

Oxford Economic Growth Strategy Steering Group Meeting, 28th August 2013

Paper Three – Business Event and Business Voice for Oxford – DISCUSSION PAPER

1. Introduction

Discussion has been had within the Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP) about the need to better engage with all businesses (not just the largest) and business groups in the city to share information and get a better perspective on the needs and challenges facing business, particularly the SMEs and micro businesses.

Furthermore, the OSP believes that there will be real benefit in creating a group or forum that can be the “Oxford Business Voice”. This group will help us to deliver our ambitions outlined in the Economic Growth Strategy, our aspirations in the City Deal, and Oxford business involvement and participation in the Local Enterprise Partnership. This group could act as a sounding board for OSP partners and also for the LEP and from this group the Oxford Business representative for the LEP could be chosen.

We have held discussions with colleagues from the ProOxford Group and Richard Rosser from B4 on how we might take this forward. This paper suggests some ideas and thoughts for discussion.

2. Business Event

Suggestion:

Work alongside a credible business organisation such as B4 and others (e.g. Oxfordshire LEP, County Council, Universities and Experience Oxfordshire) and hold an annual event at an appropriate venue.

The event will showcase issues, services and businesses through 15 minute topic based presentations and provide networking opportunities. The event could be used to promote the need for a Business Voice for Oxford Group and we encourage expressions of interest for involvement.

Following a meeting between Richard Rosser, David Edwards and Sebastian Johnson, Richard has made some suggestions to prompt discussion

- **A venue such as The Said (West Wing), The Town Hall or The Ashmolean**
- **The following is based on venue being The Said**
- **An afternoon of 15 minute topic based presentations starting at 2pm through to 9pm (can be shorter if required)**
- **Exhibition area in the main dining area upstairs with networking here and in The Club Room.**
- **Presentations to take in one or more of four Harvard Lecture Theatres.**
- **Proposed as many as 40 presentations taking place from 2pm to 7pm which would mean some overlap of course.**

- **B4 Event to take place afterwards in the Club Room with the dining area still open for delegates to visit exhibition stands.**
- **Jointly branded event – with City Council, Universities, LEP, Experience Oxfordshire, Experience Oxfordshire already**
- **We would look upon this as an event which is ultimately a B4 event with partners, hence we would take the lead on organisation but support with regards to promotion from the partners would be essential to ensure we maximised attendance. With some excellent presentations lined up, we would like to think the event could attract in the region of 250 to 500 delegates (we held a Lloyds Economic briefing at the Canvass Building in Abingdon last year and had 180 attending) given the content and central Oxford location.**
- **Need to look at the costs of this event and the models that may need to be used (e.g. delegate charge, partner and exhibitor fee)**

3. Business Voice for Oxford

This group will help us to deliver our ambitions outlined in the Economic Growth Strategy, our aspirations in the City Deal, and Oxford business involvement and participation in the Local Enterprise Partnership. This group could act as a sounding board for OSP partners and also for the LEP and from this group the Oxford Business representative for the LEP could be chosen.

- **Suggest a panel of 10 to 20 be invited to see who felt they could contribute going forward**
- **Between organisations we could suggest some excellent candidates for this**
- **meet twice, maximum three times a year to discuss key issues facing Oxford businesses**
- **Canvass at the annual event what should be areas for discussion and a “forward plan”.**

4. Business Survey

Is there any value in the OSP (led by the City Council and some key partners) undertaking a business survey? The results could be launched at the event and form key discussion points for the Business Voice for Oxford Group.

B4 have expressed an interest in this but there are issues to consider around area, size, cost etc