

## JOINT COMMITTEE

22nd November 2012

### Local Enterprise Partnerships

#### Recommendation

Members are asked to endorse the signing of the Worcestershire Regulatory and Business Partnership Charter and their support for WRS to undertake the work that will be needed to convert the Charter principles into a delivery plan

#### Contribution to Priorities/ Recommendations

Contributes to priority to stimulate the local economy and support business growth

#### Introduction/Summary Background

Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) is making a positive contribution to both the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Worcestershire LEP, taking the lead for the 'regulatory' theme. It is a UK leader in simplifying regulatory cultures and delivery which support business growth and enterprise while reducing burdens on business.

Our service has undergone significant transformation during the last two years and used initial business engagement to lay good foundations for streamlined regulatory compliance which supports rather than hinders business growth.

This is a good starting point but there is more to be achieved which can contribute to Worcestershire being "Open for Business".

#### Report

##### National Context

1. Businesses want a simplified regulatory environment to ensure a fair and competitive trading context. The UK regulatory system has evolved over many decades and for some time now there has been a move towards a lighter-touch regulation for business, yet ensure that public and consumer safety is not put at risk. Prosecution has very much been used for extreme cases

or as a last resort, were providing consistent regulatory advice to achieve better compliance has been the main focus of our service delivery.

2. Nationally the department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) has embarked on its Red Tape Challenge which intends to reduce wide ranging regulatory burdens on businesses of all types, sizes and purpose. Businesses say they want regulation to exist to ensure a level playing field for all but they want it to be in a “right and light touch” way where businesses are helped towards self compliance with prosecution and enforcement only used as the very last resort and primarily focused on high risk business areas or rogue traders. Large companies generally have an in-house resource to ensure business compliance but there is evidence of greater burdens being shouldered by start-ups, micros, Small Medium-size Enterprises and Social and Young Entrepreneurs who do not comprehend the enormity of regulatory requirements when their focus is on developing a new business idea for products and services and striving to do well in the economic climate.

3. As a consequence, LEP’s have been tasked by BIS to tackle the constructive and mutually beneficial relationship between regulation and enterprise to find local innovations and solutions which support business start-ups, growth and expansion.

4. BIS hosted a one day “Better Business For All” event on 31<sup>st</sup> October attended by all LEPs, specifically LEP Boards, business representatives and local regulators. The outcomes of the two Pathfinder LEPs (Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP; Leicestershire LEP) developing products and tools for regulation supporting growth were shared at the event. BIS is expecting each LEP to set out firm plans for its grassroots activity on this agenda and WRS will be considering what practical products it can develop over the coming months to better support the LEP agenda.

### **Joint Worcestershire LEP and Regulatory Services Approach**

5. Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) is a UK leader in simplifying regulatory cultures and delivery which support business growth and enterprise while reducing burdens on business. Our service has undergone significant transformation during the last two years and used initial business engagement to lay good foundations for streamlined regulatory compliance which supports rather than hinders business growth. This is a good starting point but there is more to be achieved which can contribute to Worcestershire being “Open for Business”.

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6. WRS have also been closely shadowing the evolving practical tools and products emerging from the two Pathfinder LEP's in order to learn and develop Worcestershire solutions. This has been particularly important with Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP given the common area of North Worcestershire which will ensure consistency and mutual benefits for both adjoining LEP areas.

7. The Worcestershire LEP workshop on 'Regulation Supporting Enterprise' in May 2012 highlighted the importance of this agenda and signalled the practical areas where businesses, local and national regulators can work together in Worcestershire to develop supportive practical tools and advice for business entrepreneurs and leaders. Such tools include a sign posting phone application, a website that gathers all regulatory information in one place and a Business Partnership Charter that sets out what a business can expect from a regulator. The LEP and Worcestershire Regulatory Services are therefore working together to establish a delivery plan comprising tangible products and outcomes which meet business needs.

8. The Worcestershire LEP and WRS have held discussions with key national regulators including HMRC, ACAS, Food Standards Agency, the Fire and Rescue Service, Health and Safety Executive and the Environment Agency. All are willing to work collaboratively on this agenda with the LEP and WRS and create solutions to help businesses establish and grow.

9. The Worcestershire LEP held their mid-term conference on the 9th November at which the Regulatory and Business Partnership Charter (Appendix 1) was signed and launched by the various regulators, including WRS. This is a significant step forward to ensuring that WRS continues to have a positive impact on helping stimulate the local economy.

Members are asked to endorse this action and their support for WRS to undertake the work that will be needed to convert the Charter principles into a delivery plan.

10. This Charter will act as the starting point and public signal to Worcestershire businesses that practical products, advice and positive changes are coming.

### **Next Steps**

WRS will undertake a business analysis of the market to establish what regulatory support and services local businesses would find most helpful.

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WRS will continue to develop its business support/advice team and develop products that will support new and existing businesses throughout their various business cycles.

WRS will continue to work with partners such as Environment Agency and the Fire and Rescue Service and Business Central to coordinate regulatory support and advice for those businesses in most need.

WRS will continue to offer cost effective training opportunities such as Food Safety and Health and Safety courses for relevant business sectors.

**Financial Implications**

WRS will commit resources to this work but these will be contained within existing budgets.

**Legal Implications**

None as a result of the recommendations

**Contact Points**

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**Background Papers**