

Written response to question from Councillor Dr Susan van de Ven:

Question:

Can Councillor McDonald explain how the council is supporting local businesses outside of the booming science and IT sectors to survive and thrive during this difficult economic period?

Response from Councillor Peter McDonald, Lead Cabinet Member for Business:

Thank you for your question.

I'm pleased to say that our Economic Development Team (including Business Support and Investments) are continuing to work directly with businesses, in a demand responsive way, to support them during these difficult economic times. They work with businesses of all sizes, including new start-ups and across all sectors.

The team offers a package of support to businesses, which includes:

- Our dedicated business support and development webpage which over the last year has received over 10,000 views
- Our monthly Business Support Newsletter – our subscription numbers are around 1000
- Our dedicated social media channels, where we run campaigns promoting local businesses
- Visit South Cambs, which since launching in September 2021 has had over 600 listings and attracted more than 13,000 users. In the upcoming months there will be a focus on supporting South Cambridgeshire pubs to support them with marketing and the launch of 'South Cambs pubs and restaurant week' to help drive customers towards these businesses
- Over the last year the team has run 8 Business Webinars, attended by 99 businesses and a series of mental health and wellbeing webinars which were funded by the County Council

- We continue to work with local communities to establish new markets, and have launched the South Cambridgeshire Market Webpage, which includes a Market Toolkit and Market and Stallholder Directories. In December 2022 we hosted a Christmas Market in Cambourne which had over 70 traders and over 1000 visitors. It is estimated that it generated £20-25k in sales on the day.
- The team are also working with partners and stakeholders to introduce sector specific forums – the first of these will be with the Smart Manufacturing Alliance to understand the challenges that the South Cambridgeshire Manufacturing and Production sector are facing.
- Through the Ukraine Working Group we are also helping Ukrainians find work opportunities, by joining with local partners such as the Job Centre. We have supported a jobs fair which saw 27 job offers made.
- And as part of our joint working with our neighbouring Local Authorities we are working on building a business resilience pack, to create a comprehensive support package which will shortly be available through our individual websites.

Our dedicated Business Engagement Officers continue to work across the District and have engaged with 137 high street businesses over the last year to help us better understand local challenges and to offer advice and support. This can include advice on areas such as recruitment, diversification, the green agenda and branding and marketing amongst others. They are also important in being able to promote campaigns, changes to legislation, grant availability, and other Council services such as Environmental Health and our Commercial Waste Services to our local businesses.

I will also mention the Shared Prosperity Fund and the Rural England Prosperity Fund (jointly £2.8m), both of which the team will be overseeing for South Cambridgeshire. With this funding we will support and provide grants to businesses to become greener, support new start-ups and establish a Business and IP Centre for South Cambs with particular focus on supporting entrepreneurs from under-represented groups and female-led start-ups. Funding will also be made available to parishes to go towards Improving High Streets and includes the Visitor Economy and Markets Development programmes that will build on our work to showcase South

Cambridgeshire as a fantastic place to visit, as well as promoting its hospitality services and events to residents.

This is just a snapshot of our activities, so please do come and speak to me if you would like to know more about the support we are offering to businesses.