ABSTRACT: This report requests approval to renew the Platinum Membership of the Dundee and Angus Chamber of Commerce for a further 3 years.

1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

(i) Acknowledge the important role the Dundee and Angus Chamber of Commerce has in representing the interests of the local business community; and in assisting to promote Angus Council’s services to local industry; and

(ii) Approve Angus Council continuing as a Platinum Member of the Chamber for a further 3 years at a total cost of £12,000.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Dundee and Angus Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber) was established at the end of 2006. Since that time it has progressed well and has built a sound reputation serving the business community on matters of local and national consequence.

2.2 With reference to Article 38 of the minute of the meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee of 25 November 2008, there was submitted Report No 1168/08 by the Director of Infrastructure Services. The Report indicated that it was important that the business community in Angus had a vehicle to enable it to participate in regional and national economic and political debates that affected business sustainability and growth. The new Chamber had made good progress in its first two years and could now be considered to be an effective voice of businesses in this region. This, together with the fact that the activities of the Chamber were complementing the work of the Economic Development Division, created a strong case for the council to continue with its Platinum Membership of the Chamber for a further two years. This would allow the Chamber to continue its activities, increase its membership and develop additional services, and establish itself as a sustainable important business organisation and, in the process, this should help strengthen the Angus economy. The Committee agreed:-

(i) to note the success of the Dundee and Angus Chamber of Commerce since its establishment at the end of 2006;

(ii) to recognise the importance of a thriving Chamber representing businesses in Angus and Dundee; and

(iii) to approve the renewal of the Platinum Membership of the Chamber of Commerce for a further two years, at a cost of £10,000.

3. CURRENT POSITION

3.1 The Chamber is now well established and has built a positive reputation through its activities and sound governance. It continues to grow, despite the difficult economic conditions, and now has a membership of 420 (up from 304 at the end of 2008). The membership is drawn primarily from the private sector, with social enterprises and the public sector making up the remainder. Approximately 30% of the current membership are Angus based companies.
3.2 During 2010 the following Chamber activities were undertaken in Angus:
- the Tartan Day lunch
- annual Chamber golf tournament and networking event
- a member-2-member evening
- a ‘Master Class’ lunch
- a rolling programme of outreach sessions undertaken in towns throughout Angus

3.3 There are already a number of Chamber events planned for Angus during 2011. These include:
- Board meetings and ‘Meet the Board’ lunches in Arbroath and Forfar
- a Tartan Day Breakfast
- the Chamber AGM and BBQ
- a minimum of one ‘Master Class’ lunch
- the continuance of the outreach sessions

3.4 Furthermore, there is Angus business representation on the Chamber Board and also on its Economic Panel. More recently the Chamber has created an Angus sub-group of the Board to focus on reaching even more Angus based companies.

3.5 The existing 2 year Platinum Membership expired 31 December 2010. Since that time the Chamber has permitted the council to retain its Platinum status.

4. THE PROPOSALS

4.1 The Head of Economic Development and Environmental & Consumer Protection approves of the activities undertaken by the Chamber and continues to believe it has a positive role to play in supporting local companies and therefore the Angus economy. Furthermore the stated objectives of the Chamber can be considered to be supportive of Angus Council’s own ambitions for the local economy. The Chamber’s objectives are to:

- be the authoritative business ‘voice’ in Angus and Dundee and participate in national economic and political debates that affect this region;
- be a networking and information hub for members;
- organise events and activities focused on best practice learning, targeted to meet the specific needs of different segments of the membership;
- encourage and practice innovation and excellence;
- link business and the wider community;
- promote Angus/Dundee as a world-class location.

4.2 Given the positive work of the Chamber and the continuing challenging business environment for local companies it is proposed that the council’s Platinum Membership is renewed for a further 3 years at a total discounted cost of £12,000 + VAT. Committee members are therefore asked to approve a further 3 years Platinum Membership of the Chamber. It should be noted that the annual cost of Platinum membership is currently £5,000 + VAT, equating to £15,000 for a 3 year membership. However, as the Chamber is keen to tie up its key supporters for a longer period it is presently offering a discount of £3,000 + VAT for a 3 year membership provided the full payment is made up front. This long term commitment from the council would also provide the Chamber with a strong endorsement to assist it moving forward plus a further period of stability through the current downturn in the economy.

4.3 The following are also currently Platinum Members of the Chamber:-
- Bank of Scotland
- DC Thomson
- Dundee College
- James Keillor Estates
- Overgate
- David Winters
- Dundee City Council
- GlaxoSmithKline
- Michelin
- University of Dundee

It is proposed that council officers will continue to actively engage with the Chamber and its membership to support activities and to gain direct benefit in promoting the council’s own
economic programmes. Platinum membership will provide increased marketing opportunities via the Chambers communication channels which the Head of Economic Development and Environmental & Consumer Protection will use to promote Angus Council activities and services to the wider business community.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Platinum membership of the Chamber for the 3 years (1 January 2011 to 31 December 2013) will cost £12,000 + VAT and can be met from the Economic Development 2010/11 Revenue Budget.

5.2 While it is not normal to ‘pay for services’ so far in advance there is merit on this occasion as there is a cost saving of £3,000 + VAT over the 3 years. It also provides a positive message to the business community that the council is committed to supporting local companies through the current downturn. In accordance with the requirements of Financial Regulation 19.10, the Head of Finance has been consulted on this matter and given the substantial discount being offered and the fact that it is a membership is being procured rather than goods and services, the Head of Finance has confirmed his agreement to this proposal.

6. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no Human Rights implications arising from this report.

7. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The issues dealt with in this report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective. An equalities impact assessment is not required.

8. CONSULTATION

8.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Finance and Head of Law and Administration have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 It continues to be important for the business community in Angus to have a vehicle to enable it to participate in regional and national economic and political debates that effect business sustainability and growth. The Chamber provides this opportunity together with a range of benefits for its individual members.

9.2 Given the activities of the Chamber complement the work of the Economic Development team there is a strong case for the council to renew its Platinum membership for a further 3 years and to continue membership of the Chamber into 2012 and beyond.

9.3 This will provide a platform to promote council services while providing stability for the Chamber working through the current downturn.

ERIC S LOWSON
NOTE: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

ECDEV/DV/SW/ FM
9 February 2011