

Prepared for: Economy and Infrastructure Scrutiny 30th September 2015

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Title: Worcestershire Business Central

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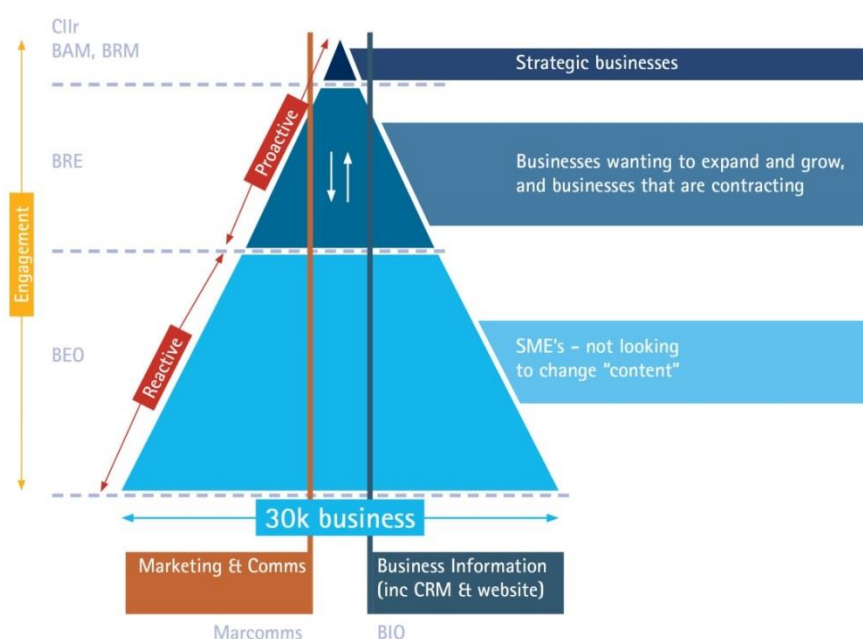
Purpose: To review the impact of WBC since its establishment in Feb 2013

Background

Worcestershire Business Central (WBC) was piloted in Oct 2012 and officially launched in February 2013. The service was developed in response to a changing economic development landscape with the closure of Business Links and Regional Development Agencies nationally. This left local businesses with no obvious point of contact for support.

The economic development partners within the county (County Council, district councils, Worcestershire LEP, HW Chamber of Commerce, DWP, FSB and Training providers) came together to develop the model for Worcestershire Business Central.

WBC is a single point of access for all businesses information and needs, it has a dedicated phone line (0300 123 1440), email (info@business-central.co.uk) website (www.business-central.co.uk), social media accounts and account/advisor management and was set up to support Worcestershire businesses to start up and grow.



Acronyms used in the above diagram

BAM - Business Account manager, BRM – Business Relationship manager

BRE – Business Relationship Executive, BEO – Business Engagement Officer

SMEs – Small to Medium Size Enterprises

Worcestershire Business Central has supported all types of businesses across the county regardless of their size, stage of business or sector. Worcestershire has approximately 25,900 businesses.

The service was segmented based on size of business and growth aspirations as detailed in the diagram above. As part of the service offer HW Chamber was contracted to work with the strategic businesses in the county ensuring large employers had a key contact, the Business Relationship Executives have proactively worked with growing companies and business networks in the county. With start-ups and micro businesses supported through the telephone service delivered by the Business Engagement Officers and referred through to service providers.

Since its launch, LEPs were tasked with establishing Growth Hubs. Recognising its success, WBC was acknowledged as the Worcestershire LEP's Growth Hub in June 2014 with a ministerial launch. WBC was the first Growth Hub in the West Midlands and 9th in the Country, a real success story for Worcestershire.

Current Level of Achievements:

WBC Core Service:

- Over 5,000 business enquiries (over 40% of enquiries are via email)
- Over 50,000 unique visitors to the website – this compares to a county average of approx. 5,000 prior to WBC launch.
- Customer satisfaction – 90% of customers would recommend WBC to others.
- Approx. 60% of telephone/email enquiries are from start-up /early stage businesses.
- 20% of Enquiries are from Worcester City, Wyre Forest 19%, Wychavon 18%, Redditch 12%, Malvern 11%, Bromsgrove 10%

WCC Business Support Programmes promoted through WBC: (full breakdown of programmes in Appendix 1).

- **Find it in Worcestershire** - over 7600 companies now registered and over £150m worth of opportunities posted.
- **Redundant Building Grant scheme** – provided almost £1m funding to local businesses creating over 160 jobs
- **Connecting schools and business** - Placements 755 work placements created for young people through
- **Worcestershire Expansion Programme**- Local Businesses have benefitted from £2.1m of funding, creating 245 jobs
- **Skills support for the workforce:** 516 training packages delivered by
- **Proof of concept** £1.2 million awarded to support business innovation, supporting local businesses to take concepts and ideas through to commercialisation.
- **Enterprising Worcestershire** has supported over 400 new business start-ups

The future:

From September 2015 Worcestershire Business Central will be delivered under the governance of WLEP and co-located with Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce. WCC will continue to support the staffing of WBC and be a key partner in the future direction of the service.

Appendix 1- WCC Business Support Programmes 2013-2015

Project Name	Description:	Project Timescales	Partners	Outputs
Enterprising Worcestershire	Support for start-up and growth businesses - business advice, coaching workshops and grants.	Nov 12 - Dec15	Blue orchid, BIS Smart, Grants	435 Jobs created, £16.5M GVA, 400 Business start ups, 550 SMEs assisted.
Worcestershire Loan Fund	SME loan fund, up to £50,000	Aug 13 - Sept 15	Impetus	25 Jobs created, 25 SMEs Assisted.
Graduate Programme	50% Funding to employ graduates on either a 1 year or three month work experience placements.	Oct 13 - Sept 15	Good2Great, Redwing Solutions	45 jobs created, £1.7m GVA
Cyber sector Support programme	Training and business advice for cyber companies and SME's re cyber security grants for business als available.	Nov 13 - Sept 15	3SDL	20 Jobs created, £750k GVA, 60 SMEs assisted.
Schools and Business	Work experience programme, linking schools to business via a web portal.	Sept 13 - Aug 16	Project Development Phase - tender to follow	785 Work Placements 200 Businesses engaged
Worcestershire Expansion Programme	Grant programme for large scale growth - up to £1M. Match funding required.	Jan 14 - March 15	Project Development Phase - tender to follow	245 Jobs Created
Inward Investment	Attract and retain companies to invest in Worcestershire. Marketing programme and development of landing package.	Jan 14 - Sept 15	Grants	£0.2M GVA, 5 SMEs assisted
Warndon Skills Centre	establishment of a purpose built construction skills centre in Warndon.	Sept 13 - Dec 15	Project Development Phase - tender to follow	176sqm of training facility.
Resource Efficient Worcestershire	Advice, support and grants for SMEs with energy and resouce efficiency.	Aug 12 - Dec 15	Pro Enviro, Chamber, Grants	60 SMEs assisted.
LEADER	support programme for rural economy supporting tourism and micro enterprise.	July 2015 - March 2020	Grants	Commences Nov 2015
ESF - Skills Support for the Workforce	Skills programme to support employers to up skill their workforce supporting LEP key priority sectors.	Dec 13 - July 15	Training and Skills Development	650 SME supported
Proof of Concept	Innovation support and grants (50%) to bring products to market.	Dec 13 - Sept 15	Central technology Belt / Grants	26 jobs created, £1M GVA, 40 SMEs assisted.
Women2web	Demand stimultaion project encouraging the take up and application of Broadband and IT in women owned businesses	Sept 2014 - March 2016	HW Chamber, FSB, Mid-West Rural, Women in Rural enterprise	200 Businesses supported
		Total		800+ new Jobs, £30M+ GVA, 1600+ SMEs assisted.