

South West Wiltshire Area Board Proposal to Grant aid Wilton & District Business Chamber (WDBC)

Project title: Developing WDBC in the Community

Introduction

WDBC is a small business chamber, established in 2011, with the aims of representing and promoting businesses in Wilton and district - linking them together as a business community, in order that they might share experience and good practice, promote business services to each other and attract customers from both within and outside of the area, whilst also having the opportunity to voice their views on business issues.

Our paid up membership in 2011 was only four, but funding from Plain Action for 12 months from March 2012, allowed us to engage a part-time Business Manager and we were able to increase membership to 20 in 2012. Our membership has to reach critical mass, so that we can be self-funding and flourish as a local chamber. To attract and retain members, we have to offer services and benefits that the membership value and raise the profile of the chamber, generally.

The project focuses on the development of WDBC, moving towards financial self-sufficiency and forming, as an established and serious organisation, formal links with other local bodies - including the Town Council, SWWAB, AONB, Rotary, Carnival Committee, Wilton Parish Church, Wilton Community Land Trust, so that, together, we might better serve and promote Wilton and district.

This "Town Team" approach (which alludes to the Portas notion of "recognising high streets as important hubs of social interaction and cohesion, as well as providers of local jobs") is intended to signal that some joined up thinking is at work in Wilton and the surrounding area! By liaising with nominated representatives from other local bodies, we would hope to avoid unnecessary overlap in our various endeavours and to combine efforts in marketing the town and surrounding area. More formal discussion in the coming months will identify more clearly specific areas for increased cooperation and joint ventures and the benefits to be derived in terms of effectiveness and cost-efficiency.

The project will also offer opportunities for the WDBC to liaise with other local chambers.

Vision

To have a well-established, flourishing and self-funded business chamber by 2016, liaising with neighbouring chambers and developing trade and tourism in our distinct town and village communities.

SMART Objectives

1. Grow membership to 50 in 2013/4 and 70 in 2014/15. Increase membership fee from £50 in 2012 to £75 in 2013/14, which will generate gross annual income of £3,750 in 2013/14 and £5,250 in 2014/15.
2. Provide services and benefits to attract and retain members. Membership and business survey planned for Q2 and Q3 2013.
3. Establish links between the business community (through WDBC) and other local organisations, primarily to be developed around the Town Team concept. Initial contacts in Q1 2013 followed by project meetings in Q2 2013 and actions thereafter for 2013/14.

SWWAB-funded activities

1. Activity: Identify and mailshot all Wilton and District businesses with a business survey/questionnaire.
Timetable: Q2 and Q3 2013
Target: Compilation of business directory, advertising and promotion of local businesses and of WDBC
Budget: £1,500
2. Activity: Presentation folders, membership packs, promotional materials.
Timetable: Q2, Q3, Q4 2013 and Q1 2014.
Target: Further membership recruitment
Budget: £500
3. Activity: Website development.
Timetable: Commencing Q2 2013.
Target: Promotion of local businesses, Wilton town and surrounding villages.
Budget: £1,500
4. Activity: Production, including jointly with AONB and Town Team of tourist/visitor information, with website links, for distribution via local businesses and, potentially, at a newly-developed Wilton TIC .
Timetable: Commencing Q3 2013
Target: To promote tourism and raise visitor awareness of goods, services and attractions.
Budget: £1,500
5. Activity: Business Expo. , in conjunction with Town Team.
Timetable: Q4 2103
Target: To showcase local businesses and promote trade.
Budget: £2,000
6. Activity: Business and Community Awards ceremony, together with Wilton Rotary
Timetable: Q3 2013
Target: Raise awareness of the local business community, other community enterprises and tourist potential and to recognise local achievements.
Budget: £500

Total bid = £7,500

NB: 2014/5 activities to be developed from the above. Details to be reviewed Q3 2013.

Non-SWAABB-funded Activities

7. Breakfast networking meetings, with speakers focussing on local community issues and development – eg Plain Action, AONB, Wessex Association, John Glen MP, Rotary.
Target, to increase average attendance from 12 to 20.
8. Introduce two 90-minute Business Lunches on similar themes to the breakfast meetings. Aimed at 30.
9. Training events. First 3 planned, on HR, Health and Safety and Taxation.
10. “Shop Locally” promotion.
11. Business referrals.

Level of Funding

We had understood from our initial discussions with SWWAB (as per RAB's e-mail of 14th November, and otherwise) that the Board might be able to offer support for up to three years, to give a measure of continuity.

Subsequent discussions have revealed that such funding might now only be available for 2 years, however.

Given that our original estimates showed that we were unlikely to be self-financing before 2016/7, we are proposing a bid for £7,500 for each of the membership years 1/4/13 – 31/3/14 and 1/4/14 – 31/3/15 and recognise that we may need to attempt to move more speedily towards self-financing than we had envisaged

Reporting Arrangements

6-monthly to SWWAB, including a review of costs and results.