

## **FSB national chairman launches bank watch for Essex small businesses**

The National Chairman of the FSB (Federation of Small Businesses), John Wright, officially launched a Bank Watch Scheme for Essex small businesses when he spoke in Chelmsford.

Addressing around 120 leading members of the Essex FSB (Federation of Small Businesses) at a General Meeting held at the Ashcroft International Business School Mr Wright said: "I recently attended the first meeting of the Small Business Finance Forum, chaired by Lord Mandelson and bringing together small businesses, banks and Government.

"Those talks did not get us very far. The FSB believes it is important that the behavioural inconsistencies of branch managers in the High Street are ironed out otherwise any good coming out of this Forum will come to nothing.

"Branch managers are scared about the implications of dishing out loans, because if there are problems it is their career on the line, and small businesses are scared about going to see their bank manager, as that sometimes leads to increased charges and overdraft rates.

"The banks have promised they will disclose to the Government how much money they make available to small firms which is a step forward but what is more important is how much of that money is actually lent to small businesses and what the interest rates are on those loans and overdraft facilities.

"That is why we have launched FSB Bank Watch which will use our network of 217,000 members, including our 3,500 members here in Essex, to monitor what bank branch managers are actually doing so we can see if the banks are keeping their promises to small businesses.

"We want hard examples of where banks have been sympathetic to requests for financial help from small businesses here in Essex and examples of when they have increased charges, called in loans or cut overdraft limits.

"If any small business – FSB member or not – has been in either situation then I would ask them to email details to [Terry.Taber@fsb.org.uk](mailto:Terry.Taber@fsb.org.uk) so we can get a true picture of what the banks are doing to support Essex businesses."

The FSB represents more than 217,000 business people across the United Kingdom and is the largest single organisation representing business interests in the country. The Essex Region of the FSB represents small businesses in the areas covered by Essex County Council and the London Boroughs of Havering and Redbridge. More information on the Essex Region of the FSB (Federation of Small Businesses) can be found at [www.fsb.org.uk/essex](http://www.fsb.org.uk/essex).

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