

## **NEWS RELEASE**

**24 April 2013**

### **New EU support programme to boost Halton small businesses**

Halton's small and medium-sized businesses are to get free expert support, thanks to a £400,000 joint funding package from the European Union, matched by Halton Borough Council.

Halton Chamber of Commerce is working in partnership with the council, who secured the funding, to deliver a comprehensive support programme to create and safeguard jobs across the borough.

Micro, small and medium-sized firms, who are based in the borough and have fewer than 250 employees and an annual turnover of less than 50 million euros, are eligible to apply for the free business support programme.

Halton Chamber had to tender for delivery of the programme and has been appointed to perform all the initial diagnostic work with companies, as well as five of eight specialist support programmes.

Chamber chief executive Paula Cain said: "Halton will only thrive if it is underpinned by a strong, flourishing business community. At such a crucial time for the economy, it's fantastic the council has managed to secure this extra funding to help our local firms flourish and expand.

"Small and medium-sized companies are key to the economic health of any community, so it's tremendously important that we invest in their future and give them a helping hand to explore new markets and become more competitive."

Halton Business Support Programme can help firms improve in a range of areas from financial management and bid writing to improving manufacturing processes and finding new markets.

The chamber has recruited seven extra business development specialists, led by Miranda Barker, to help deliver the support programme. As well as the diagnostic phase, the Chamber is also delivering specialist development advice in

- HR practices and procedures
- Financial management
- Strategic business planning
- Manufacturing and process efficiency
- Environmental improvement and waste minimisation

Paula added: “We want the Chamber to be the champion of business. We already offer a range of essential services, including training, mentoring, networking, awards and export documentation. We also represent local firms in other forums and lobby government for the best deal for all our businesses – big and small. This tailored Halton Business Support Programme is a fantastic addition to our toolbox and should help to give a major boost to local jobs and growth.”

For more information about the programme contact Dave Unsworth, Halton Business Support Programme manager on 0151 511 6803. Email [david.unsworth@halton.gov.uk](mailto:david.unsworth@halton.gov.uk). Visit websites: [www.runcorn-widnes.com](http://www.runcorn-widnes.com) or [www.haltonchamber.co.uk](http://www.haltonchamber.co.uk) .

**Issued by Lynn Pegler, Pegler Communications**

***On behalf of Halton Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise***

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