



SMALL BUSINESS FOCUS GROUP

19 June 2008 - hosted by Gloucestershire First at Chargrove Business Centre

Attendees:

Alun	Pritchard	Treble-E Consulting
Angela	Presdee	Gloucestershire First
Anne	King	Design Print Imagination Ltd
Bruce	Keen	Tewkesbury Saw Company
Carole	Garfield	Stroud Chamber & Y-Waste
David	Tate	Silverwood UK
Jenny	Pitcher	Gloucestershire First
John	Cripps	Gloucestershire Chamber of Commerce
Keith	Rog	Parklife
Martin	Quantock	Cheltenham Business Partnership
Paul	Goffe	Federation of Small Businesses
Peter	King	Design Print Imagination Ltd
Richard	Peers	Gloucestershire College
Russ	Martin	Federation of Small Businesses
Stan	Jones	Gloucestershire First
Terry	Morgan	Stroud FSB & Y-Waste

Welcome and Introduction

Stan Jones welcomed the group, and explained that there had been a break since the last meeting in 2006, which was mainly due to the additional activity around the floods in 2007. This meeting aimed to return to some of the issues previously highlighted, concentrating on 3 items for discussion specifically: - industry-education links, crime against businesses and 'keep trade local' schemes.

However other topics were also not forgotten and there is still a lot of work to do, however 2 projects progressed include:

Waste & Recycling, which was picked up in some detail over the last 12-18 months, with a BREW commercial waste project, including seed-core funding for Y-Waste. Further information about Y-Waste is available from Terry Morgan & Carole Garfield or visit www.y-waste.org

In addition, the broadband project Catalyst, reported on at the previous meeting, finished last year, after successfully delivering grants and training to more than 1300 small businesses.

Industry-Education Links

Anne and Peter King circulated a list of small business and education issues (attached). Anne is currently mapping the ways in which small businesses can get involved with education, and will be able to circulate further information in due course.

The group had a lively discussion about the need to engage with schools, and the problems that can often arise. A survey of 50 FSB members had resulted in a 100% negative experience when carrying out visits/work experience with local schools, which was a surprise. Key annoyances included staff not disciplining or even challenging rude pupils. Also it was felt that although large employers were accorded some status, small businesses were often treated with disinterest.

The introduction of the new 14-19 Diplomas provides new opportunities for small businesses to re-engage with small businesses in their local area, but they are also causing some significant problems for the schools as well. It was agreed that it would be useful to ensure that all Chamber and FSB members were made aware of their local School Consortia Co-ordinator's contact details, so that they could speak to them, rather than trying to contact individual schools directly.

School 14-19 Diploma Consortia Contacts

Cheltenham: (Richard Kemp) [_rgkh@btinternet.com](mailto:rgkh@btinternet.com)

Gloucester: (Sue Turner) [_pb@chosen-hill.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:pb@chosen-hill.gloucs.sch.uk) **FAO Sue Turner**

South Cotswold: (Mr Chris Germaine) [_stcgermaine@deerpark.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:stcgermaine@deerpark.gloucs.sch.uk)

Forest: (Alison Elliott) [_admin@lakers.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:admin@lakers.gloucs.sch.uk) **FAO Alison Elliot**

North Gloucestershire: (Jane Hamshere) [_jch@csatc.org.uk](mailto:jch@csatc.org.uk)
(inc N.Cots & Tewkesbury)

Stroud: (Joyce Winwood) [_jwinwood@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jwinwood@hotmail.co.uk)

The group agreed that the diplomas are particularly relevant to businesses because they focus on core 'functional skills' in English, Maths and IT, which were felt to be of critical importance.

Stan Jones also emphasised that other skills issues including NVQs were also of major importance to the county. There is a 'stretch target' to raise the number of people achieving NVQ Level 2 to 12,600 in 2.5 years time. This was supposed to be a rise of 600, but down to problems with the baseline data, means that there is an enormous amount of work to do marketing these NVQs through local providers. If achieved, there would be a substantial award of £1.3M which could benefit further skills provision in the county.

An Employment & Skills Advisory Panel is in the process of being set up, which will take these and other issues into consideration.

Actions: Arrange specialist meeting to consider small business input to diplomas - Anne & Peter King, Richard Peers, and Kevin Holt of GEL (query) & circulate AK's mapping info when available

Crime Against Businesses

Russ Martin provided a useful overview of crimes against businesses in the South West, and talked about the FSB campaign which was launched last year called, 'Every Crime, Every Time'. The scheme was designed to encourage businesses, and particularly small businesses to report all crimes consistently. Key reasons cited for businesses not wanting to report crime, included

- Police not interested or unable to tackle
- Insurance premiums would become unaffordable

A forum called Business Crime South West has been set up to tackle cross-cutting crime issues across the region, and this is gaining significant police support, including from Gloucestershire, although not every force is signed up yet. Russ Martin provides FSB representation on the group.

John Cripps highlighted the importance of Crimestoppers in Gloucestershire, and getting the message out to businesses that they could give information anonymously, if they did not want to file official reports. The number for Crimestoppers is **0800 555 111**. Currently there is a major local campaign around metal and lead theft, particularly from ancient buildings.

Martin Quantock and Bruce Keen both referred to local work around tackling retail and night-time economy crime. Cheltenham's scheme was felt to be very successful, but that it was resulting in some displacement activity, probably to Gloucester. Tewkesbury's retail scheme was good but occasionally let down by the technology.

Terry Morgan noted that the regional work was all being undertaken without funding, and by volunteers. Seed-core funding could help to significantly raise awareness. Stan Jones agreed to explore options to see if up to £5k funding could be found to help support the scheme, as it was important to recognise the regional importance of such initiatives – to report back at next meeting.

Another pro-active way of raising awareness of the various campaigns could be through some joined-up profiling in the local press. The group agreed that it would be a positive step to talk to the new ACC, Corporate Services – Ivor Twydell, and to involve him in any local marketing initiatives and at the next meeting if possible.

- Actions:**
- **Copy of notes to Ivor Twydell, new ACC, Corporate Services and invitation to attend next meeting on 26 November.**
 - **Contact Bev Hawes re: potential joint feature on Business Crime in new monthly supplement to raise awareness (including all local CDRP contacts, Crimestopper's details and ECET FSB campaign)**
 - **Explore funding options for Business Crime SW**

'Keep Trade Local'

The FSB has launched a new national initiative, including a petition on the Downing Street website. (Please see details attached).

Paul Goffe and Terry Morgan explained that this was a very recent campaign, and therefore are looking for early input from all parties, including Gloucestershire First to see how this might be supported locally.

Key statistics:

- 2000 local shops are closing each year
- 2500 post offices face closure across the UK
- Over 50 local pubs close every month
- By 2010 many local communities will have no small shops or services

The FSB is asking for 4 areas of support:-

- Support and promotion of the Keep Trade Local Campaign and petition
- Reduced parking charges and restrictions to encourage shoppers into town centres, rather than turning customers and businesses away
- Backing small business friendly planning policies and decisions
- Workshops, training and education/skills provision for improving retail and business performance

The group noted that the last area was a difficult point to tackle, as many small businesses are often reluctant to access even those training courses which are free-of-charge. Leadership & management training may be more important to some retailers than customer service in the current economic climate.

Action:

- **Discuss retail support with Train to Gain team – Sandra Tanner/Helen Roberts**
- **Consider further campaigns in Citizen/Echo – particularly relating to credit crunch/environmental issues**
- **Email any further suggestions to Paul Goffe at ro.bristolandgloucestershire@fsb.org.uk and copy to Jenny Pitcher at jenny.pitcher@glosfirst.co.uk**

Any other Business

The date of the next meeting was agreed for **Wednesday 26th November 2008**. This will be Stan Jones's last meeting with the FSB & Chamber, so it was decided that there would be a round-up of general issues, with future meetings to be set for the year ahead (2009) concentrating on particular themes to ensure that topics are covered in more depth.

If any members would like to propose topics for 2009, please email jenny.pitcher@glosfirst.co.uk or contact Jenny on **01242 864195**.