
WOMEN INTO ENTERPRISE PROJECT

**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) -Councillor David Lyonette,
Regeneration and Planning Portfolio**

Responsible Director(s) - John Buxton, Director of Development and Environment

Purpose of Report

1. To seek Cabinet approval to extend the Women Into Enterprise Project with Council funding for a further year and to enter into a new Service Level Agreement with Darlington Business Venture for the delivery of the project.

Information and Analysis

Background

2. The Women Into Enterprise Project was established in September 2001 and was part funded through the European Social Fund until March 2004. The Project was extremely successful with over 50 women being assisted to establish their own business and with over a 100 members in the Network.
3. The aim of the project was to raise the awareness of women's capacity to start and manage effective businesses and to provide mentors and 'how to' information to enable them to do so. It also assisted in breaking down the barriers, which stood in the way of women's success in business - factors such as lack of confidence, opportunities, advice and support. The project was delivered by Darlington Business Venture, under a Service Level Agreement with the Council.
4. An application was submitted under Objective 3 for European Social Fund assistance to extend the project for a further period. However, there were insufficient funds remaining in this Programme to satisfy all the applications received and the application could not, therefore, be supported.

Extension of the Project

5. Darlington Business Venture will encourage the establishment of women-run businesses and offer pre-start advice and counselling services, which are additional to the mainstream activity available through Darlington Business Venture's Business Start programme. They will provide training sessions at different levels to suit the various needs of the Darlington Women's Business Network membership, covering both business and personal skills.

6. Darlington Business Venture will co-ordinate the Darlington Women's Business Network, building on the existing network membership base. A newsletter will be produced on a bi-monthly basis and a directory of the membership will be developed. They will continue to develop the Women's Mentoring Programme, by encouraging existing members to mentor new members. This will also enable the existing members to continue with their personal development and to build their confidence through providing support to others.

Project Details

7. The costing of the project is based on the following:

Network Co-ordinator	Based on 25 hrs/month at £20 per hour	£4,500
Business Counselling	Based on 20 hrs/month at £35 per hour	£6,300
Business Skills seminars	4	£2,000
Personal Skills seminars	4	£2,000
Networking events	9	£1,800
Mentor Training & Packs		£2,000
Promotional Activity/Administration	Promotional activity includes the material required to produce newsletters, a membership directory and the associated costs. The administration cost includes stationery, telephone costs, e-mails etc. and staff time based on an average of 20 hrs/month	£7,250
Insurance		£1,320
Total		£26,800

8. Darlington Business Venture will provide monthly reports to the Economic Regeneration and Tourism Section, indicating the outputs attained in relation to the table below:

Indicator	Target
Number of new members to the Network	20
Number of women receiving business advice	20
Number of women assisted to start a business	15
Number of women undertaking business training	50
Number of women using coaching/mentoring	15
Number of women becoming mentors	4
Number of Business Seminars	4
Number of Personal Development Seminars	4
Number of newsletters produced	4
Number of Lone Parents accessing the scheme	2

9. The funding necessary to enable the project to proceed can be provided from within the Economic Regeneration and Tourism Section's revenue budget.

Summary

10. The Project provides a valuable service and much needed support to women entrepreneurs in Darlington, thereby supporting National and Regional enterprise objectives. Darlington Business Venture has a long-standing reputation for supporting business start-ups and they have been awarded the contract to operate the Business Link Business Start Up programme in Darlington.

Outcome of Consultation

11. The Women Into Enterprise Project is supported by Darlington's Community Strategy, One NorthEast's Regional Economic Strategy and by Business Link's Corporate Strategy.

Legal Implications

12. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

13. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

14. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework

Decision Deadline

15. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter

Recommendation

16. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) Members approve the extension of the Women Into Enterprise Project for a further year and note the expenditure is contained within the Department's existing MTFP.
 - (b) Officers be authorised to enter into a new Service Level Agreement with Darlington Business Venture to deliver the project as outlined in the report.

Reasons

17. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-

- (a) To enable the Women Into Enterprise Project to continue.
- (b) To ensure that the Project is delivered in an accountable manner.

John Buxton
Director of Development and Environment

Background Papers

- (i) A Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise, Small Business Service
- (ii) Service Level Agreement, Darlington Borough Council, Darlington Business Venture
- (iii) A Community Strategy for the Future of Darlington

Suzanne Clark : Extension 2686
jh