

## **Area North - Business Flood Recovery & Future Resilience**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

To provide an opportunity for the Area Committee to consider the on-going needs for local business engagement as part of continued support to the Area North / SSDC priority for jobs and a strong local economy.

### **Public Interest**

SSDC believes in supporting innovative communities who seek to help themselves.

The severe flooding events in the winter of 2013-14 had a significant impact on communities in Area North where many homes or businesses were flooded coupled with numerous road closures over many weeks. Whilst much has been achieved to aid recovery – including the provision of help from numerous agencies including SSDC to residents, businesses and neighbourhoods – there is more that could be done to help local businesses work together to recover and make themselves – and their local area more resilient in the future.

### **Recommendation**

Note the proposal to request a carry forward of £20,000 from the Area North budget into 2015-16 specifically for additional local business support work in Area North.

### **Supporting locally led marketing and business resilience**

On the basis of ‘helping people help themselves’ to strengthen the local economy, with low unemployment and thriving businesses\* there are a variety of programmes and services available to local businesses – some are available now such as training in the use of social media, others are not yet available such as actually super-fast broadband.

(\*Ref SSDC Council Plan 2012-2015)

Feedback from local businesses tells us that it can be confusing as to who can help with what! In turn those helping businesses may not know who to contact about certain issues.

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Area North has assisted in the response to the impact of flooding and largely as a continuation of work supporting our high streets and rural businesses. The Area North Development team work locally and make links with a wide variety of other programme / service officers.

It is clear that recovery support for some has taken longer than expected, for some businesses the impacts have taken time to show up and for others taking stock to look ahead with confidence has been challenging.

Another significant issue has been the length of time of road closures in certain locations – over and above that experienced during the actual flood event – which has an impact on passing / visiting trade. The concern is that customer habits will be lost or the period of time too long to sustain at a lower trading rate.

However what is also noticeable is the reactions of many communities – to be stronger than before, not just get back to normal. They wish to use their experience to be better prepared if trade was disrupted again – as well as asking for support to avoid some of the problems experienced.

Direct (face to face) engagement with people working locally is arguably the best way to properly understand the issues faced by a particular area – pointing people in the right direction for the help they need - **and** identifies the opportunities by which people can work together more, solving their own problems and strengthening their longer term position.

I recommend that the current reserve budget for priority local services is allocated to support additional local business engagement within the Area – whether directly employed or externally contracted are details to be worked out, and invite the comments of the Area Committee.

Charlotte Jones  
Area Development Manager (North)

## **Financial Implications**

There is a one-off reserve of £20,000 in the 2014-15 Area North budget for enhanced local services to address local needs. To carry this forward requires approval from District Executive as part of the 2014-15 outturn report.

## **Council Plan Implications**

Focus One: “We want a strong local economy which has low unemployment and thriving businesses”

## **Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications**

High quality business engagement can help encourage lower emissions – and to prepare and adapt to climate change.

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

High quality and business engagement can help promote better physical and virtual access for customers; promotes benefits for certain groups such as young apprentices and helps address the barriers faced by small businesses working in remote areas.

## **Background Papers**

None.

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