

Cabinet

Member - Environment, Economy and Skills
Councillor E Chowns

16th June 2020

Dear Herefordshire Business

LAUNCH OF DISCRETIONARY GRANT SCHEME AND ONGOING COVID-19 SUPPORT

I hope that you, your families, and your employees continue to be safe and in good health. All of us at the council do understand that these are incredibly difficult times both financially and socially.

Many of you will be aware that the government has now introduced an additional discretionary grants fund that will help provide assistance to some of the businesses that have not had access to other support schemes.

This discretionary grants fund is managed by the council and will award grants reflecting the size of business, level of fixed property costs and scale of impact experienced. The amount of funding the council has received is limited at £3.2m, consequently the scheme eligibility criteria is limited initially to those categories of businesses that are specified in central government guidance.

Businesses eligible to receive this new funding must be a small or micro business, a charity, or social enterprises with a turnover of not more than £10.2m and fewer than 50 staff. Applicants must also be either:

- a small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces;
- market traders with fixed building costs who do not have their own business rates assessment;
- bed & breakfasts which pay council tax instead of business rates or;
- charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief.

Further details, the full eligibility criteria for businesses and how to apply can be found on the Herefordshire Council website at:

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200250/coronavirus/906/herefordshire-coronavirus-discretionary-grant-fund>

This scheme is now open and completed applications must be received by midnight on the 28th June 2020.

In distributing this funding we are trying to help as many businesses as possible, while continuing to press government for further funding to support the local economy and help us build back better. If there is funding remaining in the scheme after the first round we will open the scheme more widely as we recognise that there are still other businesses who have slipped through the cracks of the various central government support.

Other support the council continues to give to businesses includes £52.4m paid out to more than 4,500 businesses in the county (up until 31 May 2020) in government grant funding.

I would like to reiterate that the all the information on the government schemes can be found via the Marches Growth Hub website <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/coronavirus-information-for-businesses/>.

For information regarding local support available from the council, including the roll out of business grants and advice, please visit the council website at <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/coronavirus>. Both these sites are updated regularly and should provide the latest national and local information.

We know that the ongoing situation is placing a considerable level of stress on many impacted businesses and their employees and we recognise that there may be a need to access mental health and wellbeing advice. Please visit <https://www.wisherefordshire.org/mentalhealthfor/details-of-the-local-advice-and-services>.

Additionally there is still a need to adhere to the latest government public health advice, and we would encourage every employer currently still operational to make themselves familiar with this. Here is a link to the public health guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

We are aware that the nature of the situation and the balance between reopening your business and protecting both you and your employees is an additional stress and complication. We also recognise that there is still considerable uncertainty for many businesses in terms of when you may be allowed to reopen and what measures you will have to put in place.

The council are doing our best to help preserve good businesses and assist hard working families. Wherever possible we will attempt to give you information and guidance that can assist your business. Our collective future economic success may well depend on how we all react over the next few months. I continue to wish that you and your families remain in good health and your business remains resilient.

Kind regards,

Cllr Dr Ellie Chowns
Cabinet Member- Environment, Economy & Skills