

REPORT TO: Cabinet Member for Regeneration

DATE: 17th February 2010

SUBJECT: Sefton Business Engagement and Consultation Framework

**WARDS
AFFECTED:** All

REPORT OF: Planning and Economic Regeneration Director

**CONTACT
OFFICER:** Mike Mullin ext 3442

**EXEMPT/
CONFIDENTIAL:** No

PURPOSE/SUMMARY:

To seek members comments on the final draft of the Sefton business engagement and consultation framework for submission to the Sefton Borough Partnership.

The framework explains how we will work with Sefton businesses as part of our Economic Development and Sustainability strategy. The framework will also give us clear information on how to speak with and listen to our businesses and get them involved in the work we do.

REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:

Report submitted for information and comment.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That members comments on the final draft of the Sefton business engagement and consultation framework for submission to the Sefton Borough Partnership.

KEY DECISION: Yes

FORWARD PLAN: Yes

IMPLEMENTATION DATE: March 2010

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

IMPLICATIONS:

Budget/Policy Framework: The business engagement and consultation framework is a new addition to the Sefton Borough Partnership's public engagement and consultation document-'Your Sefton Your Say.'

Financial:

<u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u>	2006/ 2007 £	2007/ 2008 £	2008/ 2009 £	2009/ 2010 £
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
<u>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</u>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date?				
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

Legal: None

Risk Assessment:**Asset Management:** None**CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS**

Sefton Borough Partnership, Sefton Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Business Link NW, South Sefton Development Trust, South Sefton Business Forum, Sefton Business Village Partnership, Job Centre Plus, LSC

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		✓	

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS RELIED UPON IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Sefton business engagement and consultation framework –Position Note (November 2009)

Sefton business engagement and consultation framework (November 2009)

CMR report -Sefton Business Survey- Results and next steps (28 October 2009)

Sefton Borough Partnership -Your Sefton Your Say-Public engagement and consultation framework

BACKGROUND

- 1 Sefton Borough Partnership's Business Support sub-group has been tasked with the development and production of a Sefton business engagement and consultation framework to improve how the council and its stakeholders speak with and listens to Sefton businesses.
- 2 This closely mirrors Sefton Borough Partnership's (SBP) public engagement and consultation framework-Your Sefton Your Say. This document sets out a series of standards which partners and stakeholders have agreed to when engaging and consulting with Sefton communities.

PURPOSE OF FRAMEWORK

- 3 Business engagement is engrained in many of the council's day-to-day activities and in more recent years successive EU and UK Government funding has seen more intensive levels of engagement through a range of dedicated regeneration led business support projects and programmes. This has involved the private sector in consultation exercises to help shape these initiatives and develop successful bids for funding. Indeed private sector consultation has become a major requirement of funding bodies and local authorities have to evidence this in their bids for business support funding.
- 4 Business representatives on various regeneration boards and panels in Sefton have also become commonplace. They bring with them a wealth of knowledge and business acumen, often sitting alongside local community representatives, and ensure a more inclusive approach to local decision-making.
- 5 SBP believes the engagement of local businesses is crucial to the success of its economic development and sustainability objectives for Sefton. SBP recognises that the council and its partners use a variety of methods to both engage and consult with businesses. The primary route is a partnership arrangement with Sefton Chamber of Commerce.
- 6 However the SBP's Business Support Group recognised the need to review and strengthen our overall engagement and consultation strategy and, as a first step, in June 2009 Sefton Council formally endorsed the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) Small Businesses Accord. This is a voluntary code of practice for local authorities in the North West, which seeks to encourage a more productive dialogue with local businesses. The Accord brings together various aspects of consultation best practice to improve the level of participation by businesses in local democracy and decision-making.
- 7 Sefton Planning and Economic Regeneration Department (PERD) recognises the value of Sefton businesses to the economic prosperity

and well-being of the borough. It has already established a number of engagement and consultation routes for local businesses including the establishment of Sefton Economic Forum and the ' Sefton Business Survey' in September 2009, the results of which were presented to members at 28th October CMR.

CURRENT APPROACH TO BUSINESS ENAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 8 Sefton Council engages with businesses on a number of levels ranging from supporting enterprise, growth and inward investment in the borough to statutory requirements such as planning, environmental protection, licensing, trading standards and business rates.
- 9 Most departments and functions of the Council also involve businesses in their decision-making. The Council's economic development service, operated by the Planning and Economic Regeneration Director, has taken its engagement strategy to a higher level because of the need to involve and inform businesses in the economic strategy for Sefton and the wider Liverpool City Region.
- 10 Officers are tasked with creating effective links with all sectors of the business community and more importantly bringing together various aspects of consultation and best practice. The Business Development Managers take a proactive approach to engaging with businesses so that they are given the fullest opportunity to participate in the decision making process and to fully understand the reasons behind the final decisions taken.
- 11 The following table shows the existing business networks and communication/consultation methods:

Business Network	Membership	Communication/consultation Method	Data held
Sefton Chamber of Commerce & Industry	c. 500 businesses Network attendance averages 100 members per month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business network events (Monthly) • Newsletters • E newsletters • Chamber TV 	Membership database
Sefton Economic Forum	c 600 member database Attendance averages 80 per each qtr event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 events pa • Consult over major strategic projects e.g. LEGI 	Membership database

Business Network	Membership	Communication/consultation Method	Data held
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint meetings with North Liverpool Business Forum 	
The Mersey Partnership/Invest Sefton Investor Development	Working with Sefton's top 20 Major employers/Foreign owned companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southport Business Park Executive Club • Aftercare programme supporting re-investment/job safeguarding projects 	Tractivity CRM system
South Sefton Business Forum	c. 300 membership Active membership of about 130 and average 50 members per monthly event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly events • Consult over major strategic projects e.g. SRB, LEGI • Nominates members for steering groups/boards • Presentations on key business issues 	Electronic mailing system
Build Sefton/Stepclever Construction	c 390 membership Active membership of about 100 and averages 70 members per event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction network meetings • Company registration database • E newsletters and tender alerts 	Construction company database
Sefton Business Village Partnership	c. 800 membership comprising 6 BVPs Over arching board and Local BVP sub-groups (Southport, Formby, Altside, Crosby & Waterloo, Bootle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly meetings • Private Sector board nominated by stakeholders • Consultation over major initiatives e.g. highways, developments 	Membership database
Southport Tourism Business Network	c. 110 members	sub groups covering General/Travel/Golf/Restaurants/Retail/Events/Conferences & Tourism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings 2-5 times pa • Alliance meeting (board) • Sub groups 	Membership database Electronic and post
Mersey Maritime (MM)	c.1000 businesses of which 120 MM members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing strategy • Board membership • Visiting programme • Lobbying role eg. Port rates revaluation 	Membership database Electronic consultation of

Business Network	Membership	Communication/consultation Method	Data held
			c. 1000 organisations
Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)	c.1600 members in Sefton and West Lancashire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobbying role • Area meetings • Area Managers 	Membership database Website Bi-monthly magazine E-newsletter
South Sefton Development Trust-Social Enterprise Network	C 150 Social Enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly meetings 	Electronic database

12 The above networks have access to approximately 4,900 businesses. This total does not take account of duplications, or businesses located in West Lancashire through the FSB. Nevertheless, each organisation provides potential access points for consulting up to approximately 40% of the Sefton business community.

13 In September 2009 Invest Sefton undertook a survey of key council departments currently engaging with businesses in Sefton. The purpose of this exercise was to see how different departments dealt with businesses and the survey focussed on:

- Frequency of engagement and consultation
- Purpose of engagement and consultation
- Methods used to engage and consult
- Data and information used to engage and consult

14 The survey was completed on 2nd October 2009 with 26 initial responses from teams/sections currently dealing with Sefton businesses as part of their core service provision, business support or compliance with statutory requirements. A snapshot of initial responses is shown below:

Department	No of sections/teams engaging with businesses
Economic Regeneration	11
Planning	4
Environmental Protection	4
Children Schools & Families	2

Tourism	2
Technical services	1
Housing Market Renewal	1
Finance/Arvato	1

15 Other key headline responses from teams/sections include:

- 19 have daily regular contact with Sefton businesses
- 15 provide direct support, advice and guidance to businesses
- 10 are involved in joint/public private sector initiatives
- 9 engage and consult with businesses as part of their core service delivery
- 11 consult businesses on a regular basis
- 9 evaluate the impact of their work with businesses through customer satisfaction surveys
- 14 provide and disseminate important information to businesses on a regular basis
- 7 engage with businesses on statutory compliance issues
- 7 engage with businesses for obtain income for Sefton council

16 This initial survey has revealed a wide and varied range of engagement and consultation with Sefton businesses. There is also strong evidence of excellent inter-department joint business engagement work particularly in the Planning and Economic Regeneration Department with, for example, supporting inward investors , developers, a construction charter, an employment charter, business expansions, public realm and town centre initiatives. More recently under the SBP's Economic Development and Sustainability Thematic Group, the Regeneration and Environmental teams from the council are looking at joint working opportunities to support businesses on climate change and low carbon initiatives.

17 However there is still much room for improvement and greater connectivity amongst 'business facing' officers across the authority in terms of awareness of respective services, cross referral of customers, shared customer standards, sharing company data, disseminating information and supporting new enterprise and business growth.

PRIVATE SECTOR REPRESENTATION

18 There is also strong evidence of private sector involvement in council business, particularly around SBP and economic regeneration activities. The strategic focus of SBP has helped foster a greater spirit

of cooperation and inclusiveness in the Sefton community with membership from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

- 19 Historically Sefton economic regeneration programmes and projects have also encouraged this approach and we have had strong private sector representation on various board and steering groups since the inception of Bootle Maritime City Challenge in 1994. This pattern has followed through to the present with South Sefton Partnership, Central Southport Partnership and Netherton Partnership SRB programmes all benefiting from having local business owner/managers actively involved in decision making.
- 20 Private sector involvement remains strong in successor programmes such as Southport Partnership and the more recent Local Enterprise Growth Initiative with Liverpool City Council called Stepclever. Together with other business networks such as Sefton Chamber of Commerce, FSB, Sefton Business Village Partnership and Sefton Economic Forum these have continued to provide vehicles for greater business involvement in local decision-making.
- 21 Strong examples of this can be found in Sefton's private sector led investment steering groups in the current Stepclever and Working Neighbourhood Funded business projects. Both these groups have private sector representatives from broad range of Sefton businesses. All investment fund awards for new start ups and business growth projects are overseen by these groups, not only to ensure transparency, but also to provide valuable business expertise and experience to support our local based Case Officers. Similar representation can be found on local boards, panels and town centre partnerships.

NEXT STEPS

- 22 The final draft Sefton business engagement and consultation framework is attached in Annex A. The document has been widely circulated for comment to partners, stakeholders and business networks. It is has also been made available via a link on the council's website and an article in the Liverpool Echo's Business Pages on 24 December 2009. Feedback received has been incorporated into the consultation process.
- 23 The documents were presented to the SBP Public Engagement and Consultation Panel on 22 January 2010, Panel members were impressed by the current level of engagement and consultation with businesses. However it was suggested that the existing Public Engagement framework-Your Sefton Your Say-be revised to incorporate the business standards and measures show in Annex A.