

SECTION 1 - COVID – 19 Business Support and Recovery Survey Analysis

The recent survey undertaken was designed to collect the views of the local business community on TDC's current business support offer, and the impact that the COVID-19 crisis continues to have as lockdown begins to ease for many – 92 responses were received with a summary of the headline figures set out below.

Headline Figures

- Most respondents (15%) were from the Retail sector, followed by Hospitality (10%).
- 56% had been based in Tendring for over 10 years, and 75% had between 0 and 5 employees.
- 60% described their business as 'surviving' during COVID-19, but 37% described that they are in 'crisis'.
- 41% have made use of the Staff Retention (furlough) Scheme, with the next most accessed support being the Small Business Grant (40%) and Bounce Back Loan (30%). However, the question is phrased 'Have you secured or applied for any Government support.....' and so having applied for these schemes cannot be taken as guaranteed all respondents have actually benefitted from or been eligible. 18% of respondents have not accessed any of the listed schemes.
- The most frequent ways that respondents are preparing for reopening is changing the layout of their premises to enable social distancing and providing appropriate PPE, both with 65%. This may relate to the high number of retail and hospitality businesses which responded.
- 88% of respondents have never accessed a business support service, but in follow up questions regarding what types of business support they feel they would benefit from, 42% of respondents stated they would choose workshops/webinars on business basics including writing a business plan, social media and financial planning.
- 52% of respondents state that they need further information about available support, with 41% also stating that lack of time prohibits them accessing business support opportunities.
- Beyond the current crisis, accessing finance was the biggest obstacle to business growth (34%) as well as lack of suitable premises (23%).
- 60% of respondents are already subscribed to TDC's business ebulletins.

Responses in Free Text Sections of the Survey

Opportunities for free text throughout the survey, as might be expected, resulted in a range of responses, many focussing on the current crisis and the eligibility criteria for different support schemes, whilst others focussed on the atmosphere and environment of the District's town centres.

Word Clouds, below, show some of the most highlighted concerns (the larger the word, the more often it was mentioned):

Question 12: What specific business support / other services would you find useful if they were available to you? (wordcloud formed from responses to 'other')

access_{find} business_{costs} grant_{rates} support_{pay}
help_{etc} funding_{running} work

Question 13: What obstacles, if any, do you face in accessing business support? (wordcloud formed from responses to 'other')

works_{bills} business_{payment} support

Question 14: Thinking beyond the current pandemic, what are the key factors that are affecting the growth of your business? (wordcloud formed from responses to 'other')

allowed_{business} LACK_{school} restrictions_{None} town
PEOPLE AREA_{time} need_{support} back_{students} MANY will

SECTION 2 – Back to Business Initiative

Following the All Member briefing back in July and the follow up email from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance and Governance, Members have submitted a range of ideas for consideration as part of the Back to Business Initiative. A similar exercise was also undertaken with Senior Managers within the Council.

The initiative is also about helping the district recover, which is wider than just its economic recovery, with responses therefore including various items and themes within this context.

A summary of the responses is set out below. Clearly some of these will overlap with action plans already in place or are being developed as part of wider strategies and initiatives.

To provide a framework against which the ideas and responses can be considered, they have been grouped in 3 'blocks' – short, medium and long term actions in the table below:

	Responses	Additional Comments
SHORT TERM	Introduce 'Pop Up' Shops in Town Centres	This could include the direct provision of temporary 'shops' or via working with partners e.g. where there are empty units in Town Centres.
	Upgrade Clacton skate park	This would support local young people both physically and mentally and could also be used to promote a key message such as a 'Thank You NHS Park'
	'Shop Local' and 'Trade Local' Campaign	<p><i>Ideas include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold regular events such as a 'Shop Local Week' or 'Small Business Saturday' • Offer free town centre parking • Making our high streets more attractive which could include working with ECC and promoting a regional message. <p>The Council could also review its own procurement processes to ensure as much money as possible is spent locally rather than outside the district. If there are reasons to spend money outside of the district then companies could be requested to utilise supply chains and labour within the district as much as possible when delivering services / contracts.</p> <p>The above could also be complimented by accelerating the delivery of existing schemes and projects.</p> <p>The use of art in advertising could also be explored, working with local schools for example. This could include posters/street art such as advertising on car parking spaces</p>

	Establish open air or covered markets along with supporting appropriate street trading activities	<p>These could be in Town Centres or along the coast or other key areas.</p> <p>This could be extended to food vans who could use Council owned sites such as car parks.</p> <p><i>This could also include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better use of outdoor / pavement spaces • Better utilisation of Christmas Tree Island in Clacton for market or small entertainment functions • Be organised around seasonal activities. • Local artists and craft makers
	Establish a Tendring Business Club	<p>Providing members with discounts and support information.</p> <p>Also a dedicated space could be provided on the Council's website for small businesses to advertise etc.</p>
	Establish a dedicated COVID 19 Support Service / Team and maximise use of existing resources	<p>To provide essential advice and support to local people and businesses to access help that may be available from the Government or other organisations</p> <p>A request could also be made to the Police to increase the presence of uniformed officers along with using our own ASBO.</p> <p>This could extend to an emergency taskforce to support people facing redundancy. This could include targeted support for young people and school leavers whose plans and opportunities have been affected by Covid-19.</p>
	Supporting Events and Festivals	<p>This could include the Council directly organising events or working with local partners to 'grow' existing events or develop new ones.</p>
	Reopen the Town Hall Reception	<p>In our role as a community leader, to consider the reopening of the Town Hall reception as a place where local people can seek general help and support rather than for any wider operational requirements at this stage.</p>
	Offer unused office space to other organisations	<p>Encourage key service providers who do not currently have a presence in the District to come to Tendring.</p>
	Engage with Town and Parish Councils	<p>To support recovery action with input at a local level.</p>

	Understand high risk businesses	<p>To work with partners such as ECC to understand key metrics such as those business with the greatest risk of having to make redundancies / business failure in the short to medium term. This could be monitored on an on-going basis.</p> <p>TDC could play a key influencing role to signpost people who are unfortunate to be made redundant to learn new skills in economic growth areas.</p>
	Explore opportunities to use Tendring Community Fund Budget of £450k	This was set up to support community groups and organisations that in turn support residents and local communities across the district. This could therefore be reviewed in light of the back to business initiative such as prioritising Community Halls etc.
	Support local schools with IT equipment	The last few months has seen a demand for IT kit for disadvantaged children to enable them to take part in remote lessons etc. Although schools are expected to reopen in the Autumn, supporting schools by providing IT kit could contribute to the Council's key influencing role in education.
	Revisit Long Term Financial Forecast	Opportunities could be explored to deliver flexibilities that a long term plan could bring such as the potential to defer savings targets until later years and extending the economic cycle.
	Review of waived rent under CAROS	Rent due under the existing CAROS scheme was waived for the first 3 months of 2020/2021. Opportunities to extend this could be considered.
	Contributions to support Mental Health within the district	Work with existing partners to identify how the Council can continue to support mental wellbeing in the district. which could include increased contributions to the Mental Health Hub or supporting work within schools etc.
	Revisit SME Growth Fund	Explore opportunities to revise this existing local grant scheme to support local businesses in areas such as safeguarding / creating local jobs.
	Redirect / refocus community safety and enforcement activities	Explore opportunities to use existing funds to directly support the back to business initiative.
Medium Term	Develop a rural place / attraction encompassing a permanent sales space	To support suitable businesses and individuals either producing, manufacturing or selling creative products or to demonstrate particular products which are service related. Such an attraction could also act as a 'draw' to people outside of the district.

	Maximise opportunities from the Coast	<p><i>This could include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with partners to make fishing a major contributor to the local economy. • Working with wind energy suppliers to make assets into an 'attraction' such as light shows on wind turbines etc. • Establishing pleasure boat trips
	Organising business networking events	<p>Bringing together business people to explore opportunities of working together etc.</p> <p>This could include events where banks are encouraged to come and speak directly with businesses.</p>
	Establish a Tending Business Directory	The key benefits could be two fold – to build a database to understand the local economy better which could drive more focused support along with it acting as a directory advertising the goods and services of local businesses which could also use social media channels.
	Introduce a reusable nappies campaign	Look to work with key manufacturers and partners to encourage the use of reusable nappies which could be made available from local shops.
	Create an In-house Energy Efficiency Team	<p>To explore external funding opportunities and take forward the Council's ambitions including the promotion of this initiative within the wider business sector.</p> <p>To work in collaboration with other Council's.</p>
	Apprenticeship Scheme	Explore opportunities to increase apprenticeships within the district.
Long Term	Establish a skills, jobs and enterprise board	To be made up of key people / organisations within the district to start to establish stronger links between these major strands of the local economy.
	Promotion of the district as a sporting / cycling destination	Activities could include the promotion of cycling holidays and organised triathlons.
	Explore opportunities for an outdoor swimming pool and boating area	Sites by Clacton Pier were highlighted.
	To explore opportunities to encourage tourism	This could include reviewing opportunities for a hotel or theme park and take advantage of the outdoor activities available within the district.

	Back to Business Lottery	Explore opportunities to launch a local lottery with money being reinvested directly in associated back to business activities.
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