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Welcome



Welcome to the second edition of Epping Forest District Council's local business e-newsletter. The key focus for this edition remains information on government financial support available locally for businesses.

This e-newsletter is brought to you by the Council's Economic Development Team and we hope you find this information useful.

Contact us

Talk to us

We need your views!

If you have any comments on this second edition or any suggestions about future content, please let us know by emailing us on:

businessmatters@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

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<http://eepurl.com/gib9nD>

Financial Support for your business



Throughout the pandemic council officers at Epping Forest have been working hard to process grants to local businesses. So far almost £45 million in support grants to local businesses have been made, but there are still opportunities to access further financial support and grants.

Details on the available grants/funding streams are set out below:

Essex Business Adaptation Fund (EBAF) This local grant fund is available to help businesses to adapt to meet the challenges of trading in a COVID environment. Up to £1500 is available to each applicant. Over 100 businesses have already benefited from this fund in Epping Forest receiving over £160,000 in total. Applications have been received for a wide range of adaptations including new protective screens, support with website developments, equipment to help trade outside, training etc. Over the last few weeks the council has been given a further £170,000 to support local businesses undertaking this work. Additionally, claims can be made retrospectively for any adaptations made from October 15th 2020.

So don't delay, apply today! The deadline for applications for this scheme is the **1st of July**. Further information at:

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/business/business-support-grants/essex->

[business-adaptation-fund-ebaf/](#) or if you would like to speak to a member of staff for more details please call Duncan Haslam: 01992 564 264.

The new Restart Grant scheme is also available to support businesses for re-opening safely as COVID19 restrictions are lifted. **Eligible businesses in the non-essential retail** sector may be entitled to a one-off cash grant of up to £6,000. **Eligible businesses in the hospitality, leisure and personal care sectors** are eligible for up to £18,000 of support. These grants can make a major difference to our local businesses. Please visit this site for more details on eligibility and application forms.

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/business/business-support-grants/restart-grant/>

There is information on a wide range of other grants on the council's website: <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/coronavirus/support-for-businesses/>

Focus on: Abbey View Produce. A leader in the UK Glasshouse industry



It is surprising how few people know that Epping Forest is the centre of the UK

glasshouse industry and has been for more than a hundred years. Across the district glasshouses and packhouses of local growers are making an enormous contribution to providing our high streets, supermarkets and restaurants with top quality UK produce at affordable prices. The sector has continued to work flat out during the pandemic to meet the nation's fresh food needs and this has been recognised across the country.

Luke Hibberd, Director of Abbey View Produce, one of the district's major producers commented *"this is a sector where the district really excels and has done for very many years. Being responsible for up to 40% of UK grown cucumbers, peppers and aubergines, Abbey View Produce are key suppliers to the majority of high street retailers and some prominent fast-food chains. The high-quality standards that oversee our produce are recognised nationally and internationally. With an estimated 60% of UK food imported and a move towards lower environmental impact diets there are real opportunities to expand this sector and build upon the co-generation opportunities to provide sustainable local food, employment, energy, and health benefits. The recent investments in the industry are most welcomed by the district and are great news, not just for UK consumers but the many suppliers who work daily to support our sector."*

If you would like more information on Abbey View please use this email address: contact@abbeyviewproduce.co.uk

Highway Rangers: Doing their bit for our high streets



Over the last few months you may have seen members of Epping Forest District Council's Highway Rangers team working in areas across the District. The Rangers have been doing their bit to improve the look and feel of key town centres. This has involved small scale but very important work to replace broken pavements, planting new trees, repainting bollards, removing broken street furniture and installing replacements. The team have been focused on the work identified in the first two town centre regeneration reports:

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/business/town-centre-regeneration-studies/>

Local highway issues for the Rangers to consider and assess can be reported via the EFDC website

below: <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/environment/highway-rangers-service/>

Towns Centre Project Manager takes up role



Our high streets play a critical role in our local communities. Supporting our high streets is a major priority for the district council which has just appointed Paul Messenger as its new Towns Centre Project Manager. A key role for Paul will be implementing all the practical recommendations from the town centre regeneration reports with a focus on action. Paul has already spent a lot of time in the district speaking to businesses in our town centres and identifying the quick wins and longer-term challenges set out in the town centre reports, which he has also authored. As well as overseeing a lot of the practical work on the high streets there will be a concerted program to help our businesses across the district embrace the opportunities of digital trading. For more information on the town centres' programme contact Paul at pmessenger@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Back to business

April 12th was a key day for our high streets, marking the reopening of non-essential retail. The council has been working hard with local businesses to make sure their reopening plans are supported with practical advice and guidance as well as grant funding. Members of the council's environmental health team have been visiting premises advising on safe reopening and distributing posters etc for display. You may have also seen members of the team as High Street Ambassadors in all town centres on the first week of

reopening greeting customers and supporting a safe re-opening. As part of the support to re-open successfully the district council provided free parking in town centre car parks during the first week. Evidence from across the area shows a major increase in footfall as customers returned to enjoying the many offers of our town centres. Footfall monitoring at Epping Forest Retail Park showed the number of customers on the first day of reopening at close to 5000, almost double the previous Monday's trading. For more information on how to trade safely contact EnvironmentalHealth@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Help to Trade Successfully Online



The recent launch of Click It Local across Epping Forest, supported by the District Council, has brought opportunities for local retailers to access customers across Essex and at the same time, Epping Forest residents to enjoy a click and deliver service when shopping locally online. Although shoppers are returning to high streets as lockdown eases, we know that the move to online trading has taken a significant and permanent step forward. This scheme is aimed at giving local traders the opportunity to get a foothold in the growing online purchase and doorstep delivery market. As well as moving current trading online, we are looking at further support packages to allow local businesses to understand their potential and develop their online business. These include LoyalFree and Maybe*, two additional support schemes identifying and bringing local businesses and customers together which have been successful in other areas.

Don't miss out! Register your business with Click It Local today!

Business enquiries: Michael Ukaegbu michael@clickitlocal.co.uk

Website: <https://www.clickitlocal.co.uk/epping-forest>

Sustainable Transport Initiatives

New DaRT87 'Demand Responsive Transport' Service

Full details at www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/DaRT87 (or via Parking & Travel section)

Key workers/commuters. Off peak, similar to 87 (Arriva). Pre-booked journeys only. Cashless and Covid-secure operation. App trial.

DaRT87 Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) service helps in retail and commuting recovery

DaRT87 is the only bus entering Epping Forest Shopping Park and directly serves Epping High Street/market, The Broadway Loughton and Staple Tye/central Harlow shops. Two hospitals, four vaccination centres, two tube stations and Harlow rail and bus stations are also included on its route. The 16 seat minibuses have plenty of space for shopping/bags and are fully wheelchair accessible.

Covering roughly the same route as the Arriva 87 which it replaced in January, the new service has the ability to reflect demand better than a conventional bus route, with some variations on exact routing and timings, including early runs to meet the needs of NHS staff and other early commuters, but also a semi scheduled service during off peak hours that will help returning shoppers and retail staff alike. A Saturday service is not currently running, but will resume subject to demand. So register your interest below at www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/DaRT87

DaRT87 requires an annual membership (free if registered before May 31st) and every journey or block of journeys must be booked 24-48 hours in advance by phone, email or app. The service is run in Covid-secure fashion, in line with current bus regulations, so not all seats are occupied, the driver is shielded, temperatures are checked and hand sanitiser is available. Cashless operation applies, including concessionary passes accepted in line with ECC guidelines.

Full details at www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/DaRT87



DIZ (Digital Innovation Zone) updates



Digital Skills Seminar 'Embracing the Transformation'

On the 30th of April the first online smart places seminar will be hosted by the Essex + Herts Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) 'Digital Skills- Embracing the Transformation'. The seminar will be led by key speakers from Barclays, the MedTech sector and SELEP our local enterprise partnership. To book your free place on this event please follow this link:

https://diz_digitalskills_embracing_the_transformation.eventbrite.co.uk .

Discussions will focus around digital skills for life, infrastructure, health and life sciences.

Date: Friday 30th April

Time: 10am – 12noon

UK Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme

Announced on 19 March as part of the wider £5bn 'Project Gigabit' programme, the UK Gigabit Broadband Voucher will provide micro grants of up to up to £3,500 for businesses (and £1,500 for households) in the hardest to reach rural areas (with current speeds of less than 100Mbps) to support the cost of installing new gigabit-capable connections when part of a group scheme.

The voucher website has now been updated and refreshed. It includes a new premises level postcode eligibility checker that enables people to establish their eligibility for the UK Gigabit Broadband Voucher, and information on other support that may be available. This can be accessed here:

<https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>

The DIZ is keen to engage with local businesses to ensure that it's programmes are meeting real local need. For more information on how to engage with the DIZ and its work programme, contact mwarr@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
DIZ Twitter link: <https://twitter.com/DizMatters>

More information on the DIZ and its work is available at: <https://diz.org.uk/>

Qualis Management creates job opportunities

Qualis Management is expanding its team with the recruitment of a number of new roles within the business. The company, which took over Epping Forest District Council's housing repairs and void services at the end of September 2020, is encouraging people from the local community to join the company.

The roles available include Quantity Surveyor, Maintenance Surveyor, Operations Manager, Customer Experience Manager and a number of roles within the Voids Team.

It is a really exciting time for Qualis Management as it continues to improve on its performance each month and is investing in new systems to provide the most efficient and effective service for its customers and take on new work streams. Customer satisfaction is pivotal, and the company is also committed to finding environmentally responsible ways to work.

For further details about any of the roles and future opportunities please visit here:

<https://www.qualisgroup.com/careers/>



Our Assets Portfolio- Quality Space for Businesses

While most people know the council as a service provider for residents in the district it is also a key player in the provision of quality commercial premises. The council's commercial estate is being used by almost 350 businesses at nearly 450 sites across the district.

The council's Assets Team work closely with new and established businesses in retail, office and industrial sectors and oversee the Epping Forest Retail Park. Despite the economic dislocation caused by the pandemic, the team is reporting strong demand across its portfolio. This is an indication that businesses view the district as a great place to invest. At the moment the council has only two vacancies in its commercial portfolio and even these have viewings arranged for the coming weeks.

Over the last year the team has successfully let numerous retail units and industrial facilities, many of which generated a number of offers on each site and in some cases well over asking price.

For more information on the council's property portfolio please contact:

swood@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Council aims to buy local

Epping Forest District Council has updated its Procurement Strategy and Procurement Rules with effect from 1st January 2021. As part of this update, we have included a number of commitments.

- Increase the number of local suppliers that can be invited to tender (previously one local supplier for every tender, now two for every tender).
- Pay local suppliers faster (we aim to pay within 21 days for local suppliers compared to our obligation of 30 days).
- Consider environmental and social values to improve the way we procure goods, works and services.

To see selected tender opportunities for Epping Forest District Council and other government agencies, visit <https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder> in order to search for opportunities; you can also create an account and receive email updates from the site.

For more information on the council's procurement strategy please contact:

procurement@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Helping local companies link up with International Markets.



The aim of SEED (South East Export Development Group) is to connect Essex companies with distributors, buyers and valuable contacts in several international markets. The scheme is funded by SELEP (South East Local Enterprise Partnership) and will focus on enabling Essex-based businesses to make virtual connections overseas.

The project is designed to support businesses from the following industry sectors with export potential:

- **Health & Life Sciences** (including medical devices / technology, e-Health, pharma, diagnostics)
- **Food & Drink** (including manufacturers, processing, suppliers to the industry e.g. packaging).
- **Digital & Creative** (including software solutions, apps, web services)

There will be the opportunity to take part in the following virtual activities:

- **1-2-1 Export Readiness Meetings** with a DIT International Trade Advisor or equivalent Chamber of Commerce Advisor to ensure you are 'export-ready'.
- **Trade Mission Training Sessions** with tailored advice for your business about regulations and exporting procedures relevant to target markets. These will also include trade mission preparation sessions to ensure you get the most out of your trade mission meetings.
- **Virtual Trade Missions** whereby you will have the opportunity to meet with in-market contacts to present your business to.

Please visit www.kentinternationalbusiness.co.uk/SEED to find out more and download an expression of interest form or email

kazadi.mwamba@essex.gov.uk for further details.

Key sites for business support services please visit:

UK Government- Business Support

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>

Please visit this page for all the latest government announcements around business support, and guidance for adapting to COVID in the workplace.

Best Growth Hub

<https://southeastbusiness.org.uk/essex-southend-thurrock/>

Best Growth Hub provides a local team of Business Support Navigators that can help you identify and access relevant programmes, initiatives, or funding schemes currently on offer across Essex. The Business Support Navigators also provide 12 weeks of free advice for businesses seeking to scale up.

Let's Do Business Start Up

<https://www.letsdobusinessgroup.co.uk/>

The Let's Do Business (South East) Group Limited is a Social Enterprise helping businesses to start-up and grow throughout the South East of England. It offers services such as finance and support for businesses starting out, training courses, as well as exhibitions providing an opportunity for small businesses to showcase products.

FSB

<https://www.fsb.org.uk/>

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) is the UK's largest business support organisation, promoting and protecting the interests of the self-employed and small businesses.

Established in 1974 to help members succeed in business, FSB is a non-profit making and non-party political organisation that is led by members for its members. Members get an exclusive package of business services including advice, financial products and support. These cover a wide range of benefits

such as tax, legal and HR, networking, business banking, insurance services, funding, cyber protection and much more.

FSB is also the UK's leading business campaigner, focused on delivering change which supports smaller businesses to grow and succeed. Our lobbying arm starts with the work of our team in Westminster which focuses on UK and English policy issues.

The Covid-19 crisis has been a real challenge for small businesses and the self-employed. For many it has been a time of uncertainty, worry and devastation. FSB have lobbied Government on behalf of small businesses, and it has proved effective. Many of the support schemes that have been rolled out are a result of this work.

FSB is a national gateway for the UK Government's Kickstart scheme and is encouraging small businesses to get involved and help support young people.

Epping Forest Chamber of Commerce

<https://www.eppingforestchamber.co.uk/>

The Epping Forest Chamber of Commerce is a representative body run for local businesses and by local businesses.



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