



| First Point for Business One Telford | |
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| Overview | <p>The aim of 'First Point for Business' is to provide local businesses and potential investors with a single point of contact for the diverse range of council and partner services that they need to help them start and grow their companies. When we talk about businesses, we include voluntary and community organisations that face many of the same issues that private sector encounters, particularly Social Enterprises that are essentially businesses with social objectives..</p> <p>By offering focused customer services we will help to widen access, improve responsiveness, improve understanding of local business preferences and develop a more consistent and better value for money response to customer contacts.</p> |
| The key issue | <p>In our recent Local Economic Assessment, local businesses highlighted this issue as a key priority for them. <i>"... one of the problems that have is understanding which one (service area) to call. A 'one stop shop' approach that allows the business to contact one organisation and be confident they will get the support they need, is an attractive one'</i></p> <p>Local Authorities have a crucial role to play in ensuring that day-to-day services to their local business community are efficient and effective, offer good value for money and deliver what people actually want.</p> <p>There is a wide range of services that Telford & Wrekin Council provides for local businesses, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collection of business rates• Business Support and Economic Development• Procurement opportunities• Planning and Building Regulations• Licensing and Regulations Services• Parking Services• Trading Standards• Health & Safety• Environmental Services• Food Safety <p>In Telford and Wrekin we have pockets of excellence but provision is patchy, with too many access points and differing service standards and opening hours. Locally businesses may be dealing with 4 or 5 different departments at any one time, sometimes letters or calls go out with other relevant service teams unaware of discussions and at best this just results in an unsatisfied customer, at worst we will have missed out on the opportunity to help a business locate or expand in Telford.</p> <p>For many businesses, all they are after is a convenient way to pay their business rates or fill in an application for a licence. These can be easily done via the telephone, the internet or e-mail. However, for others, their needs are more complex. For a business that is considering moving premises, who wants to extend a warehouse or is having problems recruiting staff, we may need to deal with them face-to-face. There may be business rates to sort out, issues with crime in an industrial estate or a major company looking to move to Telford and move a part of its workforce here – all of these will require different relationships, but all need</p> |



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| | <p>coordinating in one place and high quality customer service offered and measured.</p> <p>The need for a central point of contact has been heightened by the current economic downturn, which is having a significant impact on residents and businesses within the Borough. This is coupled with a reduction in business support activities with the demise of Business Link and those local support agencies that relied on funding from Advantage West Midlands.</p> |
| The Solution | <p>This programme will be delivered with lessons learnt from our excellent First Point that is transforming the way we support local residents. Local Authorities that pay attention to local needs, make good and sensitive use of information technology, exhibit strong corporate leadership and use customer and citizens viewpoints to drive service improvement are those most likely to succeed.</p> <p>Local need should drive what our solution looks like. This process will need to be completely co-operative as understanding our businesses, whether they are private or community based, will be at the heart of what we do, it will be the key process in developing this model and predicting demand for future services. This will include all service delivery areas that deal with local businesses and third sector organisations.</p> <p>So, bearing all this in mind, we would look to develop a one-stop destination to provide businesses with good quality client management, quick and easy access to service information, problem solving, help and advice.</p> <p>Contact Centre: A customer Service centre is needed to offer one point of contact for businesses, but aiming to go further than the traditional switchboard and handle a good proportion of simple enquiries as well as monitoring the speed and quality of referred cases. This centre will be the customer face of the council to local prospective businesses and as such will need a good understanding of business issues and policies. Calls that require a qualified or detailed response will still be passed to the relevant officer, but performance measures will be monitored to ensure that speed and quality measures are maintained.</p> <p>CRM System: ICT is only part of the solution – but Customer Relation Management (CRM) systems are helping local authorities better understand and handle customer contact. Deep embedding of IT systems can enable appointments and requests to be made from outside service areas. Telford and Wrekin Council already has a number of CRM systems, so we would look to rationalise and then promote the most effective and appropriate one.</p> <p>Strong Leadership: The importance of strong corporate leadership is essential, both from officers and members and this approach can become a cornerstone of our cooperative approach to businesses. We would hope to establish initiatives such as improved access, better consultations and value for money through business process engineering and case studies have shown that the information taken from this process has been used to alert elected members about issues in their wards and also to feed into budget and policy making.</p> <p>Measure performance The details of this will be set once an appropriate model is decided on, however we should expect large reductions in the number of avoidable contacts by businesses (i.e. those that add no value to the outcome of the enquiry), a reduction in the number of websites and contact numbers used, high standards for a contact centre, a structured approach to complaints and improvements in information management</p> |



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| | to help businesses influence the shape of the service. |
| The Cost | <p>This programme needs to complement service and process improvements linked to the cooperative council model and value for money agenda. Many local authorities have managed to streamline and simplify the way they dealt with a number of enquiries, improving business customer satisfaction and reducing waste and duplication</p> <p>Initial costs for this work are just staff time and this can be covered within the Economic Development Team, however a full costed proposal will need to be submitted looking at areas of potential rationalisation to offer long term funding.</p> |
| Delivering Council priorities | <p>Telford & Wrekin Councils recent Local Economic Assessment highlighted this First Point for Business would contribute to the vision of the cooperative council in a number of ways, including strengthening the local economy and being an efficient, effective and customer-focused council that delivers value-for-money to the local community</p> <p>But most importantly it would seek to enhance our relationships with businesses by seeking to improve its customer service and citizen engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A commitment to user focus and citizen engagement• understanding our communities• clarity of purpose• communicating in appropriate ways; and• delivering change and improved outcomes. |
| Key areas for action | <p>If this model is to be delivered, then we would need scrutiny's support to help drive this piece of work that will have high profile, have clear budgetary implications and may well effect several service areas</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identifying the need: In order to develop and deliver a customer service strategy for businesses we first need to work with local businesses on what they actually want from us and how they expect it to be delivered2. Develop quick, focused Customer Service strategy for business: This needs to take a corporate approach, with strong leadership and that is owned by the organisation as a whole3. Develop a costed, timetabled proposal: This needs to take into account any rationalisation of current services need to deliver the project |
| Additional information | <p>Institute for Customer Services – Local Authorities drive for Excellent Customer Service Telford & Wrekin Local Economic Assessment 2011</p> |
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