

Place Select Committee
Review of Business Support and Engagement
Outline Scope

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Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

The review will contribute to the following Council Plan 2019-2022 policy principles:

Create economic prosperity

- By ensuring the businesses and people of Stockton-on-Tees are part of a thriving and productive Tees Valley economy.

Tackle inequality

- Through improving job opportunities, skills and training.

What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

The Council undertakes a number of business support activities across the Borough, from advice and guidance, to direct financial support. In recent years, the focus of this activity has changed, with a greater emphasis placed on targeted evidence-led support and creating a single point of contact ('one conversation') policy for businesses liaising with the Council. However, current challenges, largely around resources, have led to a concentration on reactive rather than proactive activity.

There are several thousand businesses registered within the Borough from micro (1-10 employees) through to large multi-national organisations. Each are important to the economy of the Borough and its residents, and the Council plays an important facilitation role in the sustainability and growth of these companies.

Of further consideration is the key interface with the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), both in terms of their business support activity and the funding streams that they either manage or can access.

This review will examine the Council's overall business support / engagement role, how this is utilised and viewed externally, and whether the necessary resources are in place to satisfy existing and future demand.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

- What are the key functions of the Council’s Business and Enterprise Team; has this changed over recent time (including resourcing) and what are the reasons for any change?
- What are the definitions of business ‘support’ and ‘engagement’?
- How do local businesses find out about the Council’s support service; how is this communicated?
- What types of business exist within the Borough; what are the key sectors?
- What types of businesses (and where are they sited) approach the Council and what do they seek? Are enquiries purely around local issues or the wider national / international environment?
- What types of support does the Council provide to businesses (including the mediums used)?
- How does the Council link in with the Tees Valley Combined Authority regarding the development of business; is there clarity on the remits of each?
- How does the Council link in with wider partners (e.g. Universities, Federation of Small Businesses, North East England Chamber of Commerce, Department of International Trade)?
- SBC Peer Review feedback – what can we learn from this recent Council review in terms of support for local business?
- How do other Local Authorities support businesses in their locality; are there any initiatives that would be appropriate for the Borough?

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Cabinet, Council, local businesses (existing and new).

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

5 months (reporting to Cabinet in June 2020)

What information do we need?

Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):

- SBC Economic Growth Plan 2017-2020
- SBC Economic Strategy 2017-2032
- Local Economic Assessment 2017 (Executive Summary)
- SBC Economic Climate Reports (quarterly)

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)

What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?

Local Authority

- Existing Council support / engagement (definitions, how communicated)
- Types of businesses / enquiries received
- Feedback from businesses on service
- Peer Review Feedback

TVCA (Tees Valley Business Compass)

- Role and partnership-working with SBC
- Funding opportunities and application data

Wider Partners (e.g. Teesside University, FSB, NEECC, DIT, TV Business Club)	➤ Partnership-working with SBC
Businesses currently being supported	➤ Evaluation of Council input
Businesses previously supported (end-users)	➤ Evaluation of Council input
Other Local Authorities	➤ Types of Council business support / engagement
<p>How will this information be gathered? (eg. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)</p> <p>Committee meetings, reports, case studies, research, analysis of service feedback, site visits (TBC).</p>	
<p>How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?</p> <p>Committee meetings, information submissions, site visits (TBC).</p>	
<p>How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?</p> <p>The Public Sector Equality Duty requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. This review will be mindful of these factors.</p>	
<p>How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?</p> <p><u>Stockton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (Summary 2018/19)</u>: Employment (wider determinant) – strategic issues include barriers to work and high unemployment in deprived areas, lack of sustainable jobs, mismatch between skills supply and demand, and lack of apprenticeship opportunities and awareness of vocational route-ways.</p> <p><u>Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2023</u>: All people in Stockton-on-Tees live in healthy places and sustainable communities – health and wellbeing are influenced by the environment in which people grow up, live, work and spend their leisure time.</p>	
<p>Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:</p> <p>This review will seek to assess whether the Council’s business support / engagement activity is fit for purpose and resourced appropriately.</p>	

Project Plan

Key Task	Details/Activities	Date	Responsibility
Scoping of Review	Information gathering	November 2019	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	04.12.19	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Agree Project Plan	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	16.12.19	Select Committee
Publicity of Review	Determine whether Communications Plan needed		Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
Obtaining Evidence	Local Authority	27.01.20	Select Committee
	TBC	24.02.20	
	TBC	23.03.20	
Members decide recommendations and findings	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	20.04.20	Select Committee
Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders	Circulation of Report	April 2020	Scrutiny Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	TBC	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Final Agreement of Report	Approval of final report by Committee	18.05.20	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee	Consideration of report	26.05.20	Executive Scrutiny Committee
Report to Cabinet/Approving Body	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	18.06.20	Cabinet / Approving Body