

Scoping paper on support for online business / ecommerce skills

Proposed by Cllr Anna Semlyen

Background

From recent Office for National Statistics (ONS) data, evidence suggests that more than half of all UK enterprises are now run from the owner's house. There are 2.5m such businesses operating across the UK.

Obviously, the online market place is relevant to all businesses, and increasingly the traditional high street retail sector is having to explore a multi-channel approach to reaching its markets. The "click and collect" model is increasingly used by the major chain retailers, but independents may not have access to the technology or skills to take advantage of this new way of earning custom.

This area of concern – i.e. the need to bring retail and traditional city centre businesses to using the most of the 21st century technologies and telecommunications – is an agenda that has been raised by the City Team York.

In addition, there is feedback from the local business networks that the pace of technological change and the development of social media outlets for customer engagement is outstripping the pace at which particularly independent or smaller companies can adapt. Such new areas of concern include:

- Cloud and data sharing – how we use this to make business more effective and efficient;
- Open source;
- Social media;
- meta pages and QR code implementation;
- online payment systems;
- mobile and tablet compatible sites; and
- the use of embedded into sites business videos.

Increasingly, then, the need for e-commerce and online skills are critical to start up and continued business success/growth.

Scope

The Committee could consider the topic from a number of angles, including the following:

- The potential start up entrepreneur – as a potential first route to market, where the cost of premises (i.e. shop, office or warehouse) can be prohibitive in the early development of the business
- The existing business facing a need to reach markets in multiple ways, whether B2C businesses (businesses selling products or services to consumers directly) or B2B businesses (businesses selling products or services to other businesses)

The scope of the work could explore the following objectives:

- Review and confirmation of skills provision relating to online commerce and business management
- Consultation with the business community across the spectrum of sectors and ages of business on barriers to use of online channels to market
- Explore particularly the use of exploring new online methods of reaching customers
- Development of recommendations for actions