

BUSINESS BULLETIN and COVID-19 UPDATE – 17 APRIL 2020

As the national lockdown continues Guildford Borough Council will publish this Business Bulletin to provide you with the latest local updates, especially where these reflect changes to Council and/or Government policy.

Compiled by the Economy and Innovation team of Chris Burchell and Chris Stanton, let us know if we can help you directly and/or suggest ways in which the Council could lobby Government for extra support not yet available. We hope that you find the Bulletin useful and welcome your feedback to business@guildford.gov.uk.

LATEST – LOCKDOWN TO LAST AT LEAST 3 MORE WEEKS

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has announced a three-week extension to the current lockdown as he stood in for Prime Minister Boris Johnson at Thursday's Downing Street press conference. He said that despite positive indications that the pandemic was coming under control, easing up restrictions too soon would be the "worst outcome", not just for public health, but the economy as well.

"We recognise the economic and social impact the measures are having which is why we have put in place an unprecedented package of support," said Mr Raab. "We know there are worries for small businesses that remain closed. Efforts are starting to pay off. Now is not the moment to give the coronavirus a second chance."

He said the government would not adjust any measures until it was confident it could meet five key measures:

- Making sure the NHS can cope
- Evidence showing a sustained and consistent fall in daily death rates
- Reliable data showing the rate of infection is decreasing to manageable levels
- Being confident in the range of operational challenges, like ensuring testing and the right amount of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), are in hand
- Being confident any adjustments will not risk a second peak and prolonged economic risk

The government scientific advisor, Prof Neil Ferguson from Imperial College, said a "significant level" of social distancing would be needed until a vaccine was found. He said the UK was not likely to be "back to normal" when restrictions were relaxed, with social distancing measures expected to be required in some form until a vaccine became available.

UPDATE ON GRANTS FOR BUSINESSES

We have updated our main website with the latest information on the business support available and the process we will follow when making payments – see <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/article/23827/Business-rate-payers-help>. We expect around 1,750 businesses will qualify for the grants in our borough, which will probably total around £22 million. It has become clear that we need additional information from ratepayers so we can make payments through the scheme – the form for you to complete is on our website: <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/busgrant>.

We are presently contacting all ratepayers who we consider are eligible for a grant and have started to make payments with the aim of distributing all the grants during April. Where we can we will make payment prior to receiving the additional form information – however you must still complete the form so that post payment verification can take place.

As Government action on grant funding and related support continues to evolve please check the official website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-business-support-grant-funding-guidance-for-businesses>

CORONAVIRUS AND YOUR BUSINESS

For the latest information about the coronavirus visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>.

General information to help businesses – including case studies – can be found at www.businesssupport.gov.uk/.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Since our last bulletin this website has had links added about the Self-employment Income Support Scheme – for phone advice you can also visit www.gov.uk/business-support-helpline.

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STOP PRESS! Sarah Butcher of Surrey Chambers of Commerce has asked us to alert you to a Chamber Solutions Zoom meeting on **Thursday 23rd April at 1pm** – you can join the meeting at <https://bit.ly/2K3pASb>. This will be especially timely as the online portal for the coronavirus job retention scheme (CJRS) applications opens on Monday 20th April. The meeting will again have expertise from the business community around Finance, HR, Employment Law and a representative from one of the borough councils.

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DOES YOUR BUSINESS TRADE OVERSEAS?

As part of the Government’s response to the Coronavirus the Department for International Trade (DIT) has announced a range of support for UK businesses that export or deliver goods and services abroad and have been impacted by the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). It includes:

- DIT support for UK business trading internationally
- Financial support for business trading internationally

DIT support for UK business trading internationally:

Your local Office (DIT South East) is at Unit 10, Fulcrum, 2 Solent Way, Fareham, PO15 7FN (tel. 0330 300 0012).

DIT can support businesses by providing assistance with customs authorities to ensure smooth clearance of their products and/or by offering advice on intellectual property and other issues with business continuity

If your business faces disruption due to the spread of Coronavirus please visit <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/> for more information. The DIT team will discuss the challenges faced by your business at home and overseas to understand how best the department can support you.

DIT has relationships with a global network of businesses across the world and can advise you on the options available to help you to find alternative suppliers if your supply chain has been affected by the Coronavirus. DIT also has offices worldwide – see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dit-worldwide-offices> for details.

If you have an advisory or professional services firm that can help UK companies to find alternative suppliers, visit the <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/> for more information.

If you are operating projects in other countries, follow local guidance and speak to your nearest UK embassy or consulate. Alternatively, you can read the general advice on [Overseas Business Risk](#) in the relevant country.

Financial support for British businesses trading internationally:

UK Export Finance (UKEF) works with banks and insurance brokers to help companies of all sizes fulfil and get paid for export contracts. It provides guarantees, loans and insurance on behalf of the government that can protect UK exporters facing delayed payments or transit restrictions. Help from UKEF:

- if your business is facing disruption due to late payments, UKEF can help ease cash flow constraints by guaranteeing bank loans through its [Export Working Capital Scheme](#)
- if you are concerned about getting paid, UKEF offers an [export insurance policy](#) that can help you recover the costs of fulfilling an order that is terminated by events outside your control
- UKEF can also support finance for overseas buyers through the [Direct Lending Facility scheme](#), so they can continue to buy your goods and services
- UKEF has over £4 billion of capacity to support UK firms exporting to China, as well as significant capacity across other markets affected by coronavirus (COVID-19) to help cover these risks.

To find out if UKEF covers your region, email customer.service@ukexportfinance.gov.uk

International business travel

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office offers the [latest advice about travelling abroad](#), including the latest information on coronavirus (COVID-19), safety and security, entry requirements and travel warnings. For more details of DIT support visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-uk-businesses/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-uk-businesses-trading-internationally>

CORONAVIRUS COVID-19 – A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

We are very grateful to the Guildford Office of DMH Stallard for providing this link to their website and information and guidance to help your business through the Covid-19 crisis:

<https://www.dmhstallard.com/coronavirus-updates>

Here the Company's legal experts consider the implications of Covid-19 and provide informed and pragmatic commentary on the key issues, considering all the latest Government updates and advice.

CAN YOUR BUSINESS OR EMPLOYEES OFFER COVID-19 SUPPORT?

NEW: Help the government increase COVID-19 testing capacity

The government wants help from businesses to increase testing capacity in the UK as part of its strategy to protect the NHS and save lives. Specifically, this includes companies who can manufacture and supply:

- Consumables and equipment for coronavirus testing, in particular test kits (such as nose and throat swabs, transport media and vials) and RNA extraction lab consumables (such as reagents, plates and pipette tips)
- New or existing types of coronavirus tests for antigens or antibodies. These must meet the requirement set out by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) – see www.gov.uk for details.

Can your business offer further support?

The UK Government is looking for businesses who can offer support in a number of important areas and has set up an online tool where businesses can register. To offer support click [here](#).

NHS asks people to share their experience of coronavirus symptoms to help others

A new Coronavirus Status Checker will help the NHS coordinate its response and build up additional data on the COVID-19 outbreak. It is open to anyone in the UK to use on the NHS website and in its initial phase the NHS is particularly keen for anyone who thinks they may be displaying potential coronavirus symptoms, no matter how mild, to complete it. Please share the checker with your employees and networks. Find more information [here](#).

Can you help feed the nation?

Country Land and Business Association Limited is calling on the public to help farms feed the nation and save this year's harvest. As a result of travel restrictions and illness, the agricultural sector could face a shortage of up to 80,000 seasonal labour workers. Find out how you could help by working on a farm near you [here](#).

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT IN OTHER PARTS OF THE ECONOMY

Government support for charities

Charities across the UK will receive a £750 million package of support to ensure they can continue their vital work during the coronavirus outbreak, Chancellor Rishi Sunak has announced. Tens of thousands of charities providing vital services will benefit from direct cash grants to ensure they can meet increased demand as a result of the virus as well as continuing their day-to-day activities supporting those in need.

- £360 million will be directly allocated by government departments to charities providing key services such as hospices and those supporting domestic abuse victims and other vulnerable people during the crisis.
- £370 million will support small and medium-sized charities at the heart of local communities which are making a big difference during the outbreak, including those delivering food, essential medicines and providing financial advice. In England support could be through the National Lottery Community Fund.
- £20 million has been guaranteed as a minimum contribution to the National Emergencies Trust appeal – the Chancellor having also announced that the Government will match fund whatever the public decides to donate to the BBC's Big Night In charity appeal on 23 April.

For details see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/funding-boost-for-covid-19-charities>

Government support for Destination Management Organisations (DMOs)

DMOs provide expert advice and guidance to local businesses and are a crucial part of developing and promoting English tourism. As a result of the coronavirus outbreak, a number of DMOs are currently facing cash flow issues and loss of commercial income. Total funding of £1.3m will ensure that DMOs continue to give critical business support in preparation for recovery. Under the scheme, DMOs could receive up to £2,500 per month for two members of non-furloughed staff who provide crucial business support services and up to £5,000 to cover operating costs.

The Government funding is available to any at-risk DMO in England which usually receives at least 50% of its income from commercial sources and will be used to cover operating costs and the cost of employees that cannot be furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme because they provide crucial business support services.

Beyond the Council's Tourist Information Centre (the last one in Surrey) and its Visit Guildford brand operating from the historic High Street, our local DMO is Visit Surrey (www.visitsurre.com), a small 'virtual' company with most of its services outsourced to specialist companies.

Visit Surrey's Chair, Christine Howard, has identified key areas of work to minimise the effects of the current crisis including Business support and continuity of service; also evaluation of external funding and support initiatives.

The Council recognises the huge contribution that Surrey's Visitor Economy makes and will support Visit Surrey's work to develop a recovery plan for the tourism, leisure and hospitality sectors in the months ahead.

OTHER SOURCES OF ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

ACAS - The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service

<https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>

Association of British Insurers – representing British Insurance sector <https://www.abi.org.uk/products-and-issues/topics-and-issues/coronavirus-qa/>

Surrey Chamber of Commerce

<https://www.surrey-chambers.co.uk/representation/how-is-your-business-doing/>

Business South – Independent representative of businesses in Central Southern England

<https://www.businesssouth.org>

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development – professional association for human resource management professionals

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/news-views/coronavirus/faqs>

Confederation of British Industry – Represents British larger businesses <https://www.cbi.org.uk/coronavirus-hub>

Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership

<https://enterprisem3growthhub.co.uk/coronavirus-covid-19>

Enterprise Nation – organisation supporting micro and small businesses

<https://www.enterprisenation.com/coronavirus-support/>

Federation of Small Businesses – Represents British micro and small businesses

<https://www.fsb.org.uk/campaign/covid19.html>

Institute of Directors – Membership Organisation for Company Directors

<https://www.iod.com/iod-coronavirus-support-hub>

Surrey Hills Enterprises – Membership Organisation for local businesses

<https://www.surreyhills.org/enterprises>