

6th January 2015**Agenda Item: 4****REPORT OF THE GROUP MANAGER, CORPORATE STRATEGY****EVALUATION OF THE SPARK NOTTINGHAMSHIRE BUSINESS
SUPPORT PROGRAMME****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update Members on the outcome of the Spark Nottinghamshire programme.

Information and advice

2. In July 2013 Committee approved the allocation of £20,000 to fund a Spark branded business support programme, run by Oxford Innovation as an extension of their contract to manage the three Nottinghamshire Innovation Centres.
3. The Spark programme is operated by Oxford Innovation as part of their portfolio of business support and management services. They have similar programmes operating in Harborough (Leicestershire), Stockport, and Harwell (Oxfordshire). The programme consists of a dedicated website which encourages people to sign up to access learning and training content including video interviews/blogs with entrepreneurs; and more intensive support through workshops.
4. The culmination of the programme is the Business Idea Competition. The business idea can be for a new business, or a new venture for an existing business. The competition was open to all Nottinghamshire residents, and was open to entries in two age categories; under 25 and 25 and over. The competition was widely promoted through websites, press releases and features, social media, partner organisations and flyers / posters in libraries and other venues.
5. A panel of local judges with business experience was recruited, including Councillor Roy Allan, Mark Chivers, Trefor Davies (Investor and entrepreneur), Tom Mawhood (Nottingham investment manager), and Rosie McCartney of McCartney's Catering in Ruddington.
6. A prize fund worth over £30,000 was available for the winners, comprising services and goods donated through sponsorship from local businesses recruited by Oxford Innovation. These included office space in one of the Nottinghamshire Innovation Centres, intensive business coaching, website development and hosting, internet strategy and marketing, a PR package, legal and accountancy support and accounts software and training.

7. A total of 28 entries were received, with potential businesses as varied as catering, fashion, jewellery, tourism, IT, health/medical/fitness, event management, and care and support services. Each entry was required to detail their business plan, viability and financial plan.
8. Each eligible entrant was invited to take part in programme of workshops to develop their business idea and skills, run by both Oxford Innovation and external partners. Workshops covered business management skills, online marketing, planning for profit and business and financial planning.
9. Eight entries were shortlisted for further intensive training to produce a full business plan and financial route map to support funding applications. Six finalists were selected to present their ideas to the judges in a Dragons' Den type finale, held at County Hall on the 22nd of July. The finalists received specific pitch training to help them present their ideas to the judges.
10. Throughout the programme, NCC Economic Development and Corporate Communications Services have worked collaboratively with Oxford Innovations to ensure that resources were maximised for engagement, promotion and publicity.

Outputs and outcomes of the project

11. Participation in the project has been greater than targeted at all stages, and can be summarised as follows;

Activity	Target	Actual
Business Support Programme		
1. Website developed and launched	Jan 2014	Jan 2014
2. Business Support workshops held	6	6
3. Engagement –number of unique visitors to Spark website	1000	2003
4. Rapport –sign ups to premium support on Spark website	100	156
5. Interaction – workshop attendees or 1:1 support session	30	58
Business Idea Competition		
1. Action – Spark Competition entries	20	28
2. Preparation – business plan and financial support for Spark competition finalists	6	7 completed
3. Intensive –business coaching to Spark competition winners	2	2

12. The winners are receiving the intensive support included in the prize package;

- Naomi Mills of ChiroMarket (over 25s) has developed a business to provide practising chiropractors with the business skills and resources they need to run their own practice. She has taken up the office space and business support in Newark Beacon, launched her website and has started to trade. She has received business coaching focusing on product development, sales and business development. She has completed her business plan and financial route map, engaged legal support sponsors for company set up, T&Cs and contract, and is working with the IT prize sponsor on a new website
 - DISE (under 25s) comprises four entrepreneurs who carry out different roles within their Apps Development business. They have officially formed their company, completed their business and financial plan, developed their brand offer, developed a customised order / project forecasting book, planned their marketing strategy, and engaged with some of the sponsors for accountancy, legal, financial and marketing support.
13. In addition to the 6 finalists and the overall winners' prizes, several other entrants benefitted from further specialist support. Two additional local prizes were also created with contributions from Councillors' Divisional Funds. These have supported business coaching for two other proposed businesses;
- Robin Hood's Tower in Mansfield has had support to develop the Business Model & Plan with critical success factors and key partners identified, developed a Project Delivery Plan and engaged with a consortium of local partners, and created a social media site
 - MOH Player in Gedling will receive a package of tailored support
14. A good amount of publicity was achieved both before and after the competition. As well as the website itself, social media was used extensively, and regular news items, workshop promotions and updates were featured in local news across Nottinghamshire. The competition finale was filmed and interviews with all the finalists are available on the Spark Nottinghamshire website.
15. A number of additional jobs have already been created as a direct result of the business support received through the competition; the over-25 winner, ChiroMarket, has taken on new staff, and one of the other finalists, Miashy, has taken on a new chef while they concentrate on their strategic business plan. The actual jobs safeguarded and created, and the 3 year forecast is summarised in the following table:

Business Name	Company formed	Actual Jobs Created/ safeguarded	Jobs 3yr projected
DISE	1	4	7.5
Bitter Lollipop	1	1	0
TayB	0	0	4
Vote 4 10	0	0	0
ChiroMarket (& acquisition of Chiro)	0	4	3

practice)			
Miashy	0	1	8
Vein Train	0	0	4
Soothe	0	1	2
Robin Hoods Tower	0	0	1
Starburst ESS	1	1	1
Total	3	12	30.5
Cost / Job	£1,667		£668

16. Oxford Innovation have delivered their own sponsored support to two of the other finalists and one other entrant;
- Miashy have completed their business plan and financial route map and are continuing work to establish a longer term strategy for the business and a possible referral to growth accelerator for further funding
 - Veintrain have a completed business plan and financial route map, have completed a review of the current operational and management structure, to allow for a more detailed marketing approach with the NHS and private health care providers, also exploring growth accelerator funding
 - Starburst ESS (now trading as a SE) have completed a ½ day session on the business idea, revenue streams value position and target markets (including customer & need profiling). On formation a further ½ day session conducted to develop a 3 year vision and action plan, a sales target list was generated and further sales strategy support is anticipated

Lessons Learned

17. It proved difficult to elicit entries from the younger age-group (18-24), and those that were received tended to be graduates or undergraduates, and living in the Nottingham city area. Any future start-up programmes would need to factor in additional work with this age group, to raise awareness and interest in running a business, through links with FE colleges, schools, youth groups and other organisations or methods targeting young people.
18. The competition entries were judged in the two age categories, but this was not necessarily reflective of the quality of the idea and business plan. Business ideas were particularly well thought-out and presented by entrants in the over-25 category.
19. The over 25s winner, Naomi Mills, and Oxford Innovation's Business Support Director, Rachel Panther, will be attending Committee and will provide a short presentation on the Spark Nottinghamshire programme.

Reason(s) for Recommendations

20. To support Committee in meeting its priorities regarding business support activities and in evaluating the benefits of individual projects.

Statutory and Policy Implications

21. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required

Financial implications

22. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

23. It is recommended that Committee notes this report

Report of the Group Manager, Corporate Strategy, Celia Morris

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Hilary Porter 72146

Constitutional Comments

This report is for noting only.

Financial Comments

This report is for noting only.

Background Papers

Options for use of the Nottinghamshire Microloan funding; report to Economic Development Committee, 9th July 2013, published

Minutes of Economic Development Committee, 9th July 2013, published

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

ALL