



And a Prosperous New Year to all!

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Stop Press... Risk to Business Involvement with Local councils!!!!

If you are involved with your local council or want to become involved, please read on.....

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are changing. We are getting reports that in some areas business involvement has been reduced to just one representative out of 15 or even out of 60!

The new LSPs are rather like the Highway Code. The Highway Code is advisory, but if you disobey it, you are in trouble, in the same way Councils are not required to have LSPs or to pay any attention. However if there are problems and they do not have an LSP and listen to it, they will be in even greater trouble. So LSPs are potentially a big opportunity for local FSB branches to start getting the council to recognise the needs of business.

But as detailed above, some councils are packing LSP groups with the voluntary or third sector to the detriment of business. And this is despite all the Government guidelines saying the business sector is vital and must be included.

If you are having problems, look in the 'How to.....' section of the SW FSB website for information on what documents to quote to your local council to get full representation restored. Don't delay, get cracking now!

And make sure your branch is attending the Study Day in April on Local Strategic partnerships, Local area agreements and multiple Area agreements. Your Branch Secretary has the details.

Train to Gain

Reports are starting to come in about poor advice from brokers – are you being recommended to a course when action learning or a 'one to one' with a coach would make more sense? Please let us know.

Are you a supplier and know from the referrals you are getting that brokers do not fully understand what businesses need? Please tell us.

The FSB in the SW has excellent links with Business Link and with Train to Gain. They are very keen to make things work so you get the service you need – so please keep feeding back to

Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk all your experiences, both good and bad.

And on the subject of training, the Open College Network provides a large number of training modules delivered by a number of providers across the SW. The modules are stand alone or can be grouped to form a qualification. To my untrained eye, they look to be what our members have been asking for. If you have a

training need, cast your eye over their website at :- <http://www.nocn.org.uk/> If what is on offer is what you are looking for, ask T2G or your usual trainer if they can provide this for you.

Floods – still a problem for some members, what about you?

We have started to get reports in about delays in payments for flood restoration work.

A number of members provide services which have been extensively used to help businesses and families get back to normal after the floods. We are starting to hear that the insurance companies are taking a very long time to pay. Are you affected?

If you are affected, please let us know the details, including normal payment terms at Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk.

And as ever, if you have been paid on time with no hassle, we would like to know as well! Praising the good guys when having a go at the bad ones is much more effective. It removes or negates many of the excuses!

And I have got my fingers crossed for you all over the weekend.

Report Crime – National Campaign starts January 17th

The last 2 'Barriers' surveys clearly showed that only about 2/3rd of crime suffered by small businesses actually gets reported. This is very worrying.

Like all other public organisations, the police are increasingly governed by statistics. We may well be unhappy about this, but it is Government's way of trying to copy the discipline we work to – that of the market. One of the results is that unless a crime is reported it does not exist. And if it does not exist, why should police make it a priority.

So, if we want the Police to make business crime a priority, we must report any crimes. This particularly applies to crimes of fraud, which have a demonstrable economic effect.

So watch out for news of the FSB's campaign 'Every Time, Every Crime' and if your business is the target of a crime, please report it.

SW FSB Policy

In response to queries from members, this is a short piece about Policy and how it works. Briefly, 'policy' is about getting the voice of small businesses heard in a way and a place where we can make a difference.

The hardest part of that work is making sure that what we do really reflects the needs of small businesses in the SW. And that is where you come in. Through the 'Barriers' survey, through your feedback to newsletters like this and your comments on discussion documents, SW Policy keeps close to members' needs and issues.

And volunteers to help with the management nuts and bolts are always very welcome – this is how it works:-

The work of the policy staff (yours truly!) is managed by the group of members called the 'SW Policy Unit'. They include one from each FSB Region in the SW, plus a Treasurer (Chris Davey). Each Regional Rep has a deputy who gets all the same information as the main rep. Deputies can also attend the APU meetings with the main rep if they wish.

The SW FSB represents small businesses on a number of committees as well as attending a number of 'one off' workshops, seminars or conferences. Members attending these on behalf of the FSB are required to write a report. They get their expenses paid as well as an amount towards the cost of their time away from their business.

Each Policy Unit has the funds to pay for just 60 days of members' time a year, so we have to ruthlessly prioritise deciding which meetings are important and which can be left.

Ways to get involved:-

Complete the 'Barriers to survival and growth in UK small firms' questionnaire. This comes out every 2 years and is invaluable as a source of real information about small businesses and what is important.

Discussion Groups – every few months there is a new discussion document about a new policy topic. As an individual you could complete the questionnaire that goes with it. Or you could get a group together at your FSB branch and discuss it there, feeding your comments back through your region.

Lobby your local council – talk to your Regional organiser about this and look on the SW Policy website for further information under 'How to.....' and 'Briefing document'. If the help you need is not there, please let Vivienne.Rayner@fsb.org.uk know so she can do the necessary.

Regional Policy work – ask your region what they are doing and see how you can contribute.

Join an e-mail group topic group. When an issue comes up which is covered by an e-mail group, they are asked for comments and feedback. Similarly if there is a conference or meeting and we are looking for members to represent the FSB, it is the e-mail group which is asked.

Shadow a permanent representative – we have permanent representatives on some SW organisations. We would welcome offers from members to 'shadow' these reps, getting to know the work of that committee or body. Longer term 'shadows' should be in a position to cover for absence and to take over when the permanent rep stands down.

And finally – the easiest and most important way is to give us your feedback on this and anything else that affects your business – bouquets as well as brickbats are very welcome.

Call for Nominations – represent the FSB to the RDA in your area

The Regional Development Agency (RDA) is changing the way it works – and we need to make sure small businesses are not forgotten.

The RDA is switching from 7 areas to 4. According to recent Government reviews, more of the RDA's work will be done more locally through these new groupings.

The SW Policy Unit is looking to appoint a member to each of these areas to make the first contact and to develop good relations with the new area offices. Longer term, such a relationship should ensure that the FSB is closely involved in any formal arrangements. All nominations will need to be agreed at FSB Regional level, except for the Western Region, where support for nominations will be required from the local branch.

Please e-mail Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk for full details.

2012 Games – becoming a supplier

If you are looking to sell to the 2012 Olympics then this is for you!

A new web portal called **CompeteFor** has been developed. It will

- Match your business profile with contracts that specifically interest you and contact you
- Check whether you are 'business ready' against 3 important criteria
- Refer suppliers not yet 'fit to supply' to business support for appropriate solutions
- Proactively share your profile with buyers looking for suppliers
- Enable you to identify who has won first tier contracts

As a registered business, you should also be able to browse the site for opportunities, respond to an opportunity, search for suppliers & partners, set alert preferences and also view results and contract awards.

Register now by visiting www.competefor.com

If you require further information or support please contact Gary Scudamore on 08456 00 9966 or at london2012@businesslinksw.co.uk

And of course, we need to know if it actually works. Please let us have your brickbats and bouquets at Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk . We are particularly interest in feedback about any references on to Business Link

And finally, if you are taking a diesel vehicle to London after February 4th, you need to read this!

From February 4th, London becomes a 'Low Emission Zone'. It will impose daily charges of between £100 and £200 on heavy goods vehicles that emit certain levels of pollution. The penalties for failing to pay will be as high as £1,000.

The zone is being phased in according to vehicle type and by how much they pollute. So be safe and not sorry – check the website at <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/roadusers/lez/default.aspx?lang=en> and don't get caught with a swingeing fine!

Vivienne Rayner – 16th January 2008