

The City of Edinburgh Council

10.00am, Tuesday, 28 July 2020

Supporting Local Businesses in Edinburgh

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive All 2
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Council:
 - 1.1.1 note the ongoing work to support local businesses across the city;
 - 1.1.2 note that an application has been submitted to the Scotland's Town Partnership's 'Towns and Business Improvement Districts Resilience and Recovery Fund' to support the Shop Local campaign;
 - 1.1.3 agree to discharge the motion by Councillor Cook, as approved at the Policy and Sustainability Committee of 11 June 2020; and
 - 1.1.4 agree to discharge the motion by Councillor Cameron, as approved at the City of Edinburgh Council of 30 June 2020.

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Report

Supporting Local Businesses in Edinburgh

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides an overview of the activities which the Council is currently or plans to progress to support local businesses in Edinburgh in response to Covid-19 and as part of the Adaptation and Renewal programme.

3. Background

- 3.1 On [11 June 2020](#) the Policy and Sustainability Committee approved the following adjusted amendment:
- 3.1.1 To welcome the unprecedented packages of financial support provided by the UK and Scottish Government to Edinburgh businesses.
 - 3.1.2 To recognise that local traders and high streets faced a particularly challenging economic environment for the foreseeable future as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - 3.1.3 To agree that the Council must do all in its power to foster a positive trading environment, working alongside local Traders' Associations and directly with traders wherever possible.
 - 3.1.4 To agree that a report be brought forward in three cycles with options available to institute a 'Support for Local Business' campaign in aid of traders in local town centres and high streets such as, but not limited to Morningside, Bruntsfield, Stockbridge and Corstorphine, as we go through the various stages of reopening under the Scottish Government's route map. The report should include options on actions such as local digital and print advertising initiatives and local signage and aesthetic improvements to local high streets as well as plans to consult directly with small businesses on what additional action the Council could take to help and support their recovery.
 - 3.1.5 To agree that this work does not preclude any actions to support business in the meantime prior to this report coming to Council.
 - 3.1.6 To note recent research by Transport for London that people on foot or bike spend 30%-40% more in local shops than those travelling by car; and therefore welcomes acceleration of measures to reallocate prime urban

space away from vehicles and towards active travel as a means of boosting local businesses.

3.2 On [30 June 2020](#), the City of Edinburgh Council approved the following adjusted motion:

3.2.1 Council welcomes the positive public engagement with the Spaces for People programme, designed to ensure the safety of people walking, cycling and wheeling; and the contribution of this, and other holistic measures which support the allocation of public space, towards a sustainable, economic recovery for Edinburgh. Council notes officers across relevant departments are working up a clear framework within which Edinburgh businesses can safely reopen and operate within all social distancing guidelines; and without detriment or compromise to accessibility; and to health and safety. Council requests an update report on work to support business reopening, including actions taken to support business operating in outside spaces as soon as practicable to include details where of:

3.2.1.1 Where businesses can find details of guidance;

3.2.1.2 How it is being decided which areas are suitable for the increased use of outdoor space and how this is being facilitated;

3.2.1.3 What guidelines are being used to mediate between Council departments where there are competing priorities such as income generation from parking versus enabling the provision of space for businesses to open and support economic activity, recognising that different areas may require different solutions.

3.2.2 Notes the public engagement with the Spaces for People initiative which supports sustainable travel and physical distancing measures across Edinburgh's communities, and to support local businesses, has generated significant interest across the city with over 3,000 suggestions submitted.

3.2.3 Recognises the key themes emerging include the narrowness of pavements, limited space to queue and the speed to traffic.

3.2.4 Notes that our city is diverse and retail and hospitality businesses operating in different locations from the city centre to village high streets face shared and differing challenges and the key to understanding and meeting these is through consultation with business owners and residents.

3.2.5 Acknowledges that supporting our local high streets and city centre is key to ensuring a sustainable economic recovery for Edinburgh and that many measures in addition to Spaces for People will be critical to this including but not limited to:

3.2.5.1 Encouraging residents to "Buy Local";

3.2.5.2 Relaxing rules on outdoor eating and drinking and the use of other outdoor areas for this purpose;

- 3.2.5.3 Consulting with businesses and their trade organisation to understand their concerns and therefore understand what the council can do to better support them.

4. Main report

Business Support and Recovery

- 4.1 Under the Council's Adaptation and Renewal Programme, the Sustainable Economic Recovery programme is putting in place Business Support and Recovery projects to support local businesses as they begin planning for reopening and recovery.
- 4.2 These projects link closely with the Spaces for People programme which has supporting economic recovery at its heart, with measures developed to support businesses in the city and local town centres.

Business Ready, Set, Go

- 4.3 Business Ready, Set, Go was launched to support businesses as lockdown measures are gradually relaxed, by clearly communicating essential information such as:
 - 4.3.1 what businesses will be able to open and when;
 - 4.3.2 what the public can expect to see and what is expected of them;
 - 4.3.3 guidance, or links to guidance, on what measures businesses need to take; and
 - 4.3.4 simple guides and checklists to help local business understand what they need to do to be Ready, Set and Go.
- 4.4 The Council website signposts to the Scottish Government regulations and guidance for businesses on opening during the Covid-19 pandemic, including a checklist for businesses which are restarting after having been closed during the lockdown period.
- 4.5 The Business Ready, Set, Go programme has so far:
 - 4.5.1 contacted all temporary license holders regarding applications, refunding fees where appropriate, and discussing their future plans;
 - 4.5.2 circulated the business reopening checklist to 20,000 businesses;
 - 4.5.3 contacted 7,000 businesses by telephone to check if they need any help, advice or support;
 - 4.5.4 emailed 6,000 businesses with information about using outdoor space;
 - 4.5.5 launched a regular newsletter which will be issued to 20,000 businesses;
 - 4.5.6 created the business advice section on the Council website; and
 - 4.5.7 had 270,000 retweets of information published on Twitter.
- 4.6 For businesses with the potential to utilise existing or newly created outdoor space, these contacts have included advice, guidance and support to enable them to make

the most effective use of these spaces.

- 4.7 These methods of communication will continue to be used to support businesses moving forward.

Shop Local

- 4.8 The Shop Local project is targeted at supporting independent traders and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) across Edinburgh's town centres and high streets and is focused on providing advice, guidance and support to help businesses adapt to the new operating environment as a result of Covid-19.
- 4.9 In addition to the Business Ready, Set Go guidance, businesses will be able to access business advice through Business Gateway services and workshops, advice on regulatory requirements and legislative changes, and advice on creating additional areas for seating and dining.
- 4.10 A promotional campaign will utilise existing digital channels such as the Council's Corporate Communications accounts, Business Gateway accounts and www.edinburgh.org as well as linking with emerging campaigns such as the tourism sector recovery plan to promote local town centres and businesses.
- 4.11 Shop Local will also provide a framework of practical advice on adapting to new ways of working, introducing physical distancing, health protection measures and adequate signage (with up to date information), making changes to how payments are taken, and using digital communications and resourcing.
- 4.12 A local Champions network will be established with individuals from local businesses, Traders Associations and/or Community Council to enable the Council to consult with directly with local businesses on the additional action which they would like the Council to take to provide further support.

Town and Business Improvement Districts Resilience and Recovery Fund

- 4.13 As part of a £2 million funding package announced by the Scottish Government on 12 June 2020, a new fund has been created to support delivery of local activities which contribute to town centre and high street resilience and recovery. £1 million of the funding will be directly allocated to address immediate local priorities as the lockdown restrictions are gradually eased, while £0.7 million will be set aside for Business Improvement Districts from September 2020.
- 4.14 An application for funding has been made to provide further targeted support for local town centres, particularly focused on collaborative multi-media promotional campaigns (digital and printed materials such as banners, posters, window stickers etc) with partners such as Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, Edinburgh Tourism Action Group, Federation of Small Businesses etc.

Procurement and Supply Chains

- 4.15 Policy and Sustainability Committee recently received an update on Council [support for small businesses](#) and the [impact of Covid-19 on Council procurement activity](#).

- 4.16 The Council's Sustainable Procurement Strategy was approved in March 2020 and includes commitments to make council spend more accessible for local small businesses and the third sector.
- 4.17 This project would seek to accelerate the action plan by reducing supply chains and supporting local business. Where possible, this will mean optimising procurement opportunities to offer greater certainty to stimulate economic growth.
- 4.18 It is intended to engage with key stakeholders to understand what arrangements operate within the 'local' area (including across the city region), identifying gaps in current sector spending and determining whether there is an opportunity to build capacity, as well as to develop sectoral approaches and priorities that offer greater outcomes.

Supporting Businesses through Spaces for People

- 4.19 The aim of Spaces for People has been to support economic recovery and to create space for people to travel and exercise safely with priority being given to walking, running, cycling, wheelchair and mobility aid use and prams. Other interventions, such as the introduction of bus gates, to allow public transport and cyclists to continue to move around the city within the reduced road space while restricting other vehicular access.
- 4.20 Plans are now being progressed to improve the spaces around businesses in the city centre and other town centres.
- 4.21 The interventions planned include creating wider pavements to allow people to queue safely when waiting to enter a business and, wherever possible, maintaining footways to provide space for pedestrians while supporting businesses by providing space for tables and chairs to facilitate outside drinking and dining.
- 4.22 The Spaces for People project team have been engaging with local businesses and representative bodies including Federation of Small Businesses, Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and local Retailers' Associations, to understand any significant issues arising from planned interventions and to gain feedback on business plans for reopening.
- 4.23 This will continue throughout the programme, but engagement will progress through the Champions network once established.

Applications for Outdoor Space

- 4.24 A single application form has been developed for the use of outdoor space. The completed application should be submitted to the Licensing service and they will co-ordinate with other Council services on the following approach:
 - 4.24.1 Assess applications to ensure that the proposal is safe and that there is sufficient space available to accommodate the area proposed (this will include discussion with the Spaces for People team on their plans); then
 - 4.24.2 Tables and chairs permit assessed; and if granted,
 - 4.24.3 A liquor application (if required) will be submitted to the Licensing Board for decision.

4.25 The following key principles have been developed to ensure consistency in the Council's approach to deciding how space will be allocated:

4.25.1 the Council will seek to aggregate the space available and will encourage businesses in a local community to work together on proposals;

4.25.2 the following criteria will be applied:

4.25.2.1 priority will be given to established businesses/premises seeking to reopen using the space outside or near their premises;

4.25.2.2 where a premises seeks to use space of any adjacent frontage, they would be required to demonstrate that they have secured the agreement of the relevant occupier; and

4.25.2.3 no new request to occupy pavement or roads either for street trading or markets will be progressed where this would prevent the space being available for established local businesses or would reduce the space available for pedestrians to safely physically distance.

5. Next Steps

5.1 Implementation of the planned activities set out in this report will continue.

5.2 Applications for the Towns and Business Improvement Districts Resilience and Recovery Fund close on 24 July 2020 and the outcome is expected to be known shortly thereafter (if not before). If this funding application is successful, work will begin on implementing the additional activities outlined in paragraph 4.13.

5.3 The creation of a Champions network will enable Council officers to engage directly with local businesses on what further support the Council could provide.

5.4 Opportunities for further financial assistance to support local town centres and high streets will also be investigated.

6. Financial impact

6.1 The activities set out in this report are currently funded from the Council's existing revenue budget. In the case of Spaces for People, these activities are funded from the £5 million of funding from the Scottish Government's Spaces for People programme.

6.2 If additional funding is secured, this will be used to fund additional activities aligned to the Council's application and the funding terms and conditions.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

7.1 The lockdown measures introduced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic meant that many businesses had to pause trading. As lockdown restrictions begin to ease, priority is to support businesses to recover while ensuring that appropriate public health measures are introduced to protect both staff and the public.

7.2 The programme of activities outlined in this report is designed to support businesses to tailor the support available to their own circumstances.

- 7.3 There has been engagement with businesses already, either directly or through representative bodies. The report highlights the creation of a local network of Champions to engage with the Council on proposed interventions and to seek feedback on the action businesses would like the Council to take to support their recovery further.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Sustainable Procurement Strategy 2020 – 2025](#)
- 8.2 [Adaptation and Renewal Programme Update – 25 June 2020](#)
- 8.3 [Towns and Business Improvement Districts Resilience and Recovery Fund](#)

9. Appendices

- 9.1 None.