

**MINUTES: Business Advisory Group**

**Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

**34/38 Beverley Road, Hull**



**PRESENT**

Barry Schofield	Tutty's Office Interiors (Chair)
Tony Anson	Gelder and Kitchen
Peter Latham Warde	PLW Consultancy
Andy Lawrence	Stainton Ward
Janice Collins	Working Links
Graham Boanas	The Bizniz
Kathryn Shillito	Hull Bid
Jeff Clarkson	Clarkson Business Strategy
John Illingworth	Goodwin Development Trust
Susan Dobbs	Premier Class Education
Jenny Brambles	Face to Face Networking
John Roberts	Destinova Consulting
Malcolm Relph	Hull City Council
Phil King	Yorkshire Bank
Sallyann Garrard-Hughes	Business Link Yorkshire
Paul Burnley	Hull City Council
Antony Towle	ONE HULL Business Forum
Hannah Crookes	ONE HULL Business Forum

**Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

- 441. Apologies were received from Tim Evison, Peter Duffield, Claire Crowther, and Mark Willett.
- 442. The Chair welcomed new members Jenny Brambles, John Illingworth, and Janice Collins to the group. Members introduced themselves around the table.

**Agenda Item 2: Minutes**

- 443. The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2010 were agreed as a true and correct record.
- 444. John Roberts raised the issue that no feedback had been received from the Police Authority from the questionnaire issued at the previous year's consultation event. It was agreed the Forum should raise this issue with the Police Authority.

- 445. The chair noted from point 434 of the previous minutes that a representative of the Hull Daily Mail should be invited to attend future BAG meetings.
- 446. The Chair requested from point 425 of the previous minutes that a letter from the Chair be written to Graham Hall requesting a response on the subject of subsidised parking rates in the Pryme Street car park.
- 447. The future and deliverability of BAG was called into question from point 437 of the previous minutes. The Chair commented that meetings had occurred; the future of BAG has now been qualified.

### **Agenda Item 3: Matters Arising**

- 448. There were no matters arising.

### **Agenda Item 4: Barriers to Business Survey**

- 449. Hannah Crookes tabled a paper on the summary of the Business Forum's Barriers to Business survey.
- 450. The group members discussed a number of key areas from the survey results; a key area was addressing skill gaps that were prevalent in Hull. It was noted that there was a common misconception that the unemployed in Hull were unemployable. It was recognised that this was not the case but there was a shortage in skills relating to employment such as CV writing.
- 451. Concern was expressed around welfare reform issue as Hull may suffer when the level of applicants to the Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) rises in accordance to predictions. It was suggested that Jobcentre Plus should be invited to a future meeting to discuss what is going on with employment in the city; this was generally agreed by the group.
- 452. In a move to strengthen applications to the Regional Growth Fund (RGF), Hull City Council was looking towards more partnership working. It would also like to understand what these different organisations want in order to make bidding to the RGF stronger and more cohesive.
- 453. The group recognised that the Barriers to Business Survey required more discussion in future meetings in order for the issues to be addressed fully. It was generally agreed by the group that the results were important but the additional comments should not be focused on as their efficacy could not be relied upon.

### **Agenda Item 5: Business Link Update**

- 454. The Chair welcomed Sallyann Garrard-Hughes, Principal Advisor at Business Link Yorkshire and invited her to discuss the future of Business Link.

455. Sallyann Garrard-Hughes provided a brief overview of the role of Business Link and stated that she had provided help and assistance to between 80 and 100 businesses per year. Over the period of 2009 to 2010, around 12,500 businesses accessed Business Link services which equated to 51% of businesses in the Hull and East Riding region.
456. Ms Garrard-Hughes informed the group that Business Link will cease operations on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2011, the office held in the Hull and Humber Chamber of Commerce will close on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2011. Events would still continue on a reduced basis but they would still offer workshops and surgeries.
457. The Chair raised the question of what business support would be available once Business Link in its current format is disbanded. Ms Garrard-Hughes stated that there would be a website and a central call centre available. It was still unknown what other services would replace other Business Link offerings.
458. It was generally agreed that Enterprise Agencies could cover a percentage of support for businesses but there would still be a gap in the sector.

#### **Agenda Item 6: Business Support and Access to Finance**

459. Hannah Crookes tabled a paper on Access to Finance; the paper provided an overview of some of the funding and support available to local businesses. It was noted that this would need to be continuously updated and that there were additional funding schemes available.
460. The Chair welcomed Phil King, Business Manager at Yorkshire Bank and invited him to provide an update on the financial services available for businesses.
461. Phil King, from Yorkshire Bank's perspective, highlighted that finance was still available to businesses; however lending criteria had been tightened. Banks were turning towards more decisions being based on a scoring system. It was highlighted that applications of finance from high risk sectors would still be considered but banks were taking a safety led approach to lending.
462. Phil King noted that he had seen a slow uptake of local businesses enquiring about the local enterprise scheme, the reasoning for which was unknown.

#### **Agenda Item 7: Any Other Business**

463. It was noted that not all members around the table were aware of the Barriers to Business Survey being launched. This raised the question as to whether it had been publicised enough.
464. It was noted that some local business support websites such as the Acorn Fund have server problems resulting in missing websites or pages. Attention should be paid when including in the Access to Finance document.

**Agenda Item 7: Dates of next meeting**

465. Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2011 at 2.30 pm