



Business Bulletin

Spring 2021

Welcome to our new look Business Bulletin

The effect of the Covid-19 pandemic has been felt by all of us, personally and professionally, bringing with it new ways of living, working, learning and collaborating, some of which undoubtedly will remain with us in the years to come.

The pandemic had a significant impact on the work of the Council, including the work of the Economic Development Team: work on the Open4Business event and other projects had to be paused and were replaced with intense workstreams which focussed on business support; grant funding; and putting in place measures to ensure our high streets were as safe as possible. The immediate support measures are set out in the Mid Sussex District Council's Economic Recovery Plan – more details on this are set out below.

One of our primary objectives in 2021 is forging even stronger links and engagement with our business community. We look forward to being able to hold the Open4Business event in 2021 either remotely or ideally face to

face and being able to meet more of you in person and put faces to the many new business leaders we have got to know over the past year.

The new look Business Bulletin will tell you about what is happening from the Council's Economic Development perspective, signpost you to the wide range of business support initiatives available across the region from our many partner organisations and encourage you to get in touch with us and let us know what is important to you.



Economic Strategy and the Economic Recovery Plan

In 2018 the Council adopted its Economic Development Strategy (2018-2031) which had a focus on maximising the economic potential of our towns and villages to make sure that Mid Sussex fulfils its full potential as a vibrant and attractive place for businesses and people to grow and succeed.

The scale of ambition is significant – thousands of new jobs, town centre redevelopment, new business parks, major infrastructure upgrades such as the

exciting Full Fibre project, a Science and Technology Park, initiatives to promote STEM skills and improving how the Council supports and promotes inward investment. Work continues to drive forward and deliver on these ambitions.

However, as a direct response to the pandemic and the far-reaching impact on the local economy, the Council recognised that its priority actions needed to focus on providing immediate business support. Mid Sussex District Council's Economic Recovery Plan was adopted in October 2020, to focus on the immediate short-term.

The past 12 months have proved to be an exceptionally busy time in terms of both adapting to new ways of working and providing speedy support and advice to businesses and residents including: around £26.4 million small business grants being paid to nearly 2,065 businesses and organisations, and an additional £6.4 million paid to businesses as a result of the recent lockdown restrictions since November; holding regular liaison meetings with businesses, our three excellent Business Associations, and the Chamber of Commerce; delivering a package of measures to ensure the re-opening of our High Streets safely; providing advice and assistance to over 180 new food businesses and helping over 300 pubs, social clubs and other licensed premises to understand the latest lockdown; and supporting the development industry (key employers and providers of new homes including affordable homes) to continue to operate in a Covid-19 secure way.

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted on the economy and the task ahead is enormous. Mid Sussex District Council's corporate priorities of creating sustainable economic growth, creating strong resilient communities and providing effective and responsive services remain at the heart of the Economic Recovery Plan. The Economic Recovery Plan highlights projects which will be largely delivered over the next 6 months to provide immediate support.

[View our Economic Recovery Plan](#)

The Council has also committed to the development of a new Sustainable Economic Strategy, demonstrating the importance of and its commitment to economic growth combined with its sustainable development goals and the potential offered by the green economy. Work is underway, beginning the process of shaping and developing this new Sustainable Economic Strategy and we will be consulting widely in the Spring with our business community and strategic and local partners.

Business Grants – Funding still available

With around £28m in government grant support across both national and discretionary schemes delivered to our businesses in the Spring / Summer of 2020, take up of grant support achieved over 98% in Mid Sussex (compared to a national average of 95%).

Mid Sussex District Council also provided an additional £300k from its own funds to businesses and community organisations to support growth and recovery projects to help businesses respond, diversify and grow in the face of Covid-19. This was a significant financial commitment on behalf of the Council to provide direct financial support to aid recovery. The funding has supported businesses across the District, many from sectors that have been hit hardest by the pandemic. The resilience and entrepreneurship of our business community has been evident with funding going towards supporting a variety of initiatives from the purchase of new equipment and developing new products, to digital and ecommerce opportunities. The first round of applications supported 45 community organisations and businesses with grant funding totalling £147,000. A second round of applications is currently being assessed for discussion at the Cabinet Grants Panel in March.

An additional £72k of Local Enterprise and Apprenticeship Platform (LEAP) funding was also available to businesses via the successful Micro Business

Grant scheme, now in its fourth year, supporting start up and micro businesses with growth projects and the recruitment of apprentices. This scheme received a record number of applications with 46 start-up and micro businesses awarded growth grants at the end of January and an additional three awarded apprenticeship grants. The high number of applications, many from start-up businesses, reflects the entrepreneurial spirit within our business community and is a very positive sign as we move into 2021.

Grant Funding still available

With further national restrictions in place at the end of last year and for the next few months at least, additional grant funding is still available. In contrast to the original funding the administration and criteria for these grants has been considerably more complex. There remains a variety of funding streams available and the team has worked tirelessly to make these grants as accessible as possible, making significant changes and improvements to the application process and working with businesses to direct them to the best possible funding stream. The drive has been to encourage as many businesses as possible to apply and access the funding available. Further information can be found on the website [here](#) and the team can be contacted directly at businesssupport@midsussex.gov.uk

Hear from one of our businesses...

"I've found the whole process of applying for the Business Grants very easy to follow and the results have proved to be a massive help to our chances of surviving this pandemic. The first job was to understand what we qualified for and we were really lucky to have Kevin hold our hand at the outset. Then, it's important that you gather the right Information and supporting evidence, but the good news is, you only need to do this once, as there will be duplication across the grants. What's also a massive help, is that the council has used a fantastic software provider and the system will pre-fill a lot of information after you've completed the first form.

We have four pubs across four different authorities, but Mid Sussex have been stand-out...first class. It can feel quite lonely running a business right now, but to see the

team at the Council working so hard for us has given us a real lift.”
James, The Frisco Group

Meet the Team and tell us what is important to you

Many businesses have been working with the teams to develop their funding bids and we thought it would be helpful for you to put the faces to the names.



From left to right: Will Hawkins and Caroline Duffy - Economic Development; Kevin Stewart and Paula Robinson - Revenues and Benefits

The Economic Development Team is keen to hear from businesses, to learn more about the issues you are facing.

As a starting point the team carried out a Business Survey in December / January with all the businesses that received grant funding in the first lockdown last year. We will be analysing the results over the coming weeks and building on what businesses have said.

Mid Sussex comprises around 8,000 businesses so **please circulate this bulletin to others in your network**. Anyone interested in receiving this Business Bulletin can sign up to receive them [here](#) and they will be added to the mailing list and contact database.

Full Fibre Connectivity

Excellent progress continues to be made to deliver our own Local Full Fibre Network. Since installation began in September last year over 20km of ducting has now been installed across Mid Sussex and fibre installation is planned around Burgess Hill over the next month. This work will help to stimulate the local telecoms market, offering more choice and lower charges. We will provide an update as the network becomes commercially available from April.

The Council has secured more funding to continue expanding the fibre network into our rural communities north of Haywards Heath and south of Burgess Hill. This work will be delivered during 2021/22. We are also working with the telecoms market to coordinate the commercial roll-out around East Grinstead. Residents and businesses in rural areas can now apply directly for Gigabit vouchers, which provide grant funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport for better connectivity for eligible applicants. More information can be found [here](#)

[**Contact the Economic Development Team**](#)