

**REPORT TO: COMMUNITY PLANNING "WEALTHIER STRATEGIC GROUP"  
ON 5 JUNE 2008**

**SUBJECT: PROPOSED DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LOCAL BUSINESS  
COMMUNITY**

**BY: HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

1.1 To put proposals to the Strategic Group for opportunities for discussion with the local business community, to help develop and improve the local economy.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 **It is recommended that the group agrees, in principle to:**

- 1) the formation of a Local Business Panel,**
- 2) a proposed seminar for "growth businesses",**
- 3) proposals to establish an annual conference for discussion of the local economy.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 In order to improve the local economy it is important that there is a clear understanding of local, regional, national and other issues, affecting the economy, and that information and opportunities are discussed by all parties so that the most important priorities and actions can be developed and implemented.

3.2 As part of the new arrangements for Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) there is a need to establish a Local Business Panel. This Panel will be a body which regularly meets to discuss local economic issues, within Moray and which provides a link to the HIE Board. Further information on this Panel will be provided by HIE, at the meeting of Steering Group, and consideration can be given to the possible membership of the Panel, and its relationship with the Community Planning Strategic Group.

3.3 There is a need for regular discussion with the local business community of issues and activities which will affect the economy of Moray. This could be achieved through an annual conference which could deal with general economic development matters, or includes specific themes. The conference, in 2008, could be held later in the year, or at the beginning of 2009, and thereafter a regular annual date set. This matter could be, if agreed, the subject of a more detailed report to the next meeting of the Strategic Group.

3.4 One of the priorities of HIE and the Council is to support those businesses which show potential for growth, and it is proposed that a Seminar be

arranged for this sector of the local economy. HIE have information on "growth businesses" within Moray, and this would be used to select representation to attend such a seminar. The purpose of the seminar would be to discuss and agree how the Moray Council, HIE, other public sector agencies, the private sector, and others involved in the local economy could work jointly to support and enhance opportunities for "growth businesses". Whilst a date has not been arranged for this, at present, it is suggested that it should take place in the autumn of 2008.

#### **4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The proposals for a Local Business Panel, annual conference and "growth businesses" seminar will help achieve the objectives of Moray 2020 Strategy, and the Single Outcome Agreement.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 **Whilst there are some opportunities for dialogue with local businesses, the proposals in this report will help formalise some of that discussion. There will also be a review of other arrangements for engagement with the local business community, to ensure that any such opportunities are co-ordinated and focussed on the main issues relating to the priorities of the Community Planning Partnership.**

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Background Papers:

Ref: SH/BDH