

15 July 2021

### Targeted support for our businesses

Coronavirus continues to be the biggest challenge for 91% of businesses across our borough. But, in this year's business survey, businesses told us about lots of other opportunities they would like support with.

Lead Councillor for Economy, Cllr John Redpath said: "The future for Guildford is bright and, thanks to the 140 businesses who took part in our business survey, I'm certain that the Council can help provide an even better environment for businesses to thrive. Telling us what challenges are ahead and what would be most helpful means that we can support businesses better.

"The Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak has had a substantial monetary impact on our local economy in Guildford, with 83% of businesses surveyed facing a reduced income over lockdown. But the spirit of our business community in the last 12 months has amazed me. They have adapted, overcome and adjusted to our temporary new way of life. They have shown great ingenuity and resolve in working together to make sure that our economy not only survives the pandemic but can come out of it even stronger.

"Having worked closely with many businesses over the past year, distributing 11 government grant schemes with a total of almost £36 million to around 90% of businesses, we understand how challenging it has been.

"There are lots of opportunities and information available to businesses who are looking for support at this time."

Businesses across the borough have a mostly positive outlook for 2021. 21% of businesses expect to return to pre-Coronavirus (Covid-19) levels of growth, more than 45% expect their business to grow in the first three quarters of 2021. 10% of businesses expect to get smaller or close.

There are already opportunities to [work with us](#). Our buying strategy now prioritises our local SMEs and focuses on providing social value and reducing CO2 emissions. And young people (aged 16-24) who claim Universal Credit can get help to find work through [the government's KickStart scheme](#) or email [business@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:business@guildford.gov.uk).

We are working on lots of other ways to support local businesses tackle the challenges they face. More than 40% of businesses across Guildford have developed new goods or services to offer during the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, with many that can be delivered digitally. Many businesses told us that they would like to play their part in tackling climate change, introduce more sustainability initiatives, find volunteering opportunities for their staff, offer training and work opportunities for local people and work more closely with the Council to provide services for local people.

So, what support will we offer?

- We will give more information on how businesses can tackle Climate Change and reduce their carbon footprint, which 44% of survey participants wanted to receive. This will include details on the Low Carbon for the South East ([LoCase](#)) scheme being launched by Surrey County Council to give training, advice, and energy efficiency grants.
- We will give local businesses more information about how they can work with us, by adding them to a supplier database, creating a list of available contracts and organising meet the buyer events, where businesses can talk to our Procurement Team. 69% of survey participants wanted more information on the supplier database and other opportunities, with 60% having been unaware of how to find those details.
- We are creating an Economy and Regeneration strategy to show how we will deliver our new Corporate Plan and a new longer-term vision for our local economy. This will include skills, regeneration, the visitor and rural economies, and innovation.
- We will continue to support the digital games and digital health sectors, two key parts of our local economy, with sponsorship, promotion and networking opportunities.
- We will create business support programmes to help businesses recover and grow from the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, and we will continue to support businesses through government grants. This includes the Welcome Back Fund to support our town centre and visitor economy through events, promotions and new initiatives.
- We will supply more information on training programmes and give details of corporate volunteering initiatives.
- We will increase and improve our communication with key employers and business partners to strengthen our relationship with the business community. 46% of participants use our website to find information, with 34% using our @GuildfordBC social media accounts on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

More businesses are signing up to receive our regular Business Bulletin, full of information, resources and events tailored for business across the borough. Email [business@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:business@guildford.gov.uk) to subscribe.

Any borough business can contact us by email at [business@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:business@guildford.gov.uk) and we will help find the support and information they need.