

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Leader and Cabinet 2 July 2009  
**AUTHOR/S:** Executive Director / Corporate Manager, New Communities

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### **ACTIONS TO SUPPORT BUSINESSES DURING THE RECESSION - QUARTERLY UPDATE**

#### **Purpose**

1. This report provides Cabinet with an update on the delivery of actions proposed to mitigate the impact of the recession on businesses in South Cambridgeshire.

This is not a key decision.

#### **Progress Report for Period 1 April – 30 June 2009**

2. The table below details the progress made against actions identified in the Cabinet Report of 16 April 2009. Key activities since this time are:
  - Financial well-being event provided advice to South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) employees in April.
  - The volume of invoices paid within 10 days improved to 52.2% in May, an increase of 4% over the same month last year.
  - How to Win Contracts event was held on 4 June. This event was organised by SCDC with the Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce and Business Link. The event was attended by 110 company delegates. Presentations and advice were given by local and regional organisations:
    - South Cambridgeshire District Council
    - Cambridge City Council
    - Cambridgeshire County Council
    - Fenland District Council
    - Cambridgeshire Police
    - Cambridge Housing Society
    - London 2012 Olympics
    - Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation
    - East of England Regional Development Agency.

Feedback was very positive.

- The changes to the Hardship Rate Relief Scheme have resulted in four requests for assistance. One application has been returned so far, and if awarded in full would cost £12,000. The Head of Revenues is assessing the application against the council's criteria. Further applications are anticipated.
- Business seminar 'Ride the Recession' has been arranged for 1 July.

Actions	Timescale	Cost	Progress to date and evaluation
<p>1. Hardship Rate Relief:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicise the existing scheme</li> <li>• Review the existing policy to facilitate the award of rate relief to assist businesses at imminent risk of failure and to ensure a fair allocation process of an agreed budget</li> </ul>	Available over 2009/10	£25,000	<p>Scheme completed and available.</p> <p>1 request received for hardship support received. Total value £12000</p>
<p>2. Freeze fees for taxi licensing, trade refuse collection and other environmental health services as recommended by the Portfolio Holder 27 January 2009</p>	Available over 2009/10	£15,500	In place – Completed.
<p>3. Lobby Minister for Local Government regarding NNDR and Minister for Energy regarding fuel poverty issues.</p>	February 2009	-	Minister's response received.
<p>4. Economic Development Events (business breakfasts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'How to Win Contracts' "event with other public authorities at the Belfry Cambourne</li> <li>• Business Seminar on surviving the economic downturn at Duxford Practical workshop with presentations from Marshall Aerospace Barclays Corporate and Business Link East</li> </ul>	<p>4 June 2009</p> <p>1 July 2009</p>	<p>£3,000</p> <p>£5,000</p>	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Attended by 100 businesses (target 70-80). Positive feedback received on practical value of the event.</p>
<p>5. Develop financial options to help development continue at Orchard Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plot C3 transferred to affordable housing from market sales. BPHA funded by HCA, with support by SCDC.</li> <li>• Persimmon Homes commenced work on Plot B1, as result of transfer to C3 to BPHA. Martin Grant have commenced work on Plot D.</li> <li>• Application for HCA Kickstart funding</li> </ul>	<p>April 2009</p> <p>May 2009</p> <p>June 2009</p>	HCA funding provided	All three house-builders are back on site, and higher level of reservations than last year.

<p>submitted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposal for private sector rented initiative made to HCA</li> <li>• Further work planned with partners on the private rented sector and selfbuild/eco housing options.</li> </ul>	June 2009		
6. Provide rent-free space for CAB at SCDC	March 2009	Within existing budgets	Offered – but unlikely to take up offer without financial grant to cover additional costs for CAB
7. SCDC staff:			
Financial well being event to signpost staff to appropriate organisations who can offer counselling and practical advice for themselves and family members	April 2009	£2,000	In place, completed
Offer short-term projects to existing staff rather than agency staff	February 2009	Potential saving	In place, ongoing
Revise the staff relocation terms so that the sums available can be used flexibly, without increasing the total claimed.	December 2009	Potential saving if new staff can be retained whilst unable to sell former home	Work has commenced
8. Aim to pay suppliers within 20 days	February 2009	Up to 10 days interest on sums paid	All staff made aware via Chief Executives message. Improved payments. Improvement over last year of 4% to 52.2% paid in 10 days. (May). 92.7 % settled within 30 days.
<b>Proposed Actions</b>			
9. Fund direct specialist business support for businesses affected by the recession. The delivery of such support to be via third party organisations to ensure that duplication of support is avoided.	September 2009	£50,000	Grant conditions currently being prepared, and value of scheme being assessed. Report to be presented to Portfolio Holder meeting.

10. Improve ways of helping firms relocate to South Cambridgeshire, including property search and identification systems	September 2009	£10,000	Meeting held with Invest East of England (19/6/09). Discussions started with neighbouring councils, businesses and commercial agents to develop a tool/mechanism for improved investment.
11. Planning Policy SPD/DPD to be produced to strengthen support for economic development	tbc	-	To be included within the review of core strategy.
12. Small businesses that are identified as likely to benefit from rate relief will be targeted and encouraged to apply for this benefit	September 2009	Within approved budgets	

### Implications

3.	Financial	<p>Council made available total of £150,000 to aid businesses in South Cambs affected by the recession.</p> <p>At the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter over £23,000 has been spent or committed. This figure does not include any commitments arising from NNDR hardship relief applications.</p> <p>A contingency fund of £39,500 is available to be allocated to further initiatives.</p>
	Legal	No implications
	Staffing	No Implications
	Risk Management	No Implications
	Equal Opportunities	No Implications

### Consultations

4. In preparing this report the Finance, Revenues and Benefits and Human Resources services have contributed.

### Effect on Strategic Aims

5.	<p><b>Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all.</b></p> <p>Many of the measures outlined in this report are based on feedback from partner agencies, businesses and local residents, and are intended to support our aim of providing excellent services. A pro-active approach is being taken to the promotion of these measures.</p>
	<p><b>Commitment to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for all.</b></p> <p>There are well-documented links between economic prosperity, health, wellbeing and community safety. The measures in this report are intended to maintain the local economy.</p>

<b>Commitment to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live.</b>
It is hoped that local residents will welcome actions that the council is taking to support businesses through the recession.
<b>Commitment to assisting provision for local jobs for all.</b>
The Council's commitment to support businesses through the recession is a key element of the authority's pledge to assist in providing jobs and prosperity across the district for all residents.
<b>Commitment to providing a voice for rural life.</b>
Small businesses form a key part of the life of a strong rural community.

### **Conclusions/Summary**

7. This report provides Cabinet with a brief update on the current position with regard to activities being undertaken to support local businesses during the recession. A further report will be presented to Cabinet in October.

### **Recommendation**

8. It is recommended that Cabinet note the report.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Reports: 15 January, 12 February and 16 April

**Contact Officer:** Nicole Kritzingler – Economic Development Officer  
Telephone: (01954) 713454