rural areas
- Send out Business Helpline leaflet with business rates bills
- Small business Saturday event
- Greater focus on business development

Supporting Information

52 Newcastle Businesses have contacted the Business Helpline since March 2016.

This compares with the following over the same period:

- Stafford 145
- East Staffs 58
- Staffordshire Moorlands 51
- Cannock 46
- South Staffs 42
- Lichfield 39
- Tamworth 21

Invited Partners/Stakeholders/Residents

A meeting took place with the Business Helpline Advisor 14 September 2016 to discuss options to increase Newcastle business contact with the Business Helpline.

Constraints

There is no financial cost to the Council as the Business Helpline is funded through external finance (Regional Growth Deal) for the whole of Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire. However, more officer time will be required to implement the range of improvement areas suggested earlier in this report.

Conclusions

In response to a request made by the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee for a performance report relating to use of the Business Helpline by Newcastle businesses, a meeting was arranged with the Business Helpline Advisor to discuss current uptake of the service and explore options for improvement.

The performance reports show that more 52 Newcastle businesses accessed the Business Helpline, which is more than 5 other Staffordshire authorities and less than two Staffordshire authorities, which indicates room for improvement.

It is clear there are number of ways that we can help our local businesses to access the helpline as detailed earlier in this report.

There is no financial cost to the Council but more officer time will be required to implement the suggested improvements areas.

Relevant Portfolio Holder(s)

Cllr John Williams, Portfolio Holder for Town Centres, Property and Business

Local Ward Member (if applicable)

Background Materials

Business Helpline Newsletter and Leaflets

Appendices