

COVID-19 BUSINESS & ECONOMY RECOVERY WORKSTREAM

Remit:

- Identify the impact of Covid on the local economy in terms of business activity, jobs, debt, benefit claimants
- Identify actions for Harlow Council
- Identify actions in partnership with others
- Develop and monitor an action plan

Meeting 29th June 2020 - Minutes

Andrew Bramidge, Sally Haggerstone, Jan Smith, Will Hales, Alex Chrusciak, Oliver Gillard

Apologies: Jane Greer, Julie Houston

1. Notes of last meeting

No further comments

2. Actions arising from the last meeting

- Advice leaflet produced for all Council commercial tenants has been sent.
- Business survey – AB to pick up with Julie Houston re brief and Simon Freeman re potential funding.
- Regen team to commence programme of engagement with larger companies.
- Institute of Licensing guidance on accelerated process for approval of outside seating was circulated by Sally.
- ACTION: Agreed that we should now move towards proactive promotion of the Town Centre and Neighbourhood Centres as retail destinations now that the initial crowding had eased and Harlow infection rates dropped significantly. AB to discuss with Comms team.

3. Next phase of business openings

- Environment Team are currently contacting all licensed premises in the town to provide guidance on seating, contact tracing etc. A streamlined process for additional outside table licences is being introduced.
- Apart from hairdressers, health and beauty related businesses are still not permitted to open.
- We should look to support the re-openings with communications to businesses and the public as to what to expect.

- Given what has been experienced elsewhere, we may need to prepare for a clean-up operation at and following the weekend as excess litter could detract from Harlow's image. ACTION: AB to discuss with HTS.

4. Discretionary Grant Fund

- The policy has now been agreed and it is planned to launch the application process at the end of this week for a two week period. There are three levels of support – £25,000, £10,000 and up to £10,000 with a total fund of just over £500,000.
- It will be targeted at businesses that have not received other forms of support, but they must have property-related costs (i.e. not businesses based at home) and be able to demonstrate a loss of income. There are already c100 enquiries.
- ACTION: Oliver and Julie to make sure that business support providers are aware of the fund.
- ACTION: AB to speak to Comms re publicising the fund.

5. Any other business

- There may be businesses in Harlow that have actually not suffered, or even done increased business, during the pandemic. Would they be prepared to give something back to the community and work with the Council on promoting this? ACTION: AB to discuss with Regen and Comms.
- Government backed business loan scheme is now operational to provide loans between £50,000 and £5,000,000 with the Government covering all fee and interest costs in the first 12 months.

6. Business representation on the group

- Not felt to be the right time to bring others on board until we had started to develop objectives and an action plan.

Next meeting: Monday 13th July 2.00pm