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## Welcome



Welcome to this first edition of Epping Forest District Council's local business e-newsletter. This monthly update will provide businesses with the latest information on support and opportunities available through your local authority.

This e-newsletter is brought to you by the Council's Economic Development Team and we hope you find this information useful.

We look forward to working closely with all businesses across the district to support recovery and economic growth.

## Contact us

## Talk to us

### We need your views!

If you have any comments on this first edition or any suggestions about future content, please let us know by emailing us on [businessmatters@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:businessmatters@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

## Share

**Please share** this e-newsletter with colleagues and friends who might find it of interest. If this edition of our e-newsletter has been forwarded to you, and you would like to receive your own regular copy, simply subscribe by following the link here: <http://eepurl.com/gib9nD>

## Financial Support for your business



Since the beginning of the Pandemic to the end of February this year, Epping Forest District Council has paid out over £42 million in support grants to local businesses. As the restrictions continue there are still the opportunities to access financial support and grants.

Those currently open for applications are:

**Local Restrictions Support Grant (for closed businesses)** applies to businesses that were required to close under the national restrictions between 5 November and 2 December 2020; and to all subsequent tier and national restrictions where businesses were required to close by law. <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/business/business-support-grants/local-restrictions-support-grant-closed/>

**Local Restrictions Support Grant (for open businesses)** applies between 17 October and 4 November 2020, when Essex was subject to Tier 2 restrictions; and to all subsequent tier restriction periods (but not periods of national restrictions) <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/business/business-support-grants/local-restrictions-support-grant-open/>

**Additional Restrictions Grant** for businesses which – while not legally forced to close – are severely impacted by Covid-19 restrictions.

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/business/business-support-grants/additional-restrictions-grant/>

**Essex Business Adaptation Fund (EBAF)** to assist businesses adapt their premises and/or operations to continue to trade and generate income whilst under restriction. <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/business/business-support-grants/essex-business-adaptation-fund-ebaf/>

Officers are working hard to administer applications and get grant payments to businesses. More information about the grants available, criteria for discretionary grants and online application forms can be found here:

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/coronavirus/support-for-businesses/>

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## New role for our High Streets



We are all aware of the impact that Covid-19 has had on the nation's high streets and the longer-term changes this has brought. Our high streets need to evolve to remain relevant and vibrant which has led the Council to commission a report on each of the district's high streets to assess their strengths and weaknesses and put together action plans for each one.

The aim is to provide a road map of support and action to help high streets through the pandemic and beyond to help them make the changes necessary to flourish as key centres for our communities. The first two reports, on

Waltham Abbey and Ongar, have already generated plans that are now being put into action. To find out how we see the future of our high streets, access the reports here: <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/business/town-centre-regeneration-studies/>

The Council is also recruiting a Town Centres Manager/ Project Officer to provide dedicated support to town centre businesses and roll out the action plans.

## Help to Trade Successfully Online



The council is investing to help local businesses and customers connect online by a new “click and collect” website provided by Click It Local <https://www.clickitlocal.co.uk/epping-forest/>. This will enable local people to shop virtually by putting items from multiple local shops into one basket and have them delivered to their door. The scheme was launched in the second week of March and already local retailers are signing up and preparing their online offer. To further help local businesses capitalise on online trading, including how to integrate social media and respond to local need, the council in April will be following up the Click It Local launch by funding business support and training packages from Maybe\*, <https://www.maybetech.com/> the market leader in the area of retail growth for local traders.

If you are a local trader and would like to find out more about serving customers online or business building through social media, please contact Duncan Haslam via email link: [dhaslam@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:dhaslam@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

## Sustainable Transport Initiatives

### New DaRT87 ‘Demand Responsive Transport’ Service

Full details at [www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/DaRT87](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/DaRT87) (or via Parking & Travel section)

Key workers/commuters. Off peak, similar to 87 (Arriva). Pre-booked journeys only. Cashless and Covid-secure operation. App trial.

### Demand Responsive Transport trial

The council has just approved an extension of the innovative DaRT87 Demand Responsive Transport trial for a full year and it is now increasingly open to all key workers, commuters, school/college users, leisure travellers, shoppers and

high street workers as lockdown eases. DaRT87 replaces the Arriva 87 which ceased after Christmas due to Essex County Council funding problems and low usage.

We hope that this more flexible and nimble service will prove a viable replacement for struggling bus routes and even to create future services linking towns and more rural areas based on demand.

Our trial is being run by Epping Forest Community Transport using 16 seat minibuses rather than full size buses and everything is run in line with Covid-secure guidelines. All fares are cashless and a new app is available to book journeys and to track the vehicles' progress to your pickup point using GPS. In general, journeys need to be pre-booked in advance, which suits fixed shift patterns. Areas covered are Debden, Epping (including both tube stations), Epping Green and Harlow's Princess Alexandra Hospital via Staple Tye and the bus station. Subject to demand, other areas of Loughton, Theydon Bois and SW Harlow can be requested.

For more information, visit [www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/DaRT87](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/DaRT87)

### **Public Electric Vehicle Charging Points**

Although Epping Forest District has the second highest number of electric vehicles on the road in Essex, there are too few public charging options and most current users charge at home (if they have off street parking) or at their workplace. The Council is also looking to expand the number of public electric vehicle charging points across the district to provide both 'rapid' charging for visitors, shoppers and businesses and 'fast' (overnight) roadside charging for residents. We will have more on this in future e-newsletters.

If you want to know more about our plans for EV charging **or the DaRT87**, contact us at [transport@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:transport@eppingforestdc.gov.uk) .

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## Epping Forest Digital



At a time of unprecedented demand on our digital broadband infrastructure, the council is continuing its efforts to ensure that businesses in the district are well placed to get the best from digital opportunities such as online trading. We are working hard to ensure all business areas in the District have access to superfast and ultrafast broadband.

Epping Forest DC has, over the last few years attracted more than £20m of external investment in the broadband infrastructure of the district. Through the ongoing project to deliver gigabit capable ultrafast 'fibre-to-the-premise' broadband, this investment is seeing around 6,000, mostly rural, premises connected to world-class internet speeds. Alongside the ongoing Superfast Essex programme this will bring superfast and ultrafast coverage in the district to over 99%.

Through the Essex + Herts Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) <https://diz.org.uk/> the council is also starting to see the benefits of a further £1.7m project, funded by Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, that will make 'fibre on demand' available to around 11,000 of the district's residential and business premises. <https://diz.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/DIZ-Press-Release-Sept-20-LFFN.pdf>

The DIZ is keen to engage with local businesses. For more information on how to engage with the DIZ and its work programme, contact

[mwarr@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:mwarr@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

DIZ Twitter link: <https://twitter.com/DizMatters>

## Staycations Boost to the Hospitality Sector and the Visitor Economy



Continuing uncertainty over foreign travel and caution around emerging from shielding is set to make staying local the safer option for those looking for breaks this year. That is good news for our hard-pressed visitor sector that is vital to our local high streets and hospitality businesses. Throughout the pandemic last year, our tourism website [www.visiteppingforest.org](http://www.visiteppingforest.org) attracted a record 200,000 visitors looking for places to exercise and news on our local attractions. The Council will continue to support its visitor industry, worth over £242 million in 2019, whilst integrating a range of initiatives. This will include the new high streets and online trading plans plus exciting new developments around green tourism including cycle paths and electric vehicles.

For more information contact Quentin Buller via email link: [qbuller@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:qbuller@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

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## More space for businesses

### North Weald – new employment land

Work continues to develop North Weald as a major employment site for the district to attract new jobs and investment. An initial consultation on the master planning exercise was undertaken at the end of last year and these comments are now being fed into the design process. As well as offering potential new space to businesses and



entrepreneurs this 10ha site will attract inward investment and create opportunities for work in supply chains for local businesses.



### **Civic Offices – new workspaces**

To maximise this space for business growth in the area and to maintain footfall on the high street the district council has refurbished the second floor of the civic offices in Epping for new tenants from the private sector. The high-quality space is currently being marketed with a view to possibly attract businesses based in London to relocate their jobs and investment into the district. See link:

<https://www.rightmove.co.uk/commercial-property-to-let/property-100964216.html>

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## **New supplier opportunities around district investment**



Qualis, a wholly owned Epping Forest District Council development company, is delivering significant investment in key sites in the district, particularly in Epping Forest. The council has also recently agreed a procurement policy to try wherever possible to offer opportunities to local businesses to tender for work associated with council business. Further information on Qualis developments is available at:

<https://www.qualisgroup.com/about-us/>

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## **Key sites for business support services please visit:**

## **UK Government- Business Support**

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>

Please visit this page for all the latest government announcements around business support, and guidance for adapting to COVID in the workplace.

## **Best Growth Hub**

<https://southeastbusiness.org.uk/essex-southend-thurrock/>

Best Growth Hub provides a local team of Business Support Navigators that can help you identify and access relevant programmes, initiatives, or funding schemes currently on offer across Essex. The Business Support Navigators also provide 12 weeks of free advice for businesses seeking to scale up.

## **Let's Do Business Start Up**

<https://www.letsdobusinessgroup.co.uk/>

The Let's Do Business (South East) Group Limited is a Social Enterprise helping businesses to start-up and grow throughout the South East of England. It offers services such as finance and support for businesses starting out, training courses, as well as exhibitions providing an opportunity for small businesses to showcase products.

## **FSB**

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) is the UK's largest business support organisation, promoting and protecting the interests of the self-employed and small businesses.

Established in 1974 to help members succeed in business, FSB is a non-profit making and non-party political organisation that is led by members for its members. Members get an exclusive package of business services including advice, financial products and support. These cover a wide range of benefits such as tax, legal and HR, networking, business banking, insurance services, funding, cyber protection and much more.

FSB is also the UK's leading business campaigner, focused on delivering change which supports smaller businesses to grow and succeed. Our lobbying arm starts with the work of our team in Westminster which focuses on UK and English policy issues.

The Covid-19 crisis has been a real challenge for small businesses and the self-employed. For many it has been a time of uncertainty, worry and devastation. FSB have lobbied Government on behalf of small businesses, and it has proved effective. Many of the support schemes that have been rolled out are a result of this work.

FSB is a national gateway for the UK Government's Kickstart scheme and is encouraging small businesses to get involved and help support young people.

**For more information about FSB visit: <https://www.fsb.org.uk/>**

### **Epping Forest Chamber of Commerce**

<https://www.eppingforestchamber.co.uk/>

The Epping Forest Chamber of Commerce is a representative body run for local businesses and by local businesses.

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## **Key highlights for businesses from the budget**

### **Furlough**

The Furlough scheme is extended till the end of September. The scheme will remain unchanged until July when employers will have to contribute 10% in August and 20% in September.

### **SEISS (Self-Employment Income Support Scheme)**

SEISS fourth grant payment at 80% for Feb to April.

SEISS fifth grant payment in May is also available for self-employed who made their first tax return on time this March. However, whilst those showing a turnover fall of 30% or more will get the 80%, those whose turnover has fallen by less than 30% will get payment at 30%.

### **Business Rates Holiday**

The current business rate holiday for non-essential businesses is extended for three months to June. This will be followed for six months by a discounted rate

of two-thirds (up to max £2m) for businesses required to close.

### **Restart Grants**

There will be new restart grants available from April when the current cash grants end. These will be worth up to £6k for those premises that can reopen earliest and up to £18k for those forced to open later (Hospitality and leisure etc). They will be administered by local authorities with eligibility discretionary, but payments likely linked to rateable value.

### **Business Grants**

A new business recovery loan scheme will offer loans from £25k to £10m to all businesses until the end of the year.

### **Hospitality VAT**

The current cut to 5% will be extended until 30th September when it will increase to 12.5% until April 2022.

### **What wasn't there**

Help for company directors who can't furlough and self employed who make less than 50% of their income this way.



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