

Cabinet

Wednesday 16 September 2026

Promotion of Business Support

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor K May Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development & Enabling
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Assistant Director Regeneration and Property Services
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Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Council Priorities	Economic Development;
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that:-

- 1) The Council continues to develop and enhance its digital-first model for promotion of business support programmes available to businesses in the District; and**
- 2) The Council continues to utilise Worcestershire Growth Hub as a central access point for business advice, support and opportunities.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Council which took place on 25 February 2026 a motion was submitted for consideration by the Council relating to promotion of business support in the district.
- 2.2 The motion asked “the Cabinet to consider producing a concise business prospectus bringing together useful information about available grants, incentives, guidance and clear signposting of business opportunities in the north of the County. This will be a single market-ready document to be distributed across Bromsgrove and

subject to agreement from Redditch Borough Council and Wyre Forest District Council, across North Worcestershire. This document would be made available at Council offices and published digitally on the Council's website."

- 2.3 Enhanced business engagement and the promotion of available business support have long been identified as priorities within the Council's economic development agenda. While resource constraints limited the Council's ability to undertake additional activity in these areas at the time the motion was submitted, a revised economic development structure has now been agreed and is being implemented to provide the capacity needed to further develop this area of work.
- 2.4 To identify examples of best practice and understand how business support is promoted elsewhere, Officers have reviewed approaches used by other organisations and local authorities.
- 2.5 As part of a national, Government supported network, Growth Hubs are recognised as an effective mechanism for improving business productivity, resilience and growth by simplifying access to a complex support landscape. Officers contacted the national growth hub network and reviewed approaches used elsewhere. The examples identified were primarily digital or downloadable resources, reflecting the need for business support information to be easy to update and access.
- 2.6 In addition, 30 local authorities across England were surveyed to understand how they bring together and promote local business support information. The findings support a digital-first approach, with online information and signposting used as the main route for helping businesses identify relevant advice, funding and opportunities.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 The Council recognises the importance of attracting small and medium sized businesses to the district and helping new and existing businesses to grow and thrive in the area. To support this objective, the Council has invested in and supported the delivery of a range of business support programmes. The Council also co-funds Worcestershire Growth Hub which acts as the primary access point for business advice, support and opportunities.
- 3.2 The business support offer currently available to Bromsgrove businesses comprises a combination of District Council-funded initiatives, County Council-funded initiatives, and national schemes. Locally, the County Council funds business start-up and early years support, business growth support, innovation support and business

grants. Bromsgrove District Council funds innovation support through the Betaden and Innovation Lighthouse programmes, as well as specialist advisor support accessed through the Growth Hub.

- 3.3 At present, the Council's website contains information on local business support initiatives and signposts businesses to Worcestershire Growth Hub and other delivery organisations. Whilst this approach provides access to online information it does not currently offer a comprehensive and regularly updated directory of available support. The Growth Hub website is primarily designed to encourage businesses to contact their advisers rather than enabling business to independently identify all available support options.
- 3.4 There is currently no uniform business support offer across North Worcestershire. Each existing local authority delivers programmes that are tailored to the needs of its local business community and aligned with its own economic priorities and ambitions. However, in the context of local government reorganisation and the anticipated creation of a North Worcestershire Unitary Authority, the development of improved business support information should be designed in a way that is capable of supporting greater consistency and future alignment across the wider area. While discussions have not yet taken place with Wyre Forest District Council, the shared officer arrangements covering Bromsgrove and Redditch provide an opportunity to begin shaping an approach that could, subject to future agreement, form the basis of a North Worcestershire business support resource.
- 3.5 The purpose of promoting business support is to raise awareness of the range of programmes available and to make them easier to find, understand and access. Officers consider that this objective is best achieved through a strengthened digital business support resource, supported by clear signposting to Worcestershire Growth Hub and direct officer assistance where required.
- 3.6 This approach allows information on grants, incentives, guidance and business opportunities to be kept current as programmes, eligibility criteria and delivery arrangements change. It also enables businesses to access information at any time and from any location, while retaining assisted routes for those who need additional help.
- 3.7 A printed or static prospectus would be less suitable as the main channel because information can change quickly and would require further updating, reissuing and redistribution. For this reason, the recommended model is digital-first, rather than digital-only, with support available through Council officers and Growth Hub advisers where additional advice and guidance is required.

- 3.8 The Council acknowledges that the current online offer could be improved. Additional capacity will shortly be available within the economic development team to support the maintenance and ongoing development of the Council's web content. This will create an opportunity to provide a more comprehensive, user-friendly and regularly updated source of business support information directly through the Council's website.
- 3.9 Officers will review examples of best practice from other local authorities and business support organisations and use these findings to inform the development of an improved online business support resource.
- 3.10 The preferred approach is therefore to focus resources on enhancing the Council's online offer, ensuring that businesses can access high-quality, current and comprehensive support information, with clear routes into Worcestershire Growth Hub and officer support where further guidance is needed. The structure of the resource will also be capable of supporting future development into a wider North Worcestershire business support resource, subject to future discussions and agreement.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The costs associated with developing and maintaining enhanced online business support information can be accommodated within existing budgets and staffing resources.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications directly resulting from this report.

6. OTHER – IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

- 6.1 The online business support directory will be developed with local government reorganisation in mind. The proposed structure will be designed to meet current Bromsgrove requirements while remaining flexible enough to support a wider North Worcestershire approach in future. This would allow content, signposting and presentation to be adapted over time as service delivery arrangements evolve.
- 6.2 The Council recently resolved to provide funding to Worcestershire Growth Hub for the financial years 2026/27 and 2027/28. This will

ensure that the Growth Hub can provide enhanced support for local businesses leading up to local government reorganisation and be well positioned to continue operating effectively under the strategic authority that ultimately assumes responsibility for business support following LGR.

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.3 The promotion and delivery of business support programmes aligns with the Council priority Economic Development. The programmes are designed to help businesses to start-up, grow and innovate creating employment opportunities and improving productivity.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.4 A digital approach support's the Council's wider sustainability objectives. By reducing the need for printing, storage and distribution, an online resource minimises the consumption of paper and other materials and reduces the risk of outdated publications being discarded. This approach is consistent with the principles of waste prevention and resource efficiency and contributes to the effort to reduce the environmental impact of Council activities.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.5 Information on a well-designed website is more accessible than printed materials. Websites can offer a wide range of built-in and user-controlled accessibility features whereas printed materials are in a fixed format.
- 6.6 It is recognised that a digital-first approach may present challenges for some individuals and businesses who experience digital exclusion, including some older people, disabled people and those with limited access to, or confidence using, digital services. These considerations have been assessed as part of the development of the proposal. While the preferred approach is to improve the provision of online information, the intention is for this to be digital-first rather than digital-only. Alternative routes to accessing support will remain available, including direct assistance from Council officers and Worcestershire Growth Hub advisers, who can help businesses identify and access appropriate support where self-service online access is not suitable. This approach seeks to balance the benefits of maintaining accurate and up-to-date digital information with the need to ensure that business support remains accessible to all potential users and that equality considerations are appropriately taken into account.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Providing business support information on a website ensures it is available at all times, can be adapted to meet accessibility needs and can be updated quickly and efficiently. However, not all businesses have access to digital channels or find websites meet their individual needs. To address this, officers and Growth Hub staff are available to offer one-to-one support, guidance and advice directly to businesses.

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9. **REPORT SIGN OFF**

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr K May Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling	5/8/26
Lead Director / Head of Service	Rachel Egan Assistant Director Regeneration and Property	13/08/26
Financial Services	Paul Earley Financial Services Manager	28/7/26
Legal and Democratic Services	Nicola Cummings, Principal Solicitor – Governance Jess Bayley-Hill, Principal Democratic Services Officer	28/07/26
Policy Team	Helen Mole Business Improvement Manager	03/08/26
Climate Change Team	Matthew Eccles Climate Change Manager	6/8/26