

Open for Business

Southampton presents Open for Business as a brand; it identifies 'the way we do business around here'; it is our public commitment as to how we deliver services to business.

It requires our staff to recognise that it is not enough to identify what the law says you can't do; that offering solutions, easily accessible information and guidance will deliver better outcomes for both the council and business.

Open for Business is a cultural change, led by our Cabinet Member, not additional spend but taking existing resources and delivering in a way that treats businesses as key customers. We work closely with Business Link through a Memorandum of Understanding with joint web content, events and advisors based in council offices.

Our regulatory visits are a key component of the brand; our officers are in direct contact with businesses every day of the year. Whether from Environmental Health, Trading Standards or any other discipline, officers are required to represent the council and the brand. Taking ownership of business enquiries and responding positively to customer feedback is key to enhancing service delivery

Open for Business has delivered three major activities in the last year, each activity demonstrating a positive response to the challenges we have set ourselves.

- In partnership with the City's Chinese Association and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) workshops and 1:1 coaching sessions in the Chinese language to Chinese caterers
- Sector specific articles published in the council's magazine "City View" each aimed at identifying key regulatory impacts on a range of business activities.
- Two sector specific seminars aimed at estate agents and landlords/letting agents including tenant safety and welfare, fire safety, protection of the environment in terms of waste and recycling advice and protecting the financial wellbeing of tenants.

Looking to the future our plans for this year include:

- Estates Excellence; working in partnership with HSE, Fire and Rescue, PCT, Business Link as well as our own Waste and Library Services to make our industrial estates and the wider city a healthier and safer place to work
- Working with Libraries, Business Link and Economic Development to deliver business advice drop-in sessions at key libraries
- A specific Directorate wide communications strategy