

### **Councillor Clayton Wellman** **Sustainable Economy**

#### **Business Grants**

In the early stages of the Coronavirus, the Government recognised the major impact that it would have on business. They established two grant schemes which local authorities would be responsible for administering. There were three individual grant schemes:

- Small Business Grants - £10k payment to eligible small businesses
- Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Scheme - £10k payment to eligible businesses with a Rateable Value of up to £15kpa
- Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Scheme - £25k payment to eligible businesses with a Rateable Value between £15,001 pa and £51k pa

As at 2 July, payments of £17.7m have been made to almost 1,400 local businesses. This is over 90% of identified eligible businesses.

A team of officers was established to administer this scheme, bringing them in from teams who ordinarily had no involvement in business engagement.

There were a number of businesses in need of support who slipped through the net in that they were not eligible for the above grants, but who were local businesses who were definitely in need of support. The Government therefore established a Discretionary Scheme aimed at supporting these businesses. MVDC received an additional £1.3m to pay to local businesses. The scheme was advertised for applications which closed on 30 June. 120 applications were received, and as at 2 July fraud and other checks were being undertaken, ahead of decisions on applications being made during the week commencing 6 July.

#### **Business Support**

Officers have worked with the newly formed Business Grants, Revenues and Communications teams to provide business support throughout the pandemic. This has ranged from writing to all businesses in the district on 19 March and 30 March alerting them to the government support and grants available to them. Advice and resource pages linked to the government's coronavirus support for business, employees and the self-employed were quickly set up on the Council's website. Spotlight, the Council's business e-newsletter has increased its frequency to weekly, linking to regional and national support information and events. Advice was also available by phone and email.

As the emphasis has moved towards re-opening businesses and the local economy, officers have worked with local businesses and business organisations such as Dorking Town Partnership and Mole Valley Chamber of Commerce (previously Leatherhead and District Chamber of Commerce) and Coast to Capital LEP. This has ranged from four drop-in business information hubs in Dorking and Leatherhead, a webinar on how to approach covid-secure risk assessments, to working with Clockwork City and the Retail Group to deliver training in digital business skills and business development skills workshops and 1:1 support online.

### **Dorking Market**

The management of Dorking Market moved back in-house at the start of the financial year. Officers have run the market throughout the pandemic in accordance with government legislation and guidance. It has provided essential food and groceries to our residents as well as supporting the livelihoods of our market traders. The learning from this has been shared with Mole Valley Chamber of Commerce who successfully reopened their general Thursday and Sunday market and held the monthly Artisan Market in June.

### **Rural Transport**

Officers worked with Surrey County Council to provide them with the evidence base to support an Expression of Interest to the Department of Transport's Rural Mobility Fund in June. The objective of the Fund is to trial demand-responsive transport solutions – distinct from dial-a-ride and community-transport services - for residents to fill a gap in provision, where there is no current local transport offer, or complement existing timetabled bus services, for example by acting as a feed-in service. It should enhance the opportunity of residents to access education, employment, healthcare and other services, and enable greater social inclusion.

### **Active Travel**

Following the publication of the Department of Transport Active Travel funding guidance in May, MVDC engaged with Surrey County Council (SCC) as the highways authority. This involved engagement with residents associations, parish councils, district and county council members, Dorking Town Partnership (the Business Improvement District - BID), Mole Valley Chamber of Commerce and Mole Valley Cycle Forum, to request and collate suggestions which would promote social distancing and active travel. Officers have engaged with Mole Valley Access Group to feed in their experiences including up to MHCLG. Funding was confirmed on 26 June, which means schemes are required to be started within four weeks (24 July) and completed within eight weeks (21 August). The guidance for Phase 2 (long-term investment) is still awaited.

### **Reopening High Streets Safely Grant**

MVDC has been allocated up to £77,000 of European Regional Development Funding. This enables MVDC to reclaim expenditure on four areas:

1. Local economy reopening action plan development
2. Communications and public information activity for its residents
3. Business facing awareness raising activity focussed on SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises)
4. Temporary public realm changes to public spaces

The funding has supported the production and installation of temporary social distancing signage for Ashted, Bookham, Dorking, Fetcham and Leatherhead as non-essential retailers were permitted to reopen from 15 June and further re-openings from 4 July of hospitality businesses. A communications campaign has been planned and will be launched later this month.