

# **h&f** Means *Business*

**A Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board**

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**The London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham**

**April 2012**

# **H&F Means Business**

## **A Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board**

**The London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham**

**April 2012**

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# Executive Summary

On 6<sup>th</sup> March 2012, the Overview and Scrutiny Board held a brief inquiry into local business partnerships: *H&F Means Business*, and invited a range of local business leaders and other community stakeholders to attend to give their views on the business environment, support arrangements and business partnership networks in Hammersmith and Fulham. The aim of the scrutiny inquiry was to explore how local businesses and the council currently work together to bolster economic growth and what additional actions could be taken to improve joint working.

The meeting included formal presentations and an introduction from the H&F Cabinet Member for Strategy, Cllr Mark Loveday, as well as informal “*café-style*” break out discussions between the Members of the Board, council officers and local business representatives. Key conclusions were agreed at the meeting and key points of discussion arising from the workshops were noted and are documented for reference in this report.

At the meeting, business representatives were asked to consider key questions around the inquiry and their views were noted. They were asked about whether they felt Hammersmith & Fulham is a business-friendly borough, the proposal for a new Hammersmith & Fulham Business Partnership, what they would like the Council to do to improve business prospects, and the council’s communications with local businesses. Following the meeting, an online consultation was posted and a wider range of local business and community people were able to submit their views on these questions. Some of the key responses are quoted here in this report for reference and have been used to inform and evidence the conclusions and recommendations arising from the inquiry.

At the end of the inquiry, six scrutiny recommendations have been made by the Overview and Scrutiny Board, for development of the business support, economic development, learning and skills portfolio, which are summarised below and exemplified within the report. The key conclusions and recommendations of the scrutiny inquiry are also summarised at the end of the report. It is envisaged that the report and recommendations will be referred to the H&F Cabinet for consideration, with an invitation to respond with an Executive Response and executive decisions.

# Summary of Recommendations

## **Recommendation One: The Economic Development, Learning and Skills Work Programme.**

It is recommended that the Economic Development, Learning and Skills team incorporate key discussion points and actions in its 2012/13 work programme.

## **Recommendation Two: A Businesses Strategy Group**

It is recommended that a Business Strategy Group is formed within the council, made up of council officers from across departments, with the aim of providing enhanced communications and greater harmony of council policy development and services which affect the local business community.

## **Recommendation Three: A Borough Business Champion**

It is recommended that an elected councillor be nominated as a Borough Business Champion.

## **Recommendation Four: A H&F Business Support Network**

It is recommended that the council establishes an H&F Business Support Network.

## **Recommendation Five: An Annual Borough Business Partnership**

It is recommended that an annual Borough Business Partnership meeting be held, with an open invitation to all borough businesses.

## **Recommendation Six: Businesses Networking**

The establishment of corporate council mechanisms to ensure timely and appropriate networking, liaison and consultation with local businesses both in written form and face to face.

# Membership of the Committee



Councillor Alex Karmel (Chairman)



Councillor  
Victoria Brocklebank-  
Fowler



Councillor Rachael Ford



Councillor Georgie Cooney



Councillor Donald Johnson



Councillor Lucy Ivimy



Councillor Andrew Jones



Councillor Sally Powell



Councillor PJ Murphy

# Aims and Objectives

*The Aim of the scrutiny inquiry was to explore how businesses and the Council currently work together to bolster economic growth and what additional actions could be taken to improve joint working.*

## Introduction

Hammersmith and Fulham Council's current Economic Development Strategy sets out the Council's vision for working with local businesses and other partners to promote and enhance local economic growth. Local business partnerships are at the heart of it. The vision states that "the Council will adopt an effective, partnership driven approach to stimulating economic development in Hammersmith and Fulham, which is built upon the effective collaboration of public, private and third sector organisations; and local people".

**“the Council will adopt an effective, partnership driven approach to stimulating economic development in Hammersmith and Fulham, which is built upon the effective collaboration of public, private and third sector organisations; and local people”**

*An Economic Development Strategy for Hammersmith and Fulham*

This scrutiny inquiry was set up to look at how the Council and its partners are achieving this in the current economic context, to speak directly to local business people and to discuss ways in which local partners can work together to further enhance local networks and local policy, to help the Council to further its vision and objectives for local business support and local economic development.

The global economic downturn has placed economic growth and investment at the top of the agenda for government, private, public and community sectors. In Hammersmith and Fulham, the Council is working with businesses to deliver practical responses to today's economic climate, against a backdrop of widespread austerity measures and fiscal challenge. This work has focused on using the Council's influence and resources to:

- ▶ deliver efficient and effective public services, with the 2012/13 Council Tax for residents reducing by a further 3.75%
- ▶ support local businesses through advice and information provision, as well as attract new business investment
- ▶ assist residents to secure skills, qualifications, experience and ultimately, jobs
- ▶ regenerate deprived areas of the borough through the provision of new homes and jobs in order to foster economic growth<sup>1</sup>.

A critical way of fostering growth is through the establishment and development of partnerships with businesses and this scrutiny inquiry has briefly examined the

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<sup>1</sup> Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Board 6<sup>th</sup> March 2012, *H&F Means Business: the Council's work with businesses to achieve local economic growth*, The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham 2012



current initiatives taking place and put forward recommendations to strengthen joint working, as well as invite broader discussion on 'what works' in supporting local businesses.

On 6<sup>th</sup> March 2012, the Overview and Scrutiny Board invited a range of local business people and other local stakeholders to discuss what more local business partnerships could do to work together and to identify possible areas for improvement and development. The meeting examined the programmes currently in place to support local business and the current economic profile and context for the borough and its main town centres. It provided a forum for round table discussions between local business people, elected councillors and council officers. Further to that meeting, an online consultation was held, aimed at local businesses, to allow a wider input into the discussions.

At the end of the inquiry, six key recommendations were resolved upon, which are outlined in this report, along with key conclusions and identified areas for development. Several issues and perspectives were also identified, which may be useful for future consideration. The key conclusions and recommendations from the scrutiny inquiry are summarised at the end of this report.

**“ Business development is an important area for the Council. Most Members of the Cabinet are either themselves business entrepreneurs or directly involved in private business enterprise in some way, with a high level of appreciation and concern for the issues facing local businesses in Hammersmith and Fulham ”**

**Councillor Mark Loveday – Cabinet Member for Strategy**

# **1 An Economic Profile of the Borough**

1.1. Hammersmith & Fulham is home to large clusters of creative, retail and hospitality businesses and contributes a huge amount to the wider London and national economy. Hammersmith and Fulham is home to the head quarters of a number of large international companies, as well as a wide range of different small business enterprises. Located at the inner West London nexus, it provides a combination of favourable economic opportunities, sitting between the affluent tourist, retail and leisure sectors of the West End to the east, Heathrow airport to the west, the new Wembley Stadium facilities to the north and the Thames corridor regeneration developments to the South. It is a borough of economic contrasts, with successful large businesses juxtaposed alongside pockets and neighbourhoods of relative deprivation<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> *An Economic Development Strategy for Hammersmith and Fulham*, The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, August 2007

## Visitors and Tourism

- 1.2. Visitors to Hammersmith and Fulham contribute 750m to the local economy and 35,000 people are employed in the business services sector. Hammersmith and Fulham offers a diverse range and combination of visitor attractions and is home to London's No.1 retail attraction: Westfield London<sup>3</sup>.

## Key Features

- 1.3. During the inquiry, an economic profile of the borough was provided by the Principal Business Investment Officer. She said that positive economic features included a high job density with a high number of vacancies, a high number of businesses in high growth sectors, high levels of business "births", a high percentage of businesses that are foreign-owned, a high percentage of residents that are self employed, and low insolvency rates.
- 1.4. Negative features include low levels of businesses that are 'adaptive' (i.e. firms that have shown signs of distress in the past but have recovered), low numbers of businesses that are significantly exporting, a high number of businesses 'at risk' (i.e. high average time taken to settle bills after being invoiced) and pockets of high deprivation & unemployment.

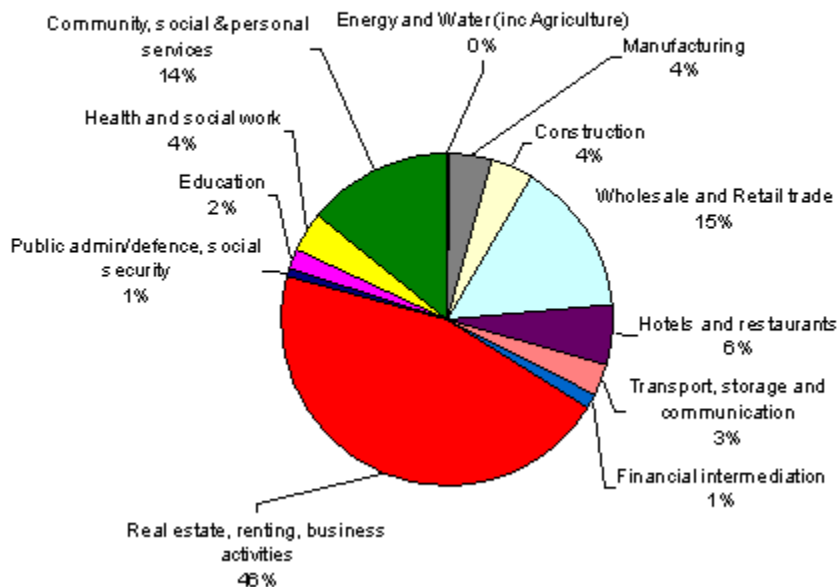
## Key Sectors

- 1.5. There are currently 126,000 people working in 19,000 businesses in the borough. Key sectors identified were wholesale and retail, real estate, and business services. 7,500 businesses are 'working from home' or 'self employed'. There are 3,590 new business start-ups within the borough, accounting for 24.4% of all businesses. There were 291 new businesses for every 10,000 people of working age, compared to the London average of 255<sup>4</sup>.
- 1.6. She said that Hammersmith and Fulham had a high quality public realm with good public services and provided responsive support and information services for businesses. The borough offers attractive openings for new business investment, and has major sites of physical regeneration and opportunity areas.

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<sup>3</sup> Information for Investors and Developers, *Introducing the Hammersmith & Fulham Economy*, The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham 2010

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board 6<sup>th</sup> March 2012, The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham 2012



Source: Annual Business Inquiry NOMIS, 2008

**“Hammersmith & Fulham is a relatively business friendly borough, it seems to have well organised local business Forums and made considerable efforts to improve the general appearance (even if those efforts have not always come to fruition). Some sensible planning decisions have been made recently which will improve business in the medium to long term ”**

*Charlie Raworth - Director and owner of Bush Hall*

## 2 Regeneration: Transforming the Borough

- 2.1. The borough's Borough of Opportunity vision, as detailed in the Community Strategy 2007-14 sets out the Council's wider ladder of opportunity aspirations. Hammersmith and Fulham Council has set out plans to regenerate key parts of the borough, rejuvenating town centres and building new homes. This includes a physical regeneration ambition across five major sites, including three of the Mayor for London's fifteen Opportunity Areas: Old Oak, White City and Earls Court. The regeneration of deprived areas with its resulting estimated 18,000 new homes and 40,000 jobs, will ensure that investment helps to achieve sustainable economic growth over time.
- 2.2. The regeneration programme is designed to attract significant new investment from developers to build new, better homes, create jobs, break down the barriers caused by big estates and create mixed and balanced communities.

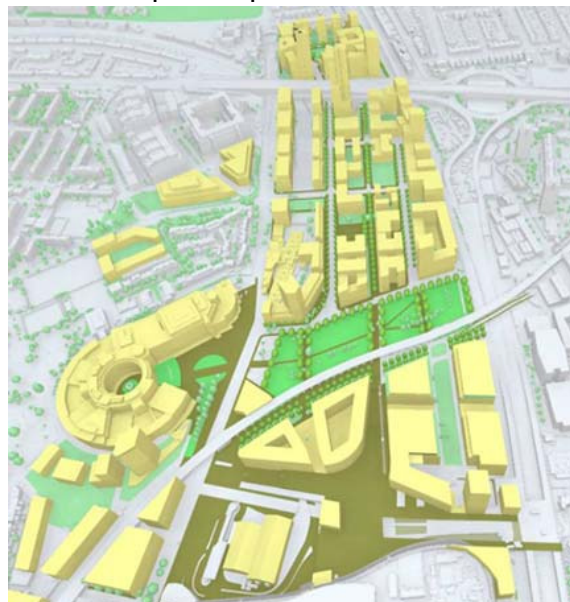
- 2.3. At the meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2012, the Cabinet Member for Strategy provided an overview of the key strategic economic and social regeneration projects and strategies currently being rolled out, including the key regeneration projects currently underway in the West Kensington and Earls Court Opportunity Area, the White City Opportunity Area and the Old Oak Opportunity Area developments.

#### West Kensington and Earls Court

- 2.4. He outlined some of the key aspirations and benefits sought from these projects. The West Kensington and Earls Court development aspires to provide 8,000 new jobs, new mixed use sustainable neighbourhoods, new efficient schools, leisure and health facilities, public and private open space and public transport improvements.

#### White City

- 2.5. He said that the White City development aspires to provide 10,000 new jobs, a focus on creative industries and retail, the potential to extend the town centre to the north of Westfield, major leisure uses, community facilities including schools, health etc., public and private open space public transport improvements



*An overview of the site in White City to the north of Westfield which is earmarked for new homes and firms, with a possible outline of what it could look like*

#### Old Oak

- 2.6. The Old Oak Common developments aspire to provide a 90 hectare site situated within an area of London that contains some of the most deprived

communities within England and over the next twenty years could contribute to the creation of an estimated 20,000 jobs.



The council encourages the redevelopment of land at Old Oak Common railway sidings for a major mixed use development including industrial, research, distribution, office based and bio-tech industries related to the Hammersmith Hospital research centre.

The council is pressing for the site to be used as a future Crossrail station and West London hub for a national High Speed Rail Link to Heathrow airport. The regeneration of this area, which forms part of the Park Royal industrial estate, has the long term potential to bring 5,000 new jobs.

## Shepherds Bush

- 2.9. The Westfield shopping centre development is regenerating the W12 area and has brought new homes, new tube, train and bus stations, extra police on the beat and substantial environmental improvements.

## South Fulham Riverside

- 2.10. The South Fulham Riverside Area is one of five regeneration areas within the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham identified under the adopted Core Strategy 2011. London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham have produced a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for South Fulham Riverside to provide guidance on the way in which the area should be regenerated and developed over the next 20 years. Statutory public consultation on the second draft for the South Fulham Riverside SPD is taking place for six weeks from Friday 30 March until 5pm Friday 11 May 2012.

# 3 Supporting Local Businesses

- 3.1. The Government has set out a raft of initiatives, which will be championed by the GLA led London Enterprise Panel, to foster economic growth through skills development, employment opportunities, the visitor economy and tourism, business sector investment and support, including 'Coaching for Businesses' and Business Link; a UK on-line based service.
- 3.2. Locally, the council delivers its economic development and business support strategies through the Economic Development, Learning and Skills department; part of the Regeneration and Housing Strategy Division. It aims to foster economic growth and prosperity by assisting residents and businesses with practical responses to today's economic challenges. Specifically, it aims to:
- ▶ support local businesses and attract business investment
  - ▶ assist residents to secure skills, qualifications, experience and jobs
  - ▶ regenerate deprived areas of the borough.
  - ▶ deliver the Council's key theme '*H&F – a better place to do business*'
  - ▶ stimulate inward investment and provide strategies for competitive growth
  - ▶ develop and maintain business relations and providing a voice for businesses at local, regional and national levels
  - ▶ work with developers to sustain business growth and maximise employment/training benefits from developments
  - ▶ lever in funding/investment for business support activities
  - ▶ develop strategic partnerships, strengthen the involvement of businesses in the local community and promote local corporate social responsibility.

## Current Council Priorities

- 3.3. The Council aims to prioritise initiatives which focus on the following building blocks for economic growth and prosperity:
- ▶ Ensuring the borough's commercial centres and high streets are competitive places to locate and more generally maximising opportunities to trade and invest in the borough
  - ▶ Working with businesses as employers to increase the availability of employment opportunities for residents
  - ▶ Increasing the pool of employed, enterprising and skilled residents
- 3.4. For key contacts and further information on Hammersmith and Fulham Council's economic development and business support, visit: [www.lbhf.gov.uk/business](http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/business)

## Current Council Initiatives

- 3.5. The Economic Development, Learning and Skills team leads on; maximising jobs and employment opportunities for residents, delivers over 400 classes per year to adult learners, and works with the business sector to increase business investment and growth.
- 3.6. The team's work with businesses currently includes:
- ▶ management of a Business portal: a one stop shop for all local businesses, offering support, advice and signposting to wider services including access to finance, training and procurement opportunities
  - ▶ town centre and high street management in Fulham and Shepherds Bush, delivering dedicated business support initiatives in partnerships with the Metropolitan Police, local businesses and residents to maintain a safe and attractive retail environment in order to increase footfall and trade
  - ▶ business communications including newsletter and e-updates; the H&F Business directory (listing 3,000 local businesses); a 52 page H&F business pack jammed with information and advice; organisation in the area, local and sector specific business forums
  - ▶ the H&F Enterprise Club (for new business start-ups). In January, at the club launch, nearly 100 local residents attended a packed event opened by the Mayor. Meetings are held monthly, with each session focusing on a different aspect of business development
  - ▶ Business to Business networking events; including the planned Business Expo Twenty12 on June 18<sup>th</sup> 2012
  - ▶ management of 69 H&F owned units which are rented out to business for office, light industrial and media purposes
  - ▶ business investment; assisting the development and growth of the borough's two BIDS (Business Improvement Districts); HammersmithLondon and Park Royal Partnership which between them invest nearly £1m pa in the borough.
- 3.7. The Economic Development, Learning and Skills team also delivers complementary services to local employers through its local recruitment facility; the WorkZone. The

WorkZone, based at the Shepherds Bush library, aims to capture retail jobs at Westfield London as well as deliver outreach employment support activities in the community.

- 3.8. The Overview and Scrutiny Board has noted the positive feedback from members of the business community towards the council's Economic Development, Learning and Skills team, who appear to provide an energetic and proactive approach in supporting the council's business support strategies. It is hoped that the officers who have participated in this inquiry have also found the process to be useful as part of their engagement with the local business community and in identifying, in the facilitated dialogue with local business people through this inquiry, some further areas for service development. It is recommended, therefore, that the Economic Development, Learning and Skills team incorporate the key discussion points, key conclusions and actions arising from this inquiry into their 2012-2013 work programme.

**Recommendation One: The Economic Development, Learning and Skills Work Programme.**

It is recommended that the Economic Development, Learning and Skills team incorporate key discussion points and actions in its 2012/13 work programme.

- 3.9. A summary of the key discussion points and key conclusions arising from this inquiry is provided in Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations.

A Business Strategy Group

- 3.10. Two of the key areas for development that have been drawn from these discussions have been work to ensure that the voices of small and medium sized businesses, that are on the margins of profitability, are heard and the establishment of corporate council mechanisms to listen to local businesses and where possible, co-ordinate across the council ways to take these perspectives into account.
- 3.11. This is about making sure businesses perspectives are heard in different services that have an impact on local businesses. It is therefore recommended that a Business Strategy Group be formed within the council, made up of council officers from across departments, with the aim of providing enhanced communications and greater harmony of council policy development and services which affect the local business community.

**Recommendation Two: A Businesses Strategy Group**

It is recommended that a Business Strategy Group is formed within the council, made up of council officers from across departments, with the aim of providing enhanced communications and greater harmony of council policy development and services which affect the local business community.

***What one improvement to our communication with business would you make tomorrow?***

***“Publish the names and contact numbers of the responsible officers for litter, bins, gardening, etc.”***

*Vicar of St John’s Church*

A Borough Business Champion

- 3.13 Raising the profile of local business perspectives at a Member level is also important, to make sure that there is enough energy, time and resources to advocate and articulate the needs of the business community, in the council and to government and local partners.
- 3.14 We are therefore recommending a borough “Business Champion”; an elected councillor, appointed to champion the needs of local businesses and to speak to them and speak out for them.

**Recommendation Three: A Borough Business Champion**

It is recommended that an elected councillor be nominated as a Borough Business Champion.

Business Units & Facilities

- 3.15 Currently, the council provides business units in three different locations in the borough: the Townmead Business Centre, the Sullivan Enterprise Centre and Indie North Media Village. This provides new and small business with access to business work space.

***“These are a great way for new/small businesses to take their first step on the business property ladder and the council needs to be congratulated for their continual support of these facilities”***

*Paul Kelly - Chairman, Federation of Small Businesses, West London*

- 3.16 In their evidence submitted to the inquiry, Paul Kelly of the Federation of Small Businesses suggested ways in which they think this could be improved. These included the addition of similar units in the centre of the borough (e.g. Hammersmith) and the development of desk/small office facilities for start-ups and sole traders.



3.17 He suggested that these facilities could provide:

- ▶ “easy in, easy out” terms
- ▶ on-site specialist business support (who might also be start-ups/micro businesses,
- ▶ IT & connectivity i.e. network, broadband, Wi-Fi and telephony
- ▶ access to research & development opportunities, training, graduate resources and financial expertise
- ▶ administration & secretarial services
- ▶ business networking opportunities
- ▶ meeting facilities, and
- ▶ all supplied at preferential rates (for a maximum period, no minimum), with no legal fees or hidden extras.

3.18 In his view, “by its very nature, this will increase job creation and local spending”. These proposals would need to be appraised for feasibility and resource implications, but are noted here for future consideration in service development.

#### Procurement Opportunities

3.19 In evidence submitted to the inquiry, Paul Kelly of the Federation of Small Businesses suggested that the Council could possibly provide more procurement opportunities for micro/SME businesses by opening up access to local council procurement opportunities.

3.20 In particular, he suggested improving access to procurement opportunities for micro/SME’s businesses as the Tri-Borough project develops, where Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster Councils are joining up service delivery.

**“As more services become integrated, it will become more tempting to consolidate smaller contracts, which move the opportunities further out of the reach of local businesses”**

**Paul Kelly - the Federation of Small Businesses**

3.21 Again, these proposals would need to be appraised for feasibility and recourse implications, but are noted here for future consideration in service development

## **4 Business Partnerships**

4.1. The Overview and Scrutiny Board has heard in evidence that the Hammersmith and Fulham economy employs over 126,000 people in 19,000 businesses. This includes 7,500 businesses which are categorised as either “Working From Home” or “Self Employed”. Employment is across a variety of industries and the key sectors

identified as Wholesale & Retail, Real Estate, Business Services and Personal Services<sup>5</sup>.

- 4.2. Over the last three years there have been over 3,590 new business start-ups within the borough, which account for 24.4% of businesses. This equates to nearly 291 new businesses for every 10,000 people of working age. This is a much higher level of new business activity than in any of the surrounding boroughs, whilst the London average is 255 per 10,000 working age population.
- 4.3. The Overview and Scrutiny Board, through talking to members of the local business community, have considered ways in which the Council supports local business partnerships and what further might be done through the partnership to further support local businesses. In particular it has considered ways to enhance the local business partnerships and the ways in which the Council communicates with business partners.

#### An H&F Business Support Network

- 4.4. Local business representatives were generally receptive to the idea of convening a local business support network and we think that it would be useful as a way of bringing local partners together for mutual support and advice and to enhance the voice of the local business communities. One concern that we have is that such a forum should not be too focused on meetings and open ended discussions, but have a clear focus on practical support and communication. We are recommending the establishment of an H&F Business Support Network, which would be a network of local businesses and other local stakeholders for mutual advice and support.

#### **Recommendation Four: A H&F Business Support Network**

It is recommended that the council establishes an H&F Business Support Network.

*“what benefits do you think a new Hammersmith & Fulham Business Partnership would bring to the borough? Would you be interested in joining? please tell us why?/why not?”*

“Potentially yes, although these things often tend to be the same faces trying to build and regenerate the area for everyone else. We need an organisation that is more engaging to bring new businesses into the ethic that if we all add a little there will be rewards for everyone to reap in the years to come ”

**Laura Carr, The Durell Arms**

#### An Annual Borough Business Partnership

- 4.5. As part of the council’s engagement with local business partners and as part of the local business network, we would like to see a forum convened annually that brings

<sup>5</sup> Experian report 2009

together key business stakeholders across the community, to allow discussion on ongoing policy and strategy developments to improve business support, including local businesses mutual support and a louder voice for the local business community. We are therefore recommending an Annual Borough Business Partnership meeting, with an open invitation to all borough businesses.

**Recommendation Five: An Annual Borough Business Partnership**

It is recommended that an annual Borough Business Partnership meeting be held, with an open invitation to all borough businesses.

“*All of these issues could be addressed by a local group of business people*”  
*Robert Grothier - antique and made to measure furniture business proprietor*

H&F Business Desk & Business Link

- 4.6. Through the Business Desk, the council aims to support businesses wishing to establish in the borough. The Business Desk is described as “your first port of call, and from there we will be able to direct you to free and paid-for services available within the council or from external partners”<sup>6</sup>.
- 4.7. For more information see [www.lbhf.gov.uk/business](http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/business)
- 4.8. The council also encourages all businesses to contact Business Link to view the resources available to them and sign up for the newsletter and alerts on events, legislative updates etc. Business Link is the government's free online resource for businesses. It contains information, support and services for business, whether a large organisation or just starting up.
- 4.9. For more information on Business Link see [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)



H&F Brilliant Business Awards

- 4.10. Residents, shoppers and workers are being asked to go online and nominate their favourite businesses, intrepid entrepreneurs and community-minded enterprises for a top prize in a borough-wide competition that will showcase the best of business.

There are five categories, which are:

- ▶ Your favourite business (*sponsored by Hammersmith Kings Mall*)
- ▶ Best customer service (*sponsored by Westfield London*)
- ▶ Best new business (*sponsored by H&F Chronicle*)



<sup>6</sup> Hammersmith and Fulham Website: [www.lbhf.gov.uk/business](http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/business)

- ▶ Best business supporter of the community (*sponsored by Fulham Broadway Shopping Centre*)
- ▶ Best young entrepreneur (aged 35 or under) (*sponsored by W12 Shopping Centre*)

4.11. To find out more see: [www.lbhf.gov.uk/businessawards](http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/businessawards)

**“Businesses are the blood and lifeline of our local communities. In today’s increasingly challenging economy it is refreshing to see different networking, local authorities and local media all working together to launch a new business expo in West London”**  
**Greg Hands MP<sup>7</sup>**

4.12. Of course, the council itself is an important customer for local business contracts and has an interest in both securing value for money and supporting local business suppliers where possible. In evidence submitted to the committee, the Federation of Small Businesses suggested that the council and its business partners convene regular ‘Meet The Buyer’ events, which they say is a great way for council managers to meet local suppliers for local procurement contracts and will become even more important as the Tri-Borough project develops<sup>8</sup>.

## 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Through its consultation with local business and local stakeholders, both at the meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2012 and the online consultation and survey, the Overview and Scrutiny Board asked the following questions:

1. *“please tell us your role, the name of the firm, and how long you’ve been in business in Hammersmith & Fulham”,*
2. *“in your experience, is Hammersmith & Fulham a business-friendly borough, tell us why or why not”,*
3. *“what benefits do you think a new Hammersmith & Fulham Business Partnership would bring to the borough? Would you be interested in joining? please tell us why?/why not?”*
4. *“what one thing would you like the Council to do or not do that would improve your business prospects?”*
5. *“what one improvement to our communication with business would you make tomorrow?”.*

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<sup>7</sup> From [www.expotwenty12.co.uk](http://www.expotwenty12.co.uk)

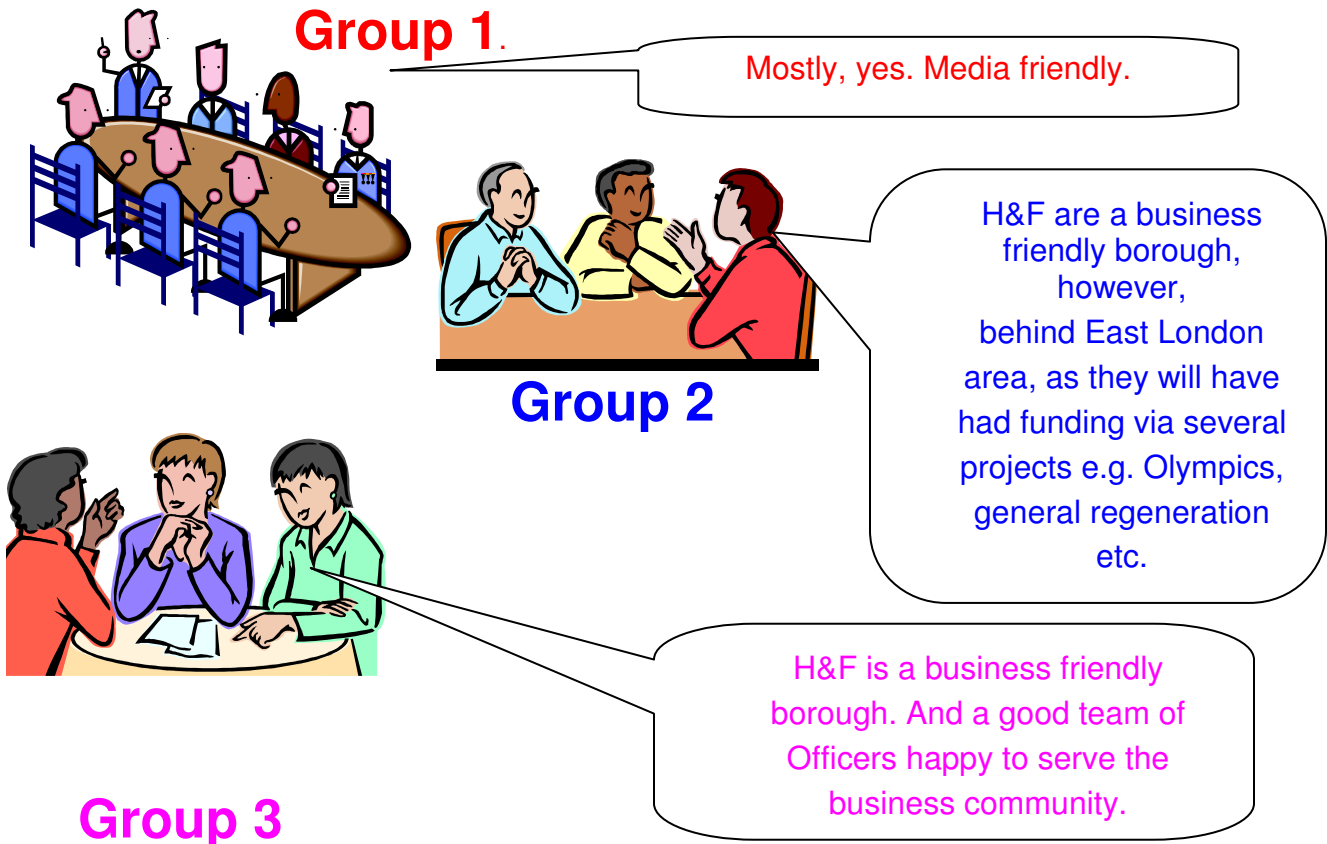
<sup>8</sup> Evidence submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board H&F Means Business Scrutiny Inquiry, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2012 by Mr Paul Kelly – The Federation of Small Businesses

## Listening to Local Businesses

- 5.2. At the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting 6<sup>th</sup> March 2012, following formal interviews and report presentations, informal “café-style” discussion groups were formed to facilitate discussion around the key consultation questions and any other issues local business representatives wanted to raise.
- 5.3. The key points arising from their discussions are provided here.

### A Business Friendly Borough?

*In your experience, is Hammersmith & Fulham a business-friendly borough – tell us why? /why not?*



**Group 1.**

Mostly, yes. Media friendly.

**Group 2**

H&F are a business friendly borough, however, behind East London area, as they will have had funding via several projects e.g. Olympics, general regeneration etc.

**Group 3**

H&F is a business friendly borough. And a good team of Officers happy to serve the business community.

“I believe it is. I am very happy that our section of the Fulham Road and the Kings Road parallel to us are full of independent retailers which is interesting for the customers to visit, you cannot internet shop for our products along this street or kings road so need to come and see for yourselves what you can buy.....allowing us (retailers) to use this valuable opportunity to upsale (increase their spend) by having personal contact with the customers, introducing alternatives, more options,

greater value etc. If there were too many high street names then there would be less interest in our street as you can find them on the internet. We have a super proactive town centre manager, Nicki Burgess, who cares about our business success and the council members I have found to be genuine in their interest to our success or plight and have supported important campaigns to ensure we have a fair chance to survive these tricky times, i.e. short stay parking along our street was a life saver....we cannot underplay this ””

**Serena Turle - The Parsons Nose**

“As proprietor of Artbeat, here for nearly 30 years I haven't found H&F a particularly business friendly borough in the past, although it has improved the last 3 or so years”  
 – Jill, Artbeat

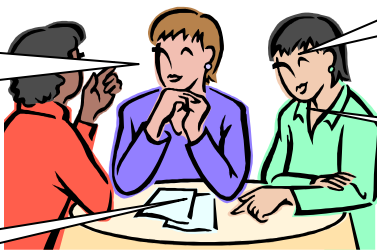
A New Business Partnership?

What benefits could a new Hammersmith & Fulham Business Partnership bring to the borough? – would you be interested in joining? please tell us why?/why not?



**Group 2**

Greater access to council contracts for SME's.



**Group 3**

More opportunities to work with larger and medium size businesses.

Better communication to / with businesses...

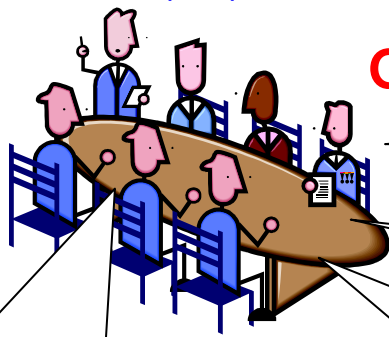
Increase CSR with regards to buying local etc.

More frequent newsletter

“Wot's a Business Partnership?”  
 Online H&F Means Business questionnaire respondent

## The Role of the Council

*What one thing would you like the council to do / not do that would improve your business prospects?*



### Group 1

Organise meet the buyer events.

Create a list of local recommended suppliers.

Create opportunities for procurement, supply chains / how small businesses can get work from the large businesses.

Get rid of the Hammersmith flyover

Cut red tape and licensing bureaucracy that can be time consuming and inhibit business growth.



### Group 2

Concerns about how business support is funded in the council, is it was mostly 106 financial contributions? And if so, that this wouldn't demonstrate much commitment.

A Business Partnership would be effective, but it needs to meet regularly.

Make things more easy for businesses by cutting lots of red tape.

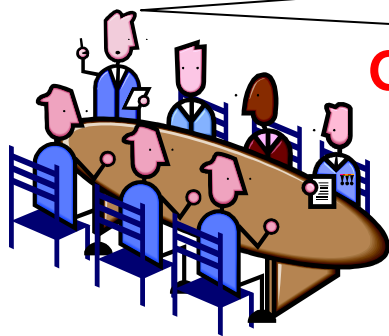


### Group 3

Provide a simple complaints process.

## Communicating With Businesses

*What one improvement to our communication with business would you make tomorrow?*



**Group 1**

With Round Table discussions like this: businesses feel they were listened to. It provides an opportunity for businesses to talk directly to local councillors.

Business Borough E News Bulletin is good. (H&F news missed by businesses too).



**Group 2**

Start communicating regularly and effectively with all business on relevant matters!!!!



Would like to have more events on the website.

Better newsletter.

**Group 3**

Keep the council website up to date.

Produce an "E-newsletter".

**“ Nothing beats the personal touch and visits to the shop are the best way without a doubt but I TOTALLY understand that this is incredibly difficult on time, it is just not possible with workload and perhaps the owner of the business is not present at the time, but that is when the best brainstorming can happen I think. Emails and letters are so easily put aside and then a drama happens in the shop and they are forgotten about ”**

**Serena Turle - The Parsons Nose**



## Key Conclusions

- 5.4. During the inquiry, the following areas were identified where more could be achieved locally:
- i. work to ensure that the voices of small and medium sized businesses, that are on the margins of profitability, are heard in the context of cost reduction and efficiency savings as well as greater understanding of the often conflicting viewpoints of business and government
  - ii. work to fully capitalise on upcoming Golden Jubilee and Olympic & Paralympics events which can extract maximum benefit from the visitor economy, whilst diminishing any negative impacts on transport and trade
  - iii. regular discussion on the focus of council activity that is coordinated to achieve a good balance between engagement with the largest businesses which potentially yield the biggest impact in terms of the return in jobs and investment verses a focus on the delivery of more labour intensive support and area based interventions areas e.g. local high streets. As well as the balance to be struck between assisting existing businesses and helping residents seeking to establish businesses and new enterprise
  - iv. communication with all sectors of the business sector and whether more sector based initiatives are more fruitful than size or area based work
  - v. clarification of the business rate settlement and relief arrangements between local authorities and regional and central government
  - vi. the establishment of corporate council mechanisms to ensure timely and appropriate networking, liaison and consultation with local businesses both in written form and face to face.

### **Recommendation Six: Businesses Networking**

The establishment of corporate council mechanisms to ensure timely and appropriate networking, liaison and consultation with local businesses both in written form and face to face.

## Scrutiny Recommendations

- 5.5. At the end of the inquiry, the following recommendations have been made by the Committee:

### **Recommendation One: The Economic Development, Learning and Skills Work Programme.**

It is recommended that the Economic Development, Learning and Skills team incorporate key discussion points and actions in its 2012/13 work programme.

**Recommendation Two: A Businesses Strategy Group**

It is recommended that a Business Strategy Group is formed within the council, made up of council officers from across departments, with the aim of providing enhanced communications and greater harmony of council policy development and services which affect the local business community.

**Recommendation Three: A Borough Business Champion**

It is recommended that an elected councillor be nominated as a Borough Business Champion.

**Recommendation Four: A H&F Business Support Network**

It is recommended that the council establishes an H&F Business Support Network.

**Recommendation Five: An Annual Borough Business Partnership**

It is recommended that an annual Borough Business Partnership meeting be held, with an open invitation to all borough businesses.

**Recommendation Six: Businesses Networking**

The establishment of corporate council mechanisms to ensure timely and appropriate networking, liaison and consultation with local businesses both in written form and face to face.

## Acknowledgements

Our thanks to all of the local business representatives and others who took time to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Board to provide evidence to our inquiry, or complete our questionnaire.

## Witnesses

*The following individuals, groups and organisations were interviewed during the inquiry:*

### **H&F Cabinet Members:**

Councillor Mark Loveday – Cabinet Member for Strategy

### **H&F Council Officers:**

Derek Myers – Chief Executive, Hammersmith and Fulham Council

Jane West – Executive Director for Finance and Corporate Governance, Hammersmith and Fulham Council

Nicki Burgess - Fulham Town Centre Manager, Economic Development, Learning & Skills, Hammersmith and Fulham Council

Kim Dero - Head of Economic Development, Hammersmith and Fulham Council

Mike England – Assistant Director, Housing and Regeneration, Hammersmith and Fulham Council

Antonia Hollingsworth - Principal Business Investment Officer, Economic Development, Learning & Skills, Hammersmith and Fulham Council

Mohammad Haniff – Town Centre Manager, Housing and Regeneration, Hammersmith and Fulham Council

Rotimi Ololade – Business Growth Officer, Housing and Regeneration, Hammersmith and Fulham Council

### **Local Business and Community Representatives:**

Martin O'Connell – The London Window Cleaning Company,

Angela Bond - Bush Theatre,

Alexandra Brunner - Hotel Manager, Juries Inn Chelsea

Sarah Watts - Eat My Cake

Paul Kelly – Federation of Small Businesses

Andrew Fullerton - BBC

Uday Thakker - Red Ochre

David Wood- Best of Hammersmith & Fulham

Steven Forshaw - W12 Centre

Marnie Williams - W12 Centre and the Shepherds Bush Business Forum

Phillipa Berridge – The Urban Partnership and Events Organiser

Fiaz Mohammad- Global Sports

John Ryan – The White City Neighbourhood Forum

Arun Sondhi – Chief Executive, Hammersmith and Fulham Business Improvement District (BID)

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