

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet **DATE:** 24th January 2011

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WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Community and Leisure – Councillor S Chaudhry

PART I **NON-KEY DECISION**

PRIMARY AUTHORITY BUSINESS SUPPORT SCHEME

1. **Purpose of Report**

To seek Member approval to withdraw the local authorities Home Authority business advice service with effect from 1 April 2011 and to replace it with a self funding Primary Authority business support scheme.

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Cabinet is requested to resolve that the Council withdraw from the local authorities Home Authority business advice service in relation to trading standards, food & safety and licensing matters with effect from 1 April 2011 and that it be replaced with a self funding Primary Authority business support scheme.

3. **Community Strategy Priorities**

Excellent transport links and close proximity to London and Heathrow have made Slough the ideal UK location for many national and multi national companies. As a consequence, the town is now home to many large and familiar brand names and is the third most productive “city economy” outside London.

The proposed Primary Authority Scheme will enable the Council’s regulatory services, namely trading standards, food & safety, and licensing to support local businesses to prosper and will help create employment and prosperity in the town.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

The proposed Primary Authority scheme will be fully self funding through direct charging for business advice. The existing informal Home Authority scheme does not include provision for charging.

(b) Risk Management

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Risk/Threat/Opportunity</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>
The provision of a Primary Authority business support scheme to replace the existing Home authority scheme.	The proposed Primary Authority Scheme will enable the Council's regulatory services, namely trading standards, food & safety and licensing to support local businesses to prosper and grow will help create employment and prosperity in the town	

(b) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act or other legal implications.

(c) Equalities Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken.

(d) Workforce

The proposal will have positive workforce implications and enable the retention of a self funding business support service at a time of financial constraint.

5. **Supporting Information**

- 5.1 The Primary Authority scheme was introduced by the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008 and enables a new type of partnership to be formed between business and local authorities. This will, in turn, streamline and simplify the regulatory compliance demands on local businesses in relation to trading standards, food & safety and licensing matters.
- 5.2 It is anticipated that the Primary Authority scheme will help reduce compliance costs and increase the prosperity of businesses and communities while offering protection for vulnerable consumers and traders facing unfair competition.
- 5.3 The role of a Primary Authority is two-fold, namely:-
1. to give Primary Authority advice to its partner business which, if implemented by the business, gives the business assurance that it cannot be easily challenged by other regulators
 2. liaise with other regulators about its partner business, helping to provide information to other regulators about the business's systems and risks, so that other regulators are well briefed and able to reach proportionate enforcement decisions about that business, should this be necessary
- 5.4 Regardless of size, a businesses operating across Council boundaries can form a Primary Authority partnership with a single local authority in relation to regulatory compliance.

5.5 The Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008 enables Primary Authorities to charge partner businesses fees for the costs it has reasonably incurred. In this regard it is proposed to introduce an hourly charge to partner businesses receiving advice and support through the Primary Authority scheme. The introduction of a fee paying scheme will ensure the sustainability of a compliance advice service to local businesses.

5.6 Notwithstanding the above, our regulatory services will continue to provide basic compliance advice to all businesses trading in the Borough and in particular the small businesses and sole traders based in the town. There will be no charge made for informal advice of this nature.

6. **Conclusion**

Establishing Primary Authority partnerships with eligible businesses will demonstrate the Councils commitment to supporting locally based businesses and key employers in the town. The scheme provides for simpler, more successful local regulation based on a new relationship between businesses and local authorities.

8. **Background Papers**

'1' - The Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008

'2' - Primary Authority in Practice: Insight for Local Authorities