

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Communities Housing & Infrastructure
DATE	29 <sup>th</sup> August 2017
REPORT TITLE	One stop employability shop
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/17/197
DIRECTOR	Bernadette Marjoram
REPORT AUTHOR	Matthew Lockley

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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT:-**

This report seeks approval for officers within Economic Development to work with Instant Neighbour to progress the establishment of a city centre one stop shop where the public can access support, information, and training relating to employment.

**2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

It is recommended that committee:

- (a) Agree that discussions with partners on the development and running of a city centre one stop employability shop be continued;
- (b) Delegate authority to the Head of Economic Development, in consultation with the Head of Land and Property Assets to negotiate a sub-letting agreement with Instant Neighbour (the lead body);
- (c) Agree to receive annual reports on the outcomes achieved within the one stop employability shop

**3. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES**

This initiative has been proposed in response to a variety of city wide drivers and opportunities.

**Drivers**

- 3.1 Economic driver – the downturn in the oil and gas sector has seen an increase in the number of people ‘actively seeking’ work across all industry sectors. Those recently made redundant are more ‘employment ready’ which will see many lower skilled people in the city become even further removed from job opportunities.

- 3.2 Current neighbourhood audits are identifying that many people have multiple barriers preventing them from fully engaging and benefiting from a positive lifestyle. These individuals are often unable to co-ordinate appointments with multiple agencies and therefore fail to receive the required support.
- 3.3 Market testing (across Council services, and externally) identified a need for a more coordinated approach to service delivery, information sharing and maintenance. This was also further reinforced by the neighbourhood audits, highlighting that there appeared to be significant service delivery, however the signposting was inconsistent and poor. Securing a city centre location would improve communication of services to target beneficiary group.
- 3.4 Overheads for training providers are increasing with the potential of many moving out of the city and reducing the level of service provision. This is further compounded by a number of providers coming to the end of their lease agreements.

### **Opportunities**

- 3.5 Increased employment opportunities through the delivery of the city centre masterplan and city region deal. Further employment opportunities could also be created through the internal and external management of Community Benefit clauses where additional requests are placed on developers to ring-fence entry level jobs and training opportunities. These opportunities could be promoted through the one stop city centre shop. The branding of this shop would remove the stigma perceived by many when entering DWP premises and hopefully increase the number of applications received by employers.
- 3.6 Increased promotion and uptake of ESF employability pipeline project, Employability Fund and other training initiatives currently being offered across the city.
- 3.7 Access to IT equipment and support to enable those without IT equipment or broadband facilities to apply for vacancies and receive support to ensure they are promoting themselves appropriately.
- 3.8 Co-location with other training and support agencies will lower operating costs, increase breadth of knowledge and promote best practice working. Shared resources and staffing of reception facility will also reduce overheads.
- 3.9 Co-location with Instant Neighbour will bring a number of benefits beyond the financial savings. Individuals who are visiting the retail facility that may not have engaged with support services will be made aware of the wider range of support services available within the building and can be discretely referred.
- 3.10 In addition, there is currently a shortage of appropriate accommodation for some team members within the adult education service, the establishment of the one stop would address this issue and also allow members of the team to deliver services directly from the city centre.

- 3.11 Effective and improved collaboration across key agencies, council services and local training providers, could boost the number of outputs/ outcomes by a significant amount. This would form part of the “Aberdeen Works” initiative and could be eligible for support under the ESF employability pipeline project.
- 3.12 Align with the Tackling poverty and Inequality strategy to ensure clients are supported to progress from an employability intervention

### **Overview**

- 3.13 Officers from Economic Development and Instant Neighbour have been working together to explore ways to deliver a cost and resource efficient service that will promote the retail and training opportunities through Instant Neighbour and also the wider range of support services for those seeking employment and skills development. It was established early that for a facility to work it must be based in an area of the city centre which is accessible to the public and which demonstrates high footfall. Further research was carried out through members of the Employability Training Providers Forum and other national support agencies based within the city to gauge if there was sufficient interest in providers participating in this initiative. Feedback was extremely positive with all partners advising that they felt this would be a significant step forward within the city in relation to the provision of employability support and that similar models in other areas had worked very well, increasing positive outcomes and the number of individuals becoming engaged with services.
- 3.14 From initial research with partners there has been a clear commitment to participation across 4 levels if the appropriate facility were to become available:
- Relocation of staff on a full time basis
  - City Centre hot desking availability
  - Access to 1 to 1 confidential client interview space
  - Access to training facility

Further to this partners were in agreement that they would share the cover of the reception and referral area to ensure that the services were available throughout the day. Multi partner working would also increase security for officers as it would eliminate lone working in an area open to the public.

- 3.15 Initial discussions indicated that the following agencies wish to participate in this initiative – offering a rounded support provision for clients:

Aberdeen Foyer  
Momentum  
ITCA  
SHMU (Station House Media unit)  
Barnardos  
Pathways  
Realise  
Instant Neighbour  
Skills Development Scotland (SDS)  
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Lifelong learning services have also indicated that they would be keen to locate staff within this facility and would be able to offer IT support to individuals seeking support to complete online applications and job search activities.

### **Proposed premises**

- 3.16 After a considerable period of research Economic Development and Instant Neighbour officers have identified potential premises on Union Street for the proposed one stop shop. The location offers good footfall, is accessible and close to all public transport connections and has high visibility.
- 3.17 The property is spread across 2 floors meaning that the floor space can be suitably divided between retail and employability provision space, which in turn enables overheads to be split equitably. Initial discussions with the landlords highlight that they are in favour of this type of occupancy. The landlords have made clear that the property will be upgraded with new security doors and systems, toilets and kitchen installed. The facility also meets with disability access requirements as there is ramp access to the main floor and lift access to the sub ground floor. The landlord is also willing to enter into a long term agreement at a discounted rate.

## **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Initial discussions with the landlords suggest that they are open to negotiation on the terms of any lease, which will depend to some extent on the length of lease commitment. As noted above, Instant Neighbour would be the leaseholder with Aberdeen City Council entering into a sub-leasing arrangement with them that relates to a fixed proportion of the lease costs. Subject to Committee approval, delegated authority will be given to the Head of Economic Development and Head of Land and Property Assets to enter into an appropriate legal and financial agreement with Instant Neighbour. Financial commitments will be met from existing budgets, with identified sources of funding from Aberdeen City Council including Lifelong Learning and the City Centre Masterplan's existing allocation to Aberdeen Works.
- 4.2 The facility will also generate income to offset the Council's proportion of the costs. Training providers and partners have indicated that they would be keen to use the facility for 1-to-1 city centre sessions and also to hire training rooms for workshop delivery. It is estimated that this could generate approximately £14,000 of income per year. In addition, providers who chose to relocate to the proposed new site would be bound into a tenancy agreement with Instant Neighbour and an agreed contribution to rent and overheads would be set.
- 4.3 In the longer term if income from room and space rental exceeded the overheads then these funds would be recycled into further support services for users of the one stop shop.

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 If this proposed initiative gains approval, colleagues within Legal and Democratic Services will support the development of an acceptable sub-lease agreement between Instant Neighbour and Aberdeen City Council. Following from this there will be a requirement for paperwork to be drawn up in support of short term room rental agreements to support income generation. There are no actual legal implications arising from the operation of the facility.

## **6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

### **6.1 Financial**

As highlighted above, if Instant Neighbour and Lifelong Learning agree to contribute towards the overheads to the rate agreed and a portion of the calculated room rental is received then there will be no additional financial burden on Aberdeen City Council. If the room rental income is significantly less in the start-up period then this could be initially covered by a contribution from the Aberdeen Works project.

### **6.2 Employee**

There have been no risks identified that would impact on employees. Co-location with external partners would significantly broaden officers' wider knowledge of partners, leading to an enhanced ability to offer and signpost clients to appropriate services. Co-location would also ensure that there is significant staff coverage to offer a full service across opening hours. Continued presence by other service providers will increase the safety of officers and remove the fears associated with lone workers.

### **6.3 Customer/Citizen**

Operation of a "One stop employability shop" will significantly increase the level of services available for our current and future clients. Located in a convenient area, clients will be able to access a wide range of support and information services covering welfare, benefits and employability under one roof. This will also speed up referral across agencies and potentially reduce client disengagement time.

### **6.4 Environmental**

The centralisation of internal and external services to one location will reduce operating costs, positively impacting on the carbon footprint. Sharing of capital equipment will also positively impact on the environment.

### **6.5 Legal**

If this proposed initiative gains approval then colleagues within Legal and Democratic Services will be required to support the development of an acceptable lease agreement to cover the Council's commitment to the project with the leaseholder, Instant Neighbour.

### **6.6 Reputational**

No activities arising from this proposal will negatively impact on the reputation of Aberdeen City Council or its staff. This activity will potentially positively impact on reputation. This proposed initiative in a period of increased

unemployment levels across a skill set that had previously never suffered unemployment will significantly raise the profile of Aberdeen City Council in a positive manner.

## **7. IMPACT SECTION**

### **7.1 Economy**

The proposal will create a focused central location promoting additional opportunities for individuals to participate in and gain from the procurement of significant capital projects, in addition to accessing information and support which will speed their journey into full engagement and economic activity. This will increase earning capacity and reduce the reliance on benefits across communities of need, ultimately developing an increased skills base to meet the needs of our business community.

### **7.2 People**

The delivery of this initiative will remove much of the confusion in relation to signposting of appropriate support and development services, increasing the accessibility and positive outcomes delivered from the same resources. Staff will also benefit from being co-located with other service providers, increasing their knowledge base and developing significant relationships which will ultimately benefit the client group. 43 – 45 Union Street is fitted with disabled ramp access directly from Union Street. There is also a lift to access the basement floor. This shop will be open to all citizens of Aberdeen who have an interest in skill development, job seeking and employment. Job seeking and interview technique courses for non-English speakers will be offered. Where appropriate, key partners have information leaflets available in a range of languages. Skilled support staff will be on hand for people experiencing poverty, helping them to move towards a more sustained economic future through skills development and employability skills. As this initiative was developed to be fully inclusive and Instant Neighbour have a current existing Equalities policy an additional EHRIA assessment was not deemed to be required.

### **7.3 Place**

The one stop employability shop will create a buzz and assist in the regeneration of an area of Union Street that has suffered decline in the last decade.

### **7.4 Technology**

The shop will provide access to technology and support to enable individuals who may not have the knowledge to operate or access to IT equipment that supports online applications, CV development and DWP claimant processes.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

## **9. APPENDICES (if applicable)**

None

## **10. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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