

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**23 June 2015**

**Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Information**

**1 BETTER BUSINESS FOR ALL**

**Summary**

**This report provides an update on the progress that is being made with the Better Business for All initiative in Kent and Medway, since it was last reported to this Board in February 2014.**

**1.1 Background**

1.1.1 The aim of Better Business for All (BBfA) is to break down the barriers that exist between the regulatory and businesses communities, with the ambition of promoting economic growth and regeneration. There are a number of ways that the programme will seek to do this, which include:

- reducing the regulatory burden on businesses;
- promoting two way communication between businesses and regulatory services;
- improving the business perception of regulators;
- supporting regulators to find the right balance between encouragement, education and enforcement;
- developing a joint offer of support from regulatory services for businesses;
- building trust and confidence between regulators and businesses; and
- advising government on how to do things better for both businesses and regulators.

1.1.2 BBfA was initiated by the Better Regulatory Delivery Office; part of the Department for Business Innovation and Skills; working with two pilot areas - Leicestershire and Greater Birmingham and Solihull. This work resulted in strengthened relationships between businesses and regulators, the development of a single access for business to regulatory guidance and advice, the

development of a regulatory directory “Talk to Reg” and engagement with their local Growth Hubs.

- 1.1.3 In Kent we can clearly see the benefits of this approach for both our business communities and this has been demonstrated by the wide representation by local regulators on the BBfA Steering Group, the work of which has gained strong support from the Kent Chief Executives Group.
- 1.1.4 Since this was originally reported to Members in February 2014 huge strides have been made by the Steering Group to develop the programme, including setting up a long term Business Engagement group, the development of a website, which we anticipate going live in July, and a training group focusing on delivering a culture change programme for regulators.

## **1.2 Business Engagement**

- 1.2.1 It is important that as group of regulators we communicate our aspirations to the business community and listen to their feedback. Significant progress has been made on this front following the involvement of both the Federation of Small Businesses and Invicta Chamber of Commerce. They have provided strong support to the programme, including promotion with their members and we have a growing number of businesses that are supportive of the principles of BBfA.
- 1.2.2 In September representatives of the Steering Group, including our Chief Environmental Health Officer, will be making a presentation to the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership on BBfA and its merits, with a view to developing a Business Engagement Panel comprising some of their members.
- 1.2.3 The website, which is currently under construction, will provide businesses with a single point of access for regulatory advice and guidance. It is the intention that this will link with the Kent and Medway growth Hub when that comes on line.

## **1.3 Regulator Training**

- 1.3.1 One of the principle components to the successful delivery of this initiative is to encourage regulators to reflect on the way that regulation is delivered to businesses, particularly SME’s, that simply do not have the resources to navigate their way through the myriad of regulations that might apply to them.
- 1.3.2 The Council’s regulatory services include Planning, Environmental Health, Licensing and Building Control, representatives of each Team will be attending the training events of which the aim is two-fold; firstly to help regulators gain an insight into perceptions held of them by businesses and help them appreciate some of the constraints that small businesses work under on a daily basis and secondly for regulators across the County to explore how they can work together better for the benefit of the business community.

- 1.3.3 Three ambitious training events are planned over the next four months, in which approximately 300 regulators will be trained. Following the training we will be looking at how we might work differently to support this agenda across the Borough, for example identifying opportunities for better co-ordination, focussing on high risk and poor performing businesses, developing business support and guidance and sharing data between regulators on business performance.

#### **1.4 Legal Implications**

- 1.4.1 This initiative underpins the approach to regulation promoted by the Regulators Compliance Code and aims to support responsible and responsive businesses to improve compliance, whilst applying a consistent approach to enforcement to those small numbers of businesses that blatantly refuse to make efforts to meet minimum legal requirements, for gain.

#### **1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.5.1 None

#### **1.6 Risk Assessment**

- 1.6.1 None

Background papers:

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Nil

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