

NEWS

MHDC Signs Small Business Engagement Accord



Malvern Hills District Council has signed an Accord with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) to reaffirm its commitment to taking a proactive approach to engaging with local businesses.

The Small Business Engagement Accord contains a number of principles which are designed to encourage a more productive dialogue with the local business community.

Councillor Barbara Williams, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development (pictured above with Ken Wigfield from the FSB), says:

“Engaging with local businesses is extremely important to us and is a key aspect of our Economic Prosperity priority. Given the current economic climate, this is an ideal time to develop a closer dialogue with the local business community to hear their views and understand their needs.”

Malvern Small Business Forum Celebrates 2 Years



The Malvern Small Business Forum celebrated its second anniversary last month at a meeting attended by 32 local businesses. The group, which meets every month, was set up to provide a meeting place for small businesses and for those who have recently decided to start up or are thinking of doing so. The aim is to provide an opportunity for informal networking where the more experienced members will offer help, advice and ideas to the less experienced.

The group was founded by Bryan Judson who is really pleased with the success of the group, particularly given the current difficult economic climate. “There are some really good relationships building between members of the group,” he said. “The goal was to grow the group to a sustainable 20-25 members per month, which we have more than achieved, so the group is a great success. I am impressed with the quality and diversity of the businesses that attend.”

Members network after meetings, and either help each other with questions and advice during this time, or arrange to meet for a one-to-one to find out more about a particular businesses’ service or product.

The Jobcentre also refers people who typically have been made redundant and are considering setting up their own business.

Malvern Small Business Forum is supported by Malvern Hills District Council’s Economic Development team and meets on the second Tuesday of each month, from 7pm to 9pm. The December meeting is a Christmas social for members, the next regular meeting will be on 10 January 2012 at Malvern Hills Science Park. Visit www.msbfbiz for more information.

What would you like for breakfast?



We are planning to hold regular business breakfast meetings in the district. We would like your feedback on whether you feel these would be useful. If you have any suggestions regarding locations, timings, format, content, etc. then we would welcome your comments.

One possibility could be to integrate it with some business training (e.g. selling skills, goal setting, social media, etc.).

Let us know what you think – contact the Economic Development team at ecodev@malvern hills.gov.uk

Worcestershire LEP Welcomes £3.7M Funding Boost



Worcestershire’s regional economy is in line for £3.7million in new government funds to help spearhead local building projects.

Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) has been allocated the money from the government's new 'Growing Places Fund', which can be used for new infrastructure and to open up new sites for development.

The WLEP will now prepare proposals by December on how the money will be spent before formal allocation.

Although the detail is yet to be agreed, vice chair of WLEP Tony Hyde said this announcement is a welcome boost for the local economy.

He said: "This is excellent news for the county in these challenging economic times. Clearly this is early days in terms of detail, but in principle the allocation of funding to support the delivery of priority economic projects is very welcome. The allocation for Worcestershire is relatively low – it is based on a formula of population and income levels – so it will require some clear prioritisation of projects delivering the greatest economic impact in the short term. We will be working together with our local authority partners to deliver the best impact for business and people in Worcestershire."

For more information about WLEP, visit: www.worcestershirelep.org

Business Link is Changing



Business Link West Midlands, the regional Business Link advisory service, will close on 25 November 2011. Calls to the BLWM telephone number 0845 113 1234 are being automatically transferred to the new national Business Link Helpline. If however, you would like to speak to someone at BLWM before the closure on 25 November

2011, you can contact them on 0121 569 0821.

Whilst the regional advisory service is closing, the [Business Link website](#) is being significantly enhanced and will provide improved, comprehensive support to businesses.

A growth and improvement service for established businesses, available at www.improve.businesslink.gov.uk, provides tools to help you diagnose and solve business problems, an improved business support finder, tutorials and video case studies, information on events in your area and links to business discussions and other services. View the video below for an introduction to the service.

[YOUTUBE:IN-UFy13y0oI]

A whole new area of the Business Link website will provide a comprehensive start up service including online training and a starting up task list to guide people through the process. View the video below for an overview of what is available, or visit www.businesslink.gov.uk/mynewbusiness to access the service.

[YOUTUBE:SB5T0K4OY-0]

At a more local level, Balancing Business will continue to offer face-to-face support to start ups in the district having been awarded the Worcestershire County Council's Enterprise Programme contract; this provision will include a range of workshops in Worcester and monthly clinics in Malvern and Tenbury Wells. [Click here](#) for more information.

Get Mentoring



Experienced business people are being asked to get involved as volunteer mentors for SMEs.

Get Mentoring, a new project led by the Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative (SFEDI) and supported by new grant funding of £1.2m, will recruit and train 10,000 volunteer business mentors from the small, medium and micro business community in order to help the next generation of SMEs to grow and prosper. It is about Small, Medium and Micro Businesses helping each other to succeed.

To get involved, visit getmentoring.org.

Once trained, these new volunteer business mentors will be accessible through www.mentorsme.co.uk.

New Measures Announced to Boost British Business

The Government has announced new measures to help small businesses grow and create jobs, export to new markets, secure finance and cut red tape.

The business growth package includes:

- [£95 million investment from the Regional Growth Fund](#).
- The Web Fuelled Business initiative, helping businesses exploit the potential of the internet.
- The National Export Challenge, opening up new markets around the world.
- The Finance Fitness campaign, providing the support small businesses need to access finance.

For more information, [click here](#).



Potential impacts of extreme weather events on SMEs in the Midlands



Sustainability West Midlands is currently working on a project with Climate East Midlands on behalf of the Environment Agency and DEFRA, to look at the potential impacts of extreme weather events on businesses across the Midlands. As part of the project they have developed a short survey which aims to help them inform the development of future adaptation support needs of businesses across the Midlands.

The survey, which will take no longer than 10 minutes to complete, will be open until Monday 28th November and can be accessed [here](#).

EVENTS

Strictly Networking

24th November 2011, 5.30pm – 7pm
Mount Pleasant Hotel, Malvern

The Malvern Strictly Networking event, sponsored by the Federation of Small Businesses, is free to attend and open to any business, booking is not required. Bring your business cards and start networking!

For more information call Robbie Hazlehurst on 07708 253532.

Social media for business - Findit Worcestershire workshop

28th November 2011, 9.30am – 1pm (Registration 9am)
County Hall, Worcester

Social media is changing the way we communicate. Creating engaging, motivating social media content can change the way your business communicates with your target market.

This workshop is designed to develop practical use of social media, to help attendees incorporate social media into their marketing mix and to learn from case studies of successful marketing campaigns.

For more information and to book your place, [click here](#). Cost: £35+VAT for members of Finditinworcestershireshire (it is free to join).

Optimise your SEO - Finditinworcestershireshire workshop

2nd December 2011, 9.30am – 1pm (Registration 9am)
County Hall, Worcester

You invest in search engine optimisation (SEO) because you want more qualified traffic to your website. In 2011, traffic is generated not only by traditional search engines like Google, but increasingly by social media search engines like YouTube and Twitter.

This workshop will begin by looking at the basics of SEO and then use this information to develop a practical plan for you to implement SEO in order to:

- Increase the visibility of your website on the internet
- Achieve higher search engine rankings
- Drive more qualified traffic to your website
- Create more sales and sales leads for your business.

For more information and to book your place, [click here](#). Cost: £35+VAT for members of Finditinworcestershireshire (it is free to join).

South Worcester Urban Extension Proposal Event - Potential Business Expansion or Relocation Opportunities

13th December, 8am – 9.30am
Worcestershire County Cricket Ground, Worcester

This Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce workshop will outline on behalf of Welbeck Strategic Land LLP the South Worcester Urban Extension Project. If approved, the proposed urban extension will comprise of around 2450 homes and 20 hectares of employment.

Welbeck are keen to engage with local businesses to understand what their requirements may be, whether it could accommodate them and for them to get an understanding of the emerging proposals that have been identified for South Worcester.

The event will begin with networking from 8am, with refreshments and bacon sandwiches, followed by a presentation and a Q&A session. To book your free place contact events@hwchamber.co.uk

Malvern Small Business Forum

10th January 2012, 7pm – 9pm
Malvern Hills Science Park, Malvern

The Malvern Small Business Forum provides an opportunity for informal networking, and more experienced members will offer help, advice and ideas to the less experienced. For more information visit the Malvern Small Business Forum website: www.msbf.biz

January Sales - Finditinworcestershireshire breakfast meeting

17th January 2012, 7am – 9.30am (Registration 6.45am)
Worcester Warriors Rugby Club, Worcester

The latest Finditinworcestershireshire breakfast meeting will focus on sales techniques and successful tactics.

There is also the opportunity to network with some of Worcestershire's key business people over a free breakfast.

For more information and to book your free place, [click here](#).

GRANTS & OTHER

Malvern Hills Business Booster Grant – Deadline Approaching



The deadline for the 1st round of the Malvern Hills Business Booster Grant is approaching.

The aim of the scheme is to support growing Malvern Hills District based businesses and enable them to make a step change in their development. Successful applicants will be offered a grant of up to £2,000 which must be match-funded, pound for pound (at least), from the business's own resources.

Businesses wishing to apply in the 1st round should get their applications in by 5pm on 30th November 2011. There will be at least one further round in 2012 – date TBC.

For more information and to apply, download the [application pack](#) ( Word 168 KB). If you have any queries about the scheme, contact the [Economic Development team](#).

Are you using the cloud?



Cloud computing – maybe you've heard of it but aren't sure what it is? You may even be using it without realising. If you use an online email provider such as Google Mail, then you're in the cloud.

The cloud is simply the internet. Cloud computing is using or storing files, data and applications over the internet. This normally means you can access them from any computer or smartphone with an internet connection. You're not tied to your desk or your own PC.

It could help you reduce costs, support flexible working, cut IT problems and give you a secure data back-up. To find out more, [click here](#).

Health and Safety Made Simple



Many business owners are confused about their health and safety obligations and can often err on being too cautious for fear of being sued. At the same time, 17 people were killed in workplace accidents last year.

To help strike a balance, the HSE has launched a new [free website](#) to make health and safety simple for SMEs.

For many businesses, all that's required is a basic series of tasks. The site will take you through the steps and help you make sure you have done what you need to - and no more.

[Health and safety made simple](#) gives SMEs the information they need to comply with H&S law and create policies for their businesses.