



Doncaster Council

Report

Date: 3rd March 2021

To the Chair and Members of the
Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel

UPDATE ON BUSINESS SUPPORT, THE WORK OF DONCASTER CHAMBER, FUTURE WORKING AND ISSUES AFFECTING BUSINESS

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Councillor Bill Mordue	All	No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report provides information on the current Doncaster business support provision, the business support package offered by Doncaster Chamber of Commerce, future collaborative working arrangements and issues affecting businesses.

EXEMPT REPORT

2. The report is not exempt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Members of the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel are asked to note and comment on the information provided.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

4. Both Business Doncaster and Doncaster Chamber of Commerce makes a significant contribution to make Doncaster a better a place for residents to live, work and play. Business Doncaster are the economic delivery team within Doncaster Council concentrating on projects aimed at new investment, jobs growth, supporting businesses, employment and enterprise, marketing the borough, town centre initiatives and attracting visitors. Doncaster Chamber of Commerce is an independent membership organisation that supports and represents the Doncaster business community. Both organisations work together closely and contribute to

the positive image of Doncaster in the media through our marketing and promotional initiatives.

BACKGROUND

5. Business Doncaster, are the councils Economic Development team charged with bringing forward new inward investment, provide key account management support to large Doncaster companies and SME's that have investment and job creation projects, deliver employment and enterprise initiatives, grow our tourism offer and lead on marketing activities in order to promote Doncaster as a place to live, work, invest and play.
6. Doncaster Chamber of Commerce is an independent membership organisation that supports and represents the Doncaster business community. The Chamber is a not for profit company limited by guarantee. The Chamber's board comprises of 1 x exec member (CEO), 10 x non-execs (representatives of the business community elected by the membership) and 6 x co-opted members including key strategic partners (Doncaster Council Cabinet Members, NHS Trust, Doncaster College). The Chamber is accountable to the borough's business community.
7. In terms of providing support to the business community both organisations work alongside partners such as the Sheffield City Region Growth Hub, Sheffield City Region Investment teams, Universities and Colleges.
8. Business Doncaster and the Chamber of Commerce are closely aligned but have differentiating and complimentary roles, which are highlighted below:

Business Doncaster	Doncaster Chamber of Commerce
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proactively seeking new investments and creation of jobs into Doncaster - Handling investment and property enquiries - Managing Impartial database of available commercial properties and running Doncaster property forum - Key Account Management to the larger Doncaster companies - Doncaster sector growth projects - Employment initiatives related to career progression, upskilling and getting residents into work - Co-producing high quality sectorial careers prospectuses with Employers - Contract management and delivery of 'Launchpad' start up programme - Marketing and promotion of Doncaster for attracting new investment and businesses using the 'Business Doncaster' brand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business membership organisation (700+ patrons and members) offering a range of business support services to members including H&S, Tax, HR, Legal services - Lead on Doncaster export programmes - Recognised as the private sector 'voice of Business' in Doncaster - Organiser and deliverer of business support events and workshops - Deliver quarterly business insight survey - Business Lobby organisation to government - Organiser of Doncaster Business Awards and Doncaster Business Conference - Delivery of 'Launchpad' business start-up contract

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marketing and promotion of Doncaster to residents and visitors using the 'Visit Doncaster' brand - Management of the Doncaster Tourist Information Centre - Organiser of Doncaster Business Showcase - Delivery of town centre initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lead on linkages between business and education through 'Opportunities Doncaster' programme
---	---

9. In terms of business support Business Doncaster have traditionally concentrated on attracting new investment and supporting the larger Doncaster employers through a dedicated key Account Management Programme to around 100 companies.
10. Business Doncaster have also delivered a number of externally funded European programmes to assist businesses. Programmes being delivered at present include
- South Yorkshire Productivity Programme . SME businesses in Doncaster will benefit from business support and cash grants which will help them to stabilise, recover and grow by increasing their productivity adopting new working practices and improving competitiveness. This project will mitigate some of the effects that COVID-19 has had on the local economy and should safeguard and in some cases create new job opportunities for local residents
 - South Yorkshire Launchpad programme. This programme being managed by Business Doncaster with delivery by the Chamber provides free support to pre start and new businesses in the Sheffield City Region, the programme offers one to one advice sessions with dedicated Business Advisers plus an extensive programme of workshops designed to help build the confidence and knowledge of new entrepreneurs so they can start a successful business. The programme also helps existing businesses to take the next steps to grow and develop their business. The current programme has been running for almost 2 years and has a target to achieve of 245 outputs by March 2022.
11. Throughout 2020 Business Doncaster have changed the operating model through necessity to concentrate more on business support than investment activity due to supporting businesses with flooding recovery at the back end of 2019 through to COVID support in 2020. The team have worked incredibly hard with the business rates team to process Government and Sheffield City Region grants. In addition in 2021 at short notice the team has picked up the delivery of a small discretionary grant for home and mobile businesses and the self-employed who have not qualified for the government income support scheme

DONCASTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

12. The Chamber works with circa 2,500 businesses a year.
13. The Chamber has over 700 members that, collectively, employ over 50% of Doncaster's private sector workforce. To give an indication of reach, it should be noticed that, by contrast, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has only circa 70 members across the whole of Yorkshire. The Chamber's membership includes businesses of all sectors and sizes.
14. Doncaster Chamber is one of 53 accredited Chambers in the UK and in 2019 was recognised as the UK Chamber of the Year and is part of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) network. The British Chambers of Commerce works for the 53 Chambers in the UK (and circa 40 overseas British Chambers) including leading on the network's lobbying activities on behalf of British businesses in Westminster and Whitehall.
15. Doncaster Chamber's activities fall into five broad areas:
 - Policy and Partnerships
 - Membership and Events
 - International Trade
 - Business Support
 - Business and Education

Chamber COVID Response and business support

16. A snapshot of the Chamber's activity to support businesses in relation to Covid-19 is included below. This activity comprises of 'business as usual' support for Doncaster organisations (that has been nuanced in light of Covid-19) and additional activity to help companies through these extraordinary times:
17. The core of the Chamber's support to Doncaster businesses is offered through the mechanism of Chamber membership.
18. Businesses have the choice of 'bronze', 'silver', or 'gold' membership. Depending on the option chosen by member businesses, they have access to circa 50 services to assist with business protection, business growth and cost savings. These services have been at the core of the Chamber's offer to the business community throughout the pandemic whether companies have been in 'surviving' or 'thriving' mode.
19. Services include, but are not limited to: legal, HR, health and safety, healthcare, events and supply chain, discounts, corporate volunteering, grant finding, Research and Development support, export documentation, training, translation services and a variety of other products. A full list of Chamber benefits can be found here: <https://www.doncaster-chamber.co.uk/member-package-comparison-chart/>.

20. The Chamber has experienced net membership growth every month since June 2020, a good indication that the above support services are working and highly regarded by Doncaster businesses
21. Since April 2021 the Chamber has delivered 98 events to 1,722 delegates.
22. The Chamber has safeguarded one of Doncaster's flagship business event, the Doncaster Business Awards, and will be running this digitally in March 2021. There were more entries to the Awards than in 2019 and the calibre of submissions demonstrates that, despite the dire circumstances that some businesses are thriving and growing.
23. In addition to its core membership and events offer, the Chamber also delivers a small number of publicly funded business support contracts for partners such as Doncaster Council, the Sheffield City Region and others. The support services are open, free of charge, to any eligible business or entrepreneur. The Chamber is currently delivering the following initiatives:
 - Launchpad – Start up initiative designed to assist new entrepreneurs and lifestyle businesses.
 - Scale Up 360 – A project (delivered with Sheffield Hallam University and other partners) to support early stage businesses with rapid growth potential (including those in higher value adding sectors).
 - Community Wealth Builder – An initiative to help social enterprises and charities thrive, including by deepening their links with the private sector.
24. In addition to supporting businesses through the pandemic via its 'business as usual' activities, the Chamber has, additionally, supported businesses / partners via the following mechanisms:
 - Coronavirus website hub (open to all businesses).
 - Webinars (at one point delivering 3 x a day and, initially, open to all businesses) focused on three areas:
 - Accessing information, guidance and support.
 - Accessing influencers and decision makers.
 - Accessing opportunities to network and keep business moving.
 - Promoting government grants and support services (furlough, CBILs, local discretionary grants etc.)
 - Introducing a new 'Ready' version of Chamber membership to offer basic support (webinars, legal, HR etc.) for a modest £50 per year.
 - Large scale business advocacy – championing the issues (grant accessibility, help for the self-employed, furlough extension etc. that will benefit all / many Doncaster businesses).
 - Individual business advocacy – championing and assisting individual businesses (variously with / via: Doncaster Council, SCR, their banks, MPs, the press / media etc.) that have been unable to access support or get their voice heard.

- Identifying businesses that could support the effort against the pandemic and plugging them into supply chain or philanthropic activity accordingly (i.e. PPE, test and trace, charitable donations, volunteering etc.).
- Developing a Business Heroes campaign to celebrate and champion the businesses and business leaders that are keeping the economy going.

Chamber Brexit and International Trade

25. In addition to supporting businesses in relation to the coronavirus pandemic, the Chamber has also been assisting businesses to prepare for Brexit and manage through the immediate aftermath. This is in addition to the Chamber's typical activity leading on international trade support for the borough. The Chamber's Brexit / International Trade work is summarised below:
- The Chamber provides Export Documentation for businesses that are exporting their products from Doncaster; this ensures that firms can compliantly ship their goods into their target markets. The Chamber typically facilitates the export of circa £80m of products from Doncaster every year. The Chamber team have had key worker status to ensure that this service has continued uninterrupted throughout the pandemic.
 - In addition to export documentation, the Chamber team have developed a new competency in delivering Customs Declarations to assist firms with new documentation that has been introduced post Brexit for companies that import / export from / to the EU.
 - The Chamber has also assisted businesses in relation to Brexit / International Trade in the following ways:
 - Export training (agents and distributors, documentation, compliance etc.).
 - International trade event (demonstrating market opportunities, signposting to guidance etc.).
 - Export services (translation, foreign currency exchange, consultancy, research etc.).
 - Brexit helpline. SCR Brexit readiness project (a last-minute initiative funded by BEIS to conduct outreach activity to numerous firms before March to ask how they are coping with Brexit and triaging requests for assistance).

Chamber Young People and Work Readiness

26. In addition to its activity supporting the business community, the Chamber – via its Opportunities Doncaster division – acts as the borough's primary vehicle for bringing the worlds of business and education together. This is with a view to helping to raise the aspirations of young people and families, promoting exciting careers in Doncaster, developing work readiness and encouraging the borough's business community to engage proactively and supportively with the education sector
27. The Chamber works with all secondary schools in the borough along with the further education sector and many primary schools. The Chamber also works in partnership with the Children's Trust, Doncaster College, St Leger Homes, the

Careers and Enterprise Company and all other strategic partners linked to this agenda.

28. Over the last two years, the Chamber has delivered circa 2,000,000 encounters between businesses and young people (this includes delivering around 75% of the activity under the Doncaster Careers Hub umbrella).
29. For every £1 invested into Opportunities Doncaster by Doncaster Council, the Chamber has been able to leverage £3 of additional funding from elsewhere.
30. The Chamber has been able to reimagine the vast majority of its education facing activity to provide it for Doncaster's schools and young people digitally this last year. In most cases this has ensured a continuity of delivery

This activity has included, but is not limited to:

- Careers Week
- Labour Market Information
- Innovation Challenges
- Careers Information Advice and Guidance
- Summer Staycation
- Supported Internships
- Start Platform
- Doncaster Alumni Videos
- Work Experience
- Sector Safaris
- Apprenticeships
- Traineeships
- SEND Support
- Youth Hub
- Enterprise Advisers and Coordinators

31. Opportunities Doncaster Live, the borough's flagship careers event (and the biggest careers event in South Yorkshire) has been moved – at schools' request – from March 2021 to May 2021. The event will take place digitally (with measure in place to safeguard against digital poverty and exclusion) and be open to circa 4,000 young people and over 200 businesses.
32. The Chamber has introduced the Doncaster Promise as a way of businesses publicly committing to supporting young people (particularly in light of the pandemic) and has, so far, secured 150 signatories with a target of 300 by the summer.
33. The Chamber has also become a facilitator of the Government's kick-start scheme to assist unemployed young people; so far, the Chamber has identified in excess of 200 placement opportunities for unemployed young people in Doncaster. The scheme is not, however, without challenges and, so far, DWP is not providing the volume applicants necessary to meet the vacancies being promoted by local businesses (a national problem with the kick-start scheme).

Chamber partnerships and policy

34. As well as meeting unprecedented demand from businesses and the education sector for support, the Chamber has also met unprecedented demand from public sector partners for engagement and support in a range of policy forums and groups aligned to managing the crisis and / or delivering local and regional economic recovery plans.
35. This includes representation on 40+ SCR / Team Doncaster committees and working groups in addition to the voluntary roles that Chamber directors and staff undertake supporting local charities and schools.
36. These forums / working groups include, but are not limited to: the SCR Local Enterprise Partnership, Team Doncaster, Town Funds Boards, Doncaster Sheffield Airport related forums, University City and other education related boards, the Social Mobility Opportunity Area Board, Finance for Enterprise and many others. In all cases, the Chamber plays a vital role in ensuring that business sentiment is understood by our public sector partners.
37. In most cases, the Chamber would observe that collaboration and partnership working has been good in response to Covid-19; indeed, the relationship between Doncaster Chamber and Business Doncaster has being particularly strong.
38. Nonetheless, in some cases, the Chamber would observe that there has been the occasional lack of regard for some of the smaller organisations (and their own Covid-19 experience) within SCR / Team Doncaster structures. This is a concern that the Chamber – working in concert with some of the other not for profit and smaller entities within Team Doncaster – is seeking to proactively and constructively raise with Team Doncaster’s larger partners

Chamber finance

39. As noted at the start of this report, the Chamber is an independent business organisation that needs each year to secure the revenue it needs to support businesses, entrepreneurs, partners and young people in the borough. The Chamber, like all organisations, has been affected by the pandemic with income streams such as events and international trade being particularly threatened. As such, the following info may be useful to O&S Committee member
 - The Chamber will turnover over circa £1.2m in the 2020/21 financial year and generate a small contribution of circa £20k to its reserves.
 - The Chamber now employs circa 20 people having made the regrettable, but essential, decision to downsize in light of Covid-19; this has not unduly impacted on the Chamber’s capacity to service the business community.

- In contrast to other membership organisations (for example, Welcome to Yorkshire who were bailed out by numerous Local Authorities) or what has happened in other parts of Yorkshire (for example, in West Yorkshire where the LEP subsidised business's memberships of their Chambers), the Chamber has not had additional income from the region to assist it in helping the business community through the pandemic.
- To find ways of growing headcount back and doing more to serve the business community and partners, the Chamber is constantly seeking new things that it can do to assist businesses. We will continue to do this in an entrepreneurial way.
- The inevitable increase of publicly funded business support services in response to the pandemic is both an opportunity and a threat to the Chamber; displacement is a perennial risk to our organisation.
- The Chamber is currently finalising its budget for 2021/22. The Chamber is likely to produce a modest surplus only.
- The current biggest risk to the Chamber's financial position at present is securing additional income to support its activities in relation to young people and the education sector. This activity is obviously crucial to the borough and its young people in the current climate.

FUTURE BUSINESS SUPPORT AND COLLABORATIVE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

40. As the economy continues to struggle and businesses adapt to survive it is expected that business support requests to both Business Doncaster and the Chamber will increase, particularly after government grant schemes finish and furlough comes to an end
41. Both organisations are collaboratively looking at ways how we can support businesses moving forward
42. Both organisations have contributed along with colleagues from the Sheffield City Region growth hub and the three other South Yorkshire local authorities to the production of a SCR recovery action plan
43. Contained in the plan are a number of strands of work including the employment of additional business advisors and specialists through a framework of support, dedicated supply chain advisors who will sit within the local authorities working independently and collectively on supporting SME businesses to access new contract opportunities regionally, nationally and globally. Additional funding resources will be put in place to allow additional access to finance and digitalisation funding
44. Within the plan Doncaster will be allocated 4 additional business advisors who will be employed to work for Business Doncaster and the Chamber and directly with companies on recovery plans.

45. Both Business Doncaster and the Chamber are working together on a future events plan to tailor our business support programme of events directly to the needs of the businesses
46. Both organisations are working to deliver a town centre economic recovery plan which will support businesses directly impacted in the town centre to trade differently, market themselves better and raise their profile to enable them to compete and increase trade

AREAS OF CONCERN TO ADDRESS FOR DONCASTER AND FOR BUSINESSES

47. Whilst it is not an exhaustive list, a number of areas have been highlighted as current or future areas of concern / priorities for the business community:
 - Access to Government support commensurate with the financial challenge to businesses affected by lockdown.
 - Introducing longer-term support packages for businesses and workers rather than the piecemeal interventions (some of which have been very welcome and impactful) to date.
 - Reopening the economy.
 - Ensuring Government commitment to 'levelling up' election promises.
 - Securing Freeport status for Doncaster.
 - Delivering key infrastructure projects for Doncaster and the region (DSA railway station, new hospital, HS2 etc.)
 - Working with developers to increase the commercial product stock in Doncaster in order to compete and attract new investment
 - Re-energising the town centre.
 - Diversifying Doncaster's economy and increasing business productivity.
 - Removing blockages to the Kick-start scheme.
 - Addressing the significant disruption being caused to international traders as a result of Brexit.
 - Encouraging more firms to trade internationally.
 - Identifying and developing local supply chain opportunities.
 - Delivering a green recovery and supporting businesses to contribute to net zero.
 - Improving educational standards and diversity of provision in line with business demand.

- Ensuring that Doncaster and the UK becomes increasingly business friendly and open for business.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

48. There are no specific options to consider in this report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

49. This report provides the Panel with an opportunity to focus on the work of Business Doncaster, consider opportunities for future provision and skills development and become aware of progress being made in promoting Doncaster to new Inward Investors and developing the Visitor Economy.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

50.

	Outcomes	Implications
	<p>Doncaster Working: Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to good fulfilling work • Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish • Inward Investment 	<p>Business Doncaster and Doncaster Chamber contribute indirectly towards all of Council's key objectives and Doncaster's priorities by helping developing its economy and raising the profile of the area and Doncaster both to domestic and international markets. We fully support and deliver Economy and Environment Directorate Key Priorities Numbers 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 25, 30 50.</p>
	<p>Doncaster Living: Our vision is for Doncaster's people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster • More people can live in a good quality, affordable home • Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport • Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean • Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage 	
	<p>Doncaster Learning: Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that</p>	

	<p>is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school • Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better • Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work 	
	<p>Doncaster Caring: Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have the best start in life • Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust • Older people can live well and independently in their own homes 	
	<p>Connected Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modern, efficient and flexible workforce • Modern, accessible customer interactions • Operating within our resources and delivering value for money • A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents • Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths • Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance 	

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

51. There are no specific risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (SRF Date 17.02.21)

52. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. Further legal advice can be provided to the panel if required

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (JC Date 17.02.2021)

53. Subject to approval on the 1st March 2021, the Council's 21/22 revenue budget report includes additional budget for Business Doncaster:
- £0.150m allocated in 21/22 to provide funding to continue Advance (Employment support).
 - £0.107m commitment to provide one off funding in 22/23 for the Launchpad new business start-up, this will provide match funding to support the bid for additional external funds for the service.

Once approved these allocations will support the ongoing partnering work between the Council and the Chamber.

54. This report says Doncaster will be allocated four additional business advisors these will be employed to work for Business Doncaster, the Chamber and directly with companies on recovery plans. The posts will be funded by Sheffield City Region through the Recovery Action plan. The advisors will be paid by the Sheffield City Region through the Bloom framework. An additional supply chain officer will also join Business Doncaster this post will be funded by SCR.
55. In relation to Brexit, Business has been hit hard by the increase in paperwork, but Doncaster Chamber and Business Doncaster are working with companies that import/export to the EU. The Council is supporting the Brexit helpdesk at Doncaster Chamber. The UK is now free to determine new trading agreements with non-EU countries – including emerging markets in South America which are already on the radar of Doncaster

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (DK Date 17/02/2021)

56. There are no HR implications specific to the recommendations in the report, however, any emerging matters that impact on the workforce will require HR engagement at the appropriate time. This will include the recruitment of new staff with new job roles required to go through the job evaluation process and then to be recruited to in line with Doncaster Council's recruitment policy.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS (PW Date 15.02.2021)

57. There are no specific technology implications associated with this report. However, any arising technology requirements should be discussed with Digital & ICT at the earliest opportunity.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS (CT Date 15.2.21)

58. Employment is a primary determinant of health, impacting both directly and indirectly on the individual, their families and communities. Unemployment is associated with an increased risk of mortality and morbidity, including limiting illness, cardiovascular disease, poor mental health, suicide and health-damaging behaviours. The roles of Business Doncaster and Doncaster Chamber are crucial

in supporting our local businesses through the pandemic and Brexit as well as providing assistance to start-ups and drawing in opportunities for economic growth.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS (CJD Date 12.02.2021.)

59. There are no equality implications with regards to this report. Regular review of the Overview and Scrutiny work plan enables the Committee to ensure it remains relevant and is responding to important issues for citizens and the borough. The work plan update helps support openness, transparency and accountability as it summarises outcomes from overview and scrutiny activities. Citizens are able to contribute to the work of overview and scrutiny by attending meetings or contributing to reviews

CONSULTATION

60. There is no consultation required for this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

61. None

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

SCR = Sheffield City Region
LEP = Local Enterprise Partnership
SME = Small to Medium Enterprise
ERDF = European Regional Development Fund
CEO = Chief Executive Officer
CBI = Confederation of British Industry
BCC = British Chambers of Commerce
BEIS = Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

Chris Dungworth. – Head of Service – Business Doncaster
Tel: (01302) 737857
Email chris.dungworth@doncaster.gov.uk

Dan Fell- Chief Executive Officer
Doncaster Chamber of Commerce
Tel: 01302 640100
Email: dfell@doncaster-chamber.co.uk

Dan Swaine
Director of Economy and Environment