

**REPORT TO:** CABINET MEMBER – REGENERATION

**DATE:** 9 June 2010

**SUBJECT:** Business Neighbourhoods and Sefton Integrated Business Support

**WARDS AFFECTED:** All

**REPORT OF:** Steph Prewett, Assistant Director Neighbourhoods and Investment Programmes

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Steph Prewett Ext 3485

**EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL:** No

**PURPOSE/SUMMARY:**

To present a revised approach on how support to businesses in Sefton can be delivered. This will utilise existing WNF and mainstream resources along with Stepclever funding (still subject to approval).

**REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:**

To allow resources for the BVPs to be transferred to the Neighbourhoods Division to support the continued development of Business Neighbourhoods activity.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member:

- (i) Notes the revised proposal
- (ii) Agrees to transferring all resources associated with BVPs and Town Centre Management to the Neighbourhoods Division

**KEY DECISION:** No

**FORWARD PLAN:** No

**IMPLEMENTATION DATE:** 10 June 2010

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:**

**IMPLICATIONS:**

**Budget/Policy Framework:** No Implications.

**Financial:** There are no additional financial implications of this work

**Legal:** No implications

**Risk Assessment:** No implications

**Asset Management:** No implications

**CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS**

The proposals were discussed by the NRTG before approving WNF resources  
FD 423 - The proposals will result in virement of budgets within this portfolio and there are no other financial implications for the Council.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Neighbourhood Regeneration Thematic Group (NRTG) –Business Neighbourhoods and Sefton Integrated Business Support, 14 May 2010

Cabinet Member – Corporate Resources – Chief Officers Report May 2010

**CORPORATE OBJECTIVE MONITORING:**

<u>Corporate Objective</u>		<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community		√	
2	Creating Safe Communities	√		
3	Jobs and Prosperity	√		
4	Improving Health and Well-Being		√	
5	Environmental Sustainability	√		
6	Creating Inclusive Communities	√		
7	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy	√		
8	Children and Young People		√	

**1.0 BACKGROUND:**

1.1 The NRTG was made aware some time ago that both the performance and spend of the SIBS programme had been affected by the impact of the economic downturn both in terms of the business trading climate and spending restrictions imposed by the council which has prevented the filling of key posts.

1.2 Therefore two inter-linked revised proposals have been put together to reflect a more realistic spend profile and new steer towards providing a more preventative service. It also recognises that this may be the last year of Working

Neighbourhoods Fund; the constraints of a decreasing public sector resource and policy directions pointing to localism and Total Place.

- 1.3 The Business Neighbourhoods proposal includes the transfer of Business Village Partnerships (BVPs) to the Neighbourhoods and Investment Programmes Department. The reason for the transfer is that the Neighbourhoods Division are the lead on area management and the work of the Business Village Partnerships and Town Centres is a key part of this work.
- 1.4 The four posts associated with the BVPs have already been moved across to the Neighbourhoods Division following the submission of a Chief Officers Report to Cabinet Member for Corporate Services. The WNF resources have also been agreed by the NRTG. The next step is for the resources used to support the BVPs to be transferred to the Neighbourhoods Division.

## **2.0 PROGRAMME SUMMARY:**

- 2.1 There are now two inter-linked proposals being put forward. SIBS to be delivered by the Planning and Economic Development Department as part of its business support function and Business Neighbourhoods/BVPs/Town Centres through the Neighbourhoods and Investment Programmes Department as part of area management.

### 2.2 Sefton Integrated Business Support

The proposal is that SIBS will continue to offer business start up and after care support to non-retail businesses outside of Linacre and Derby wards. (Linacre and Derby are covered by Stepclever. This will be supplemented by:

- Providing preventative business support activities aimed at tackling short term to medium issues for businesses to come out of the recession stronger and able to support the prime objective of creating employment opportunities and combating worklessness in deprived communities.
- Providing a Social Enterprise support element to the business offer through a partnership arrangement with South Sefton Development Trust
- Developing a Total Business Pilot to further develop the Sefton business engagement and consultation framework.
- Providing more intensive business support workshops and seminars with partners and stakeholders through the successful BusinessplusSefton events and activities.

- Developing a low carbon business support pilot project to undertake an intensive environmental health check and increase the take up of free existing support available for adaptations and improvements.
- Maximising the local sourcing of employment opportunities through local charters with major developers in Sefton by existing construction support from Build Sefton/Stepclever activities.

### 2.3 Business Neighbourhoods/Town Centres and Business Village Partnerships

This will involve taking a more business centred approach using the Business Neighbourhood approach of working with the businesses in the businesses. This has worked well in the existing Stepclever project which works in the Linacre and Derby wards. The businesses are offered a single point of contact and a comprehensive range of potential services which are then customised to their needs. A gap in service which needs to be addressed in the rest of Sefton is the fact that outside of the Town Centres, there is no focus on the retail sector, in particular shopping parades, smaller centres such as Marian Square in Netherton.

Plus, it is recognised that all of the above is public sector funded to support the private sector. Therefore, the fundamental issue is firstly, to encourage the sustainability of these approaches if they work as they support the viability of our communities, but also to demonstrate to the private sector that they bring added value and need a contribution.

Therefore, the revised approach is focused around:

- Offering a comprehensive service to retail businesses
- Developing Total Place approaches for the two Town Centres with the Southport work looking at a potential Business Improvement District
- Offering a menu of services to small independent businesses, focusing on issues around business crime, regulatory services, environmental improvements and business support
- Strengthening the approach to Town Centre Management
- Continuing to develop key projects and initiatives which will revitalise areas and make them more attractive to work and invest in
- Developing area plans, which will be used to prioritise activities. These will be specific to business related issues but will also tie into the wider neighbourhood area plans and development of Area Committee structures.
- Vacant premises programme to tackle derelict shop frontages to improve the visual appearance of shopping areas.

## **4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Member:

- Notes the revised proposal.
- Agrees to transferring all resources associated with BVPs and Town Centre Management to the Neighbourhoods Division.