

BUSINESS FOCUS

bringing together business in havering | news | views | comment

winter 2010 | issue 4



Michael with Jo Brand (left), Chief Executive of CEME, Bill Williams (back left), Cllr Michael Armstrong (back right) and Havering Council's Chief Executive Cheryl Coppell (right).

Doing business with No. 10

2009 was a good year for local businessman Michael Peterson. He picked up the Business Person of the Year award at the annual Havering Business Awards and saw the year off with an order from No. 10 Downing Street.

The 35 year old who runs Bombki, a Hornchurch company that designs high end handmade glass baubles, is used to being contacted by high profile clients. But ending the year with a prestigious order from no less than No. 10 Downing Street was a huge feather in his cap.

"We were contacted by Sarah Brown to design a bespoke bauble for No. 10 Downing Street. The design was also used on the official Christmas card," recalls Michael. "I thought it was all a joke, but it turned out to be true." The design is of a tiny model of the No. 10 door.

"It's been one of my best years, but I'm never complacent," says the designer, who runs his business from home.

Michael started Bombki in 2001 shortly after visiting his wife's native home in Poland, which is famous for making baubles and being introduced to possible suppliers. 'Bombki' is Polish for baubles.

He had left his job as a sales coordinator with British Steel subsidiary Corus and armed with £5,000, decided to stake his future in baubles.

"I'm an artist and I liked the idea because I could

design them myself. I started right away," he says.

His designs are based on places he has lived in or visited. Aply, Michael's first design was of a London skyline, featuring the Houses of Parliament, the London Eye and an old routemaster bus.

Like many other small businesses, it wasn't easy at the beginning. "I remember phoning Harrods for almost three years asking them to have a look at my designs," says Michael.

It was St Paul's Cathedral that proved a godsend, giving him his first high profile order. Since then, Bombki has enjoyed custom from the likes of Sir Paul Smith, Fortnum and Mason, the Royal Palaces, Liberty and Selfridges. Even Harrods eventually came round.

Bombki now has 60 different designs with various collections inspired by London, Paris and New York, as well as traditional and contemporary designs, ranging from acorns and ballet slippers to tube trains, red letter boxes and sports inspired baubles.

The sculptured collection features figurines, some of which are inspired by popular tales, including Dorothy and the Tin Man from The Wizard of Oz as well as the cow that jumped over the moon.

The Little Crystal Collection is even more upmarket, featuring designs made with Swarovski crystals.

And they are not just for Christmas – the baubles are highly sought after by tourists as souvenirs and collectibles.

"We'll soon be launching an exclusive 'Our World' collection, inspired by people, places and professions around the world. 2010 is also about getting involved with the Olympics," says Michael.

Winning in one of the coveted categories in the Havering Business Awards provided a great boost.

"It has helped me get recognised locally more, and I've had a few orders from the Romford and Essex area," says Michael. "The awards are a great opportunity to meet other businesses and high profile people who can make things happen."

The secrets to success, Michael says, are to "be passionate about what you do and treat your customers like gold – your customers are your business, without them you are nothing," says Michael. "Never forget that word of mouth is very powerful."

For more on the Havering Business Awards, go to www.haveringbusinessawards.co.uk

Keeping trade local

More than 78 per cent of the Council's contracts – worth over £79 million – were awarded to small businesses in the 2008-9 financial year.

This placed Havering at the top of the list of local authorities in the area for awarding contracts to small businesses.

Havering Council is working with small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to prepare them to seize commercial opportunities in the public sector.

A series of workshops are held throughout the year to help firms prepare a business continuity plan, a key requirement of doing business in today's world.

The workshops also provide an insight into best practice for submitting high quality tenders for the public sector.

The sessions are developed and delivered by the Council's business development unit, together with the business continuity and regeneration team, and are funded by East London Business Place (ELBP).

HCCI member Star Minicabs from Romford put what they had learned from one such workshop into submitting a good quality bid for a corporate contract to supply taxi services to the Council. Their bid was successful and their contract runs until 2011.

Dharm Tanna of Star Minicabs says the training was "really, really good. Star Mini Cabs had never attended a seminar like this before and found it very useful and fun. I would definitely recommend it."

Zest 4 Food in Upminster was also successful in tendering for business. Lynda Plews, managing director, said: "The Council's seminars and workshops have helped a great deal and we have recently won a contract for Basildon Council and came into the last two for a contract for Chelmsford before pulling out because of the other win."

The first Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) for a contract that ENDIP Consulting Limited in Rainham submitted after attending one of the Council's workshop made it through to tender stage.

A number of workshops are lined up throughout the year to help small businesses learn how to complete PQQs, how to prepare business continuity plans and how to tender.

For details on the workshops, see the Business Focus Diary on page 3.



Editorial Ready for the upturn

Beam Reach, in Rainham, one of the London Development Agency prime regeneration projects and part of London Riverside, is an area of the Thames Gateway that is ready to take advantage of a guarded but growing optimism that a market upturn may be just around the corner.

Beam Reach can provide employment opportunities on its two main sites at Beam Reach 5 and 8, which total over 100 acres. At Beam Reach 6, a further 17 acres will provide a range of employment and ancillary uses.

Beam Reach 5 on Consul Avenue is 84 acres of land situated directly alongside the A13 Marsh Way interchange. The masterplan has created a range of flexible plot sizes that can be adapted to occupier requirements from one acre upwards offered on a long leasehold or virtual freehold basis that is the hallmark of Beam Reach as a whole.

Beam Reach 8 on Coldharbour Lane has been an outstanding success story. Some 14 companies have located into the new units developed by Easter Developments. Additionally, Wincanton is seeking to expand its 89,000 sq ft facility at Beam Reach 8. Hundreds of jobs have been created on the business park.

Beam Reach is unrivalled in the Thames Gateway in what it can offer. The LDA is ensuring that infrastructure and development strategies are in place to provide opportunities to create quality jobs for local people.

We are close to agreement with several new occupiers who have recognised the advantages that Beam Reach has to offer.

For more information go to www.beamreach.co.uk

*Steven Kidd, Head of Development
London Development Agency*

Rainham means business



Wide ranging developments are transforming Rainham into an ideal location for business.

Rainham is already home to business parks and industrial estates, providing employment for hundreds of local people.

Plans are underway to further revitalise the area, including improving transport links and infrastructure, while preserving Rainham's history and natural environment.

Havering Council is working with various partners, including the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation (LTGDC) and the London Development Agency (LDA), on a multi million pound regeneration programme as part of the Rainham Compass.

Improvements to the walkway between Tesco and the Village are due to start this month. This will make the Village more welcoming and attractive for shoppers.

In addition, funds have been secured from Transport for London to implement the Viking Way extension, allowing a one-way system to be introduced. This will allow easier movement of traffic through the Village and new parking outside shops on Upminster Road South.

The London Thames Gateway Development Corporation (LTGDC) and the London Development Agency (LDA) are developing many of the projects in the area.

Coming soon to Rainham is a new development situated on Lamson Road. Plans are underway to transform and bring back to use a previously derelict warehouse next to Rainham Station.

The warehouse, at 6-10 Lamson Road, which had been vacant for more than 10 years, was recently purchased by LTGDC.

LTGDC, in agreement with Havering Council, has now granted detailed planning permission for the project. Architects Alison Brooks will completely refurbish and revitalise the building, creating five self contained high quality industrial units for sale



The golden arch opens in Harold Hill

McDonald's relaunches their newly refurbished restaurant, with a new drive-through facility, in Harold Hill this week.

The restaurant opens on 15 January, with the Leader of the Council, Cllr Michael White, the Mayor of Havering, Cllr Roger Ramsey, and the MP for Upminster, Angela Watkinson in attendance.

The eatery is the latest development by local franchisee and HCCI member Gerry

with views over Rainham Marshes.

The new building will create a significant landmark for Rainham. The work, which is due to be completed by the summer, will include a new insulated roof, bicycle racks and showers as well as dedicated parking and yard space.

LTGDC will be investing over £24.3m in the area, helping to revitalize and preserve the historic village.

Easter Park (pictured above), part of Beam Reach 8, is one of Rainham's biggest success stories. The development is encompassed by the London Riverside Regeneration Project and promoted by the London Development Agency (LDA). Beam Reach 8 is an established industrial area with excellent access to the A13 and related transport links.

The Easter Group is LDA's development partner for Beam Reach 8. Since their involvement, a total of 244,000 sq ft has been successfully developed to date. This includes Phase 1, an 89,000 sq ft pre-let to Data & Records Management Ltd, operated by Wincanton.

Phase 2 provides a range of 22 high quality industrial/distribution units ranging from 2,777 sq ft to 24,002 sq ft. This development is now 90 per cent let or sold, with occupiers including Smith Bailey & Anderson, Mason Pearson, Poth Hille, Wincanton, Ruskim Seafoods and Dunbar Wharf.

Phase 3 provides a further seven acres of developable land and Easter Group are close to finalising agreements for a further 60,000 sq ft of design and build accommodation.

For more on developments by the LDA, go to www.lda.gov.uk

For information on developments by LTGDC, go to www.ltgdc.org.uk

For details about the Rainham Compass, go to www.havering.gov.uk/rainhamcompass

Byrne, who has reinvested more than £5million on five franchises in the borough. He said: "We wanted to be proactive in providing a service to customers and to make the restaurant modern and contemporary. The restaurant has also created 30 more jobs for local people." Gerry is also involved in sponsoring street cleansing initiatives and provides work experience for ROSE Project clients with learning difficulties.

Budget consultation for business

Businesses who attended a special budget consultation meeting voted planning and regeneration as the services they would like to see funded as a priority in the forthcoming budget.

Road and pavement repairs and street lighting were also among their top priorities.

When asked how they would like to see these priorities funded through Council tax, businesses indicated that they wanted Council tax to be kept at current levels while maintaining the same levels of service through better ways of working.

Councillor Michael White, Leader of the Council, said: "The consultation was a good indicator of what Havering businesses want.

"We have listened to the priorities of local residents and businesses and will do our best to ensure these are reflected in the next budget and Council tax setting."

Simply – the best

Simply Blues in Hornchurch has been named the best restaurant of 2009 by leading hospitality guide Les Routiers UK.

The restaurant was selected based on customer feedback and for offering 'clean, comfortable facilities, good quality food and/or drink, providing a welcoming environment, good service and value for money'.

The awards are given annually by Les Routiers UK, a highly regarded guide for hotels, restaurants, pubs and inns established in 1934.

Gateway survey

Gateway to London has launched the annual London Thames Gateway Business Survey, asking local firms for their views about doing business in the region.

Gateway to London uses the findings to lobby on issues such as transport improvements and to represent the views of businesses to key decision makers.

Last year's survey found that nearly eight out of 10 companies in the region, including in Havering, were happy with their location, a notable increase on the 2007 survey.

To have your say, complete the survey at www.gatewaytolondon.org

Reducing your footprint

Small and medium sized businesses can get free advice to help their business reduce their environmental impact, find out more about environmental management systems and find practical ways to motivate staff to make changes.

Global Action Plan, an environmental charity is offering free workshops to businesses on 27 January and 4 February, 9.30am-12 noon at NCVO, 8 All Saints Street, Kings Cross, London.

There will also be more training on 3 February and 3 March, from 9am-4pm, 9 Kean Street, London.

For more information and to book, contact Abi Price on 0208 7240 1044 or email abi.price@globalactionplan.org.uk

Ahead of the competition



Take your business to another level this year by joining a portal that provides access to thousands of contract opportunities across the country.

CompeteFor is a free service that matches opportunities to provide products, services or works with companies best suited to offer them.

The website mainly focuses on supply chain opportunities and allows businesses to compete for opportunities generated by the London 2012 Games as well as major public and private sector organisations.

More than 50,000 contracts will be secured through the London 2012 supply chain and related work. An estimated £175 billion is spent every year on public sector contracts. This makes CompeteFor an ideal shop window for businesses of all sizes.

Registering for CompeteFor is easy, needs to be done only once, and it's free. Businesses need to create a business profile, which contains general information about the company such as insurance and financial standing as well as marketing information, and publish it on the site.

The business profile enables the portal to match a company's capabilities with any available opportunities.

Businesses can identify potential partners they can team up with to form onward supply chains through CompeteFor.

The website also helps firms become more business ready by providing access to free business support services.

And it's not just suppliers who benefit. CompeteFor gives buyers a more diverse range of suppliers to choose from while helping to identify the most suitable ones with minimum fuss.

Buyers use CompeteFor to compile pre-tender shortlists of potential suppliers. When they publish opportunities which describe goods, services or works that they wish to procure, they can choose which criteria to use to make the match, how suppliers should respond and how they are shortlisted.

Look out for interviews with Havering businesses who have won tenders through CompeteFor in future issues of Business Focus.

For more on CompeteFor, go to www.competefor.com



THE BUSINESS PROFILE

Clockwise from top right: Victoria, Fay, Angela and Annette

Playing by ear

In a year that saw many businesses grind to a halt, two plucky Havering residents, along with two of their work colleagues decided to take over the company they worked for after being made redundant.

In May of last year, Victoria Davies, from Collier Row, along with over 20 of her colleagues received the devastating news that they were being made redundant by The Deaf Agency, which provides communication support services for deaf people.

"It was a real bolt out of the blue. No one saw it coming," recalls Victoria, 24, the youngest of the business's new owners. "We thought the business was going well because everyone was busy."

The prospect of abandoning their clients and having to look for new jobs spurred them on to make the riskiest decision of their lives.

"Myself along with three other colleagues, Angela Tappin, 39, Fay Landy, 33, and Annette Bird, 42, got together, raised about £2,000 each and bought the business. We had no prior experience of running a business, but we decided to go for it."

The risk paid off. Not only were they able save all of their staff, they were able to continue doing the work they loved – Victoria has deaf parents and a deaf sister and Angela has deaf parents and a deaf partner – and work is flying in.

The group made use of their individual strengths to keep the business running. "I am responsible for marketing, Annette looks after the financial and payroll side of things, Fay does the business development and looks for new opportunities and Angela coordinates things and looks after staff and administration."

Havering Women in Business turns one

The borough's business forum exclusively for women, celebrated its first birthday in November.

More than 40 Havering businesswomen attended the event, which featured speed networking for the first time.

Femi Otukoya from breakfast networking company Quality Connections said: "Havering Women in

Victoria credits part of their success to the support they have received from Business Link, the free business support and advice service set up by the Government to assist small and medium sized businesses.

Far from going under, The Deaf Agency is back from the brink with bookings continuing to pour in from the education sector, employers and private clients.

The firm provides signing services for deaf people in education or at the workplace and offers British Sign Language taster workshops and deaf awareness workshops to help employers and colleagues appreciate deaf culture and the needs of people with hearing impairments.

This year, The Deaf Agency's big push will be tapping into the massive transformation in adult social services, which gives clients personal budgets to spend on services that best meet their needs.

"We will be expanding our services to offer personal assistants for deaf people," says Victoria. They also plan to offer life skills courses to help deaf people lead normal lives. Yoga classes run by a British Sign Language trained instructor are also in the pipeline.

"We keep things as cheap as possible, we're very flexible and we do our best to keep our staff and clients happy," says Victoria. "We've made it through the first few months – we're very proud of ourselves."

For more about The Deaf Agency, go to www.thedeafagency.co.uk

For free advice and support for your business, go to www.businesslink.gov.uk/london

Business events have been very helpful. We have made a few contacts and it is just nice to know that you have a network of support and a good sounding board."

The real life stories of the women she has met at the events have also proved truly inspirational.

For details on Havering Women in Business, call **433602**.

DIARY

BUSINESS FOCUS

21 January
HBEP EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT
A chance for employers to find out how they can provide opportunities for training and skills for young people. City Pavilion, Collier Row. Contact Kelly Simms on 0845 273 2228

26 January, 6-9.30pm
TRI CHAMBER NETWORKING EVENT
Kimberly Davis from The Apprentice is guest speaker at the Tri Chambers Networking Event. Hosted by Lloyds TSB with sit down dinner sponsored by The City Pavilion. The City Pavilion, Collier Row. To book, email Carly.brooker@havingbep.co.uk

27 January, 5.30pm
HAVERING WOMEN IN BUSINESS - SMARTER NETWORKING
Renowned networking expert, business coach and highly acclaimed speaker Heather White is guest speaker at the first HWIB event of the year. Free, but book in advance. Ardleigh Green Campus, Havering College, Hornchurch. Tel 433602.

4 February, 4-8pm
HAVERING BUSINESS SUMMIT
Prime business event which includes presentations and key exhibitors including HCCI, CompeteFor and Business Link as well as Havering Council's Business Regeneration Unit, among others. CEME, Rainham. Contact Valerie Snell or Linda Watson on 433602.

4 & 24 February, 9.30am-1pm
SME: WRITE IT RIGHT
Free workshops for small businesses on how to prepare pre tender PQQs and business continuity plans, plus advice on the process of tendering. CEME, Rainham. To book, email bahar.shahin@having.gov.uk

18 March, 5.30pm
BUSINESS NETWORKING EVENT
Regular networking event for local businesses. Harefield Manor, Main Road, Romford. Tel 433602

24 March, 6.30pm
HAVERING WOMEN IN BUSINESS
Regular networking event for local businesswomen. Free, but book in advance. Ardleigh Green Campus, Havering College, Hornchurch. Tel 433602.

24 March, 9.30am-1pm
SME: WRITE IT RIGHT
Free workshops for small businesses on how to prepare pre tender PQQs and business continuity plans, plus advice on the process of tendering. CEME, Rainham. To book, email bahar.shahin@having.gov.uk

The next issue of Business Focus will be published in Living in April 2010. To contribute contact Jolly Choudhury on 432680 or jolly.choudhury@having.gov.uk

WHY SHOULD MY BUSINESS JOIN THE HCCI?

- >> The Havering Chamber of Commerce & Industry is now the largest independent Chamber in East London.
- >> Members get access to regular networking events and seminars.
- >> New members receive a directory, which includes full listings of members.

The HCCI has advisors offering support in areas like finance, taxation, information and communication technology, law and local, national and international trading.

The Executive Committee of the Chamber represents the interests of the Havering business community and meets regularly with the key organisations whose decisions affect local businesses.

Membership costs from a little over £1 a week (based on a company employing up to five people).

Chair Jill Martin
Administrator Carly Brooker

Havering Chamber of Commerce & Industry,
Rainham House, Manor Way, Rainham RM13 8RE
Tel: 0845 270 3332

Fax: 0845 273 2229
Email: hcci@haveringbep.co.uk
www.hcci.org.uk

Remember, businesses that sign up to the Haveringcard will also receive a discount of 10 per cent on their annual membership.

HCCI - At the heart of local business

The New Year brings with it a fresh opportunity to join one of Havering's biggest business networks.

The Havering Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) is the largest independent Chamber in East London, bringing massive benefits for local businesses.

Apart from invitations to prime networking events, conferences and seminars, there are opportunities to present your products or services to other members and to have your business listed on the HCCI website.

Other benefits include the opportunity to keep abreast of commercial planning applications and unparalleled access to key decision makers, including MPs and business lobby groups.

HCCI also has close links with the Havering Business & Education Partnership, which gives members a chance to influence education and provide training opportunities for young people.

Each business benefits in a different way. HCCI member Diane Tyrrell, who runs alternative therapies company Hands4Healing, says: "I have benefited greatly from reciprocal business, making new friends and also a phenomenal list of good tradespeople who I can rely on as honest, hard

working and reasonably priced."

Operating as a sole agent means that life coach Mike Beauchamp of Career and Life has to work extra hard to get his business out there.

He said: "Being a one man company I find the networking opportunities provided by HCCI invaluable in getting my message across in an informal but purposeful way."

The advantages have kept members like clothes boutique owner Gloria Passanate from Philomena UK Ltd in Romford renewing their membership year after year.

Gloria says: "I have been a member of HCCI for many years. It has not only increased my business, I have also gained a huge amount of knowledge through meetings and seminars. There is also a very good social calendar making it easy for new members to integrate."

Wayne and Melanie Heath from Gymophobics are convinced that HCCI membership, helped them put their finger on the pulse of local business.

Wayne said: "We first opened our ladies only gym in July 2007 and as you can imagine it can be quite a lonely business starting your own business

especially when we both came from employed corporate backgrounds.

"We also did not have much time or funds to get the word out about what we do. We went to our first meeting and found that there was a strong local business vibe in Havering that I did not realise existed."

And it's not just small businesses who have something to gain. Havering Council is a member of the HCCI, as is the Centre for Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence (CEME).

Theresa Swift, head of sales and marketing at the CEME Conference Centre says: "We joined the Havering Chamber of Commerce to raise our profile in the local area and believe that it is a great way to meet like minded members and do business for not only now but build relationships for the future.

"After a year of being a member we have been able to meet with some good contacts and enjoy the networking and look forward to continue being a member for many years to come."

For more on how HCCI can benefit your business, go to www.hcci.org.uk

MEET THE MEMBERS

Brewing up a storm

Chamber member Alfonso Colli has brought an authentic taste of Italian café society to Romford – just don't ask for a fry up.

The restaurant business is in Alfonso's blood after years of helping out at his father's eatery in Sicily as a child.



Passion for good food: Alfonso serves a customer

"They put me in the kitchen," recalls Alfonso. "I was in charge of pasta and for a year I had 1,500 people for lunch and 1,500 for dinner."

But it wasn't until he did his national service in the Italian Grenadiers that he set his mind on it as a career.

After service, he headed straight for London and says: "Within three weeks I was working in a restaurant in Bayswater."

For the next 17 years he worked in and then managed and ran an impressive variety of restaurants in London, ranging from Italian and Spanish to Japanese and Chinese.

Then, says Alfonso, "you reach a point when you want to be your own boss."

He opened his first solo venture, Chicchi, in Roman Road, East London. "I basically had the idea of creating a coffee shop that had a restaurant feel to it," says Alfonso.

But he was opening in an area that had more than 20 cafés and eateries and locals who preferred to buy a cheap cup of instant rather than pay extra for the real thing.

"I didn't go bankrupt by the skin of my teeth," he says.

Eventually he turned the business around, building up a strong customer base by word of mouth and picking up plaudits from the food critics.

Then he and his family moved to Collier Row and on a trip to Romford, decided this was the perfect place for his kind of business. He secured the premises in Stewards Walk in The Liberty and Italianissimo! opened in April last year.

Despite launching a café in the middle of a recession, Alfonso says the gamble has paid off: "It is hard at the moment but coffee is an affordable product, even in a recession. I haven't lost a penny since the first month."

Everything in the place is about quality and good service. "We are very strict about what we sell and how we sell it," says Alfonso. "I would rather throw away a bad cappuccino than risk losing a customer. I love to interact with my customers. If all I did was push a button to make coffee I would crack up."

For more about Italianissimo! go to www.italianissimo.co.uk

WELCOME...

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to the Havering Chamber of Commerce.

Tax Assist Accountants

12-16 Eastern Road, Romford RM1 3PJ
Ron Mansfield 01708 548800
ronmansfield@taxassist.co.uk
www.taxassist.co.uk

Alpha Paint & Decorating Property Maintenance Services

46 Heron Way, Cranham, Upminster RM14 1EN
Terry Bishop 01708 222453
Mob: 07779 480487
julie@homewho.fsnet.co.uk

Grove & Dean

Tollgate House, 96 Market Place
Romford RM1 3ER
01708 436862
Mob: 07968 536508
damian@grove-dean.co.uk
www.grove-dean.co.uk

The Manor Hotel & Restaurant

Berwick Pond Road, Rainham
Jessica Lines 01708 555586
jessica@themanoressex.co.uk
www.themanoressex.co.uk

Atrium Access Ltd

Thamesview House
182 New Road, Rainham RM13 8RS
Kevin Bellis 01708 556072
atriumaccess@aol.com
www.atriumaccess.co.uk