

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CLIMATE CHANGE SUB-GROUP – 12 JULY 2023
REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (PLACE)

WENTA'S ACTION ZERO PROGRAMME

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The motivation for businesses to take action to reduce their Green House Gas emissions is manifold, however many SMEs do not know where to start.
- 1.2 Wenta is an **independent, not-for-profit, social enterprise** that exists to make it easier and greener to start and run a successful business.
- 1.3 Wenta's Action Zero programme has been designed to help small businesses tackle climate change, reduce their carbon footprint, and to produce greener goods and services, creating a more sustainable future.
- 1.4 The programme offers subscription levels that focus on four key areas, as Wenta recognised that every business is at a different stage. The four levels are bronze, silver, gold, and gold plus.
- 1.5 The offer to the council is 100 Silver memberships (for £9,999 which Wenta will upgrade to Gold, worth an additional £1,800).
- 1.6 The council will be invoiced monthly, which will ensure that payment is only required for the number of businesses that subscribe to the programme.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Members of the Climate Change Sub-Group approve drawing down up to £9,999 of the Climate Change earmarked reserves to support a maximum of 100 SMEs achieving gold status within the Wenta Action Zero Programme.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 The borough's business community is dominated by SMEs (99.4%). They therefore have a crucial role to play in tackling climate change.
- 3.2 Many SMEs do not have the right skills and knowledge to tackle the climate crisis and guidance is needed before they can understand the actions, they need to take to reduce their carbon emissions.
- 3.3 The council's Climate Change Strategy has committed to: -

To work with, support, encourage and engage residents, communities, businesses and other partners in initiatives to reduce carbon emissions.

To achieve our objectives, we will need to support all residents, businesses, and organisation within the borough. To deliver fundamental and lasting changes, we must encourage, empower, and enable our residents, local businesses, and wider

community to take personal decisions that reduce their own carbon footprints and help us meet our goals.

The council will continue to provide information through the main website and where possible, direct residents and businesses in ways to reduce their carbon footprint through available grants and schemes.

- 3.4 The Wenta Action Zero programme will enable SME businesses to receive all Zero Bronze, Silver, and Gold content over the course of a year. Content will include causes of climate change, carbon foot printing, targets, and planning and 1:1 time with a dedicated adviser.
- 3.5 Since the Summer of 2022, Wenta has secured over 1,000 subscriptions for businesses locally, nationally, and internationally. Stevenage Borough Council agreed to purchase 100 Silver subscriptions for Stevenage businesses which were upgraded to Gold. 49 businesses have subscribed and of these, 39% have operated their business for more than three years, so understand that to stay ahead of the competition you need a green agenda. Wenta's Action Zero Programme is the perfect solution to meet small business needs.
- 3.6 Each business that signs up will receive a login for one person within the business to start their Action Zero journey.
- 3.7 Each business will receive an introductory newsletter, and an explanation that the offer is for one year to begin their Net Zero Journey, after which they can continue to subscribe independently. This enables the council to create further offers for Year Two and onwards helping more businesses and having a more positive impact on the area.
- 3.8 The council will receive a quarterly report on the number of sign-ups. Wenta will share the businesses postcode, date of sign-up and age of business.
- 3.9 Wenta will provide case studies to the council on businesses in the area who have made significant progress.
- 3.10 In addition to the climate change benefits reduction in energy use will see the businesses benefit financially and this will improve prosperity within the Borough as a whole.

Implications

4 Legal Implication(s)

- 4.1 There are no Legal implications contained in this report.

5 Financial Implication(s)

- 5.1 There is a potential cost to the Council of up to £9,999. This will be funded from the reserves earmarked for Climate Change Proposals.

6 Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 The risks related to this proposal are:

6.2 There is a risk that uptake may be low, and the target number of subscriptions will not be met. As the Council only pay WENTA when businesses take up subscriptions this will not result in overpayment. Risk: Medium, Impact Very Low.

6.3 There is a risk that the scheme may be oversubscribed. In this instance the businesses may place pressure on the Council to provide further funding. This would be for the Council to consider and either reject or approve at the time. Risk: Medium, Impact Low.

7 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)

7.1 None

8 Procurement Implication(s)

8.1 There are no procurement implications contained in this report.

9 Climate Change Implication(s)

9.1 Collectively, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make a significant contribution to carbon emissions. Transformative changes are needed to achieve Net Zero amongst the SME community, but many do not know where to begin.

9.2 Wenta's Net Zero Action Programme will support businesses to tackle climate change, reduce their carbon footprint, and to produce greener goods and services, creating a more sustainable future.

10 Human Resources Implication(s)

10.1 There are no human resource implications contained in this report.

11 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)

11.1 Reduction in carbon emissions will have a beneficial impact on the general health and wellbeing of residents of the Borough.

12 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)

12.1 A communications and marketing plan will be developed with the council's Communications Team in advance of the programme launch.

12.2 Wenta will carry out their own marketing campaign to include promotion across social media channels, newsletters, and direct marketing campaigns.

13 Link to Corporate Priorities

13.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Corporate Priority: Evolving Town Centres and a vibrant economy, and specifically to the achievement of supporting businesses as they prepare for the future.

14 Equality and Diversity

14.1 An EqIA was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

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Appendices

- Wenta's Action Zero Programme Levels