



Neuadd y Sir / County Hall, Llandrindod, Powys, LD1 5LG

QUESTIONS AT ANY TIME TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Response by the Portfolio Holder:

The Coronavirus pandemic continues to have an unprecedented economic impact. The Council is committed to supporting Powys businesses and the recovery of the local economy as a top priority. Flexibility in approach and capitalising on new opportunities will be fundamental to supporting long term economic recovery and future growth. The following are examples of how the Council is supporting businesses and economic recovery in the County.

Over the past year the Council has administered in the region of £66.5m of covid related Welsh Government grant support to Powys businesses and we will continue to ensure we maximise the support to local businesses wherever possible whilst the grant funding continues.

Name	Amount	Open/Closed	Value Paid
Business Rates Grants March Scheme	£10k/£25k	Closed	£52,371,610
Start Up Grant	£2.5k	Closed	£190,000
Childcare Grant	Varied	Closed	£25,000
Freelancer Grant	£2.5k	Closed	£367,500
Business Rates Grant for Firebreak	£1k/£3k/£5k	Closed but applications being processed	£6,963,500
Discretionary Business Grant for Firebreak	£1.5k	Closed but applications being processed	£331,500
Business Rates Grant for December Restrictions	£3k/£5k	Open	£6,187,500
Discretionary Business Grant for Firebreak	£2k	Open	£88,000

The Council continues to work collaboratively with Welsh Government, Business Wales and other partners to provide advice and support to businesses and plan for recovery. Information and guidance on support available is provided via direct to businesses, via business networks, Council communications and updates on the Council website: <https://en.powys.gov.uk/coronavirus/helpforbusinesses>

Last year, the Council's covid business survey attracted over 1000 responses and highlighted the severe challenges being experienced by Powys businesses,

particularly in the hospitality and tourism sectors. This feedback and analysis has provided important evidence of the economic impact of the pandemic and has helped inform the Council's discussions on the targeting of support with UK and Welsh Governments. The Council will continue to lobby on behalf of Powys businesses for further financial support to aid long term recovery.

During the covid restrictions residents have been increasingly shopped local for food and essential goods and services. Building on this, the Council's #SupportLocalPowys communications campaign has encouraged residents to support local businesses and their highstreets. Maintaining this message and sustaining support will play an important role in recovery. Measures to encourage local businesses to take advantage of Council procurement opportunities and local purchasing will also play a key role in retaining money in the Powys economy and local supply chains.

Powys high streets have been hard hit by covid restrictions. The Council has implemented a range of measures to support town centres and is currently administered a Covid town centre grant scheme to support high street businesses with social distancing measures and 13 grants have been awarded to Town Councils. Further measures are planned next year to provide targeted grants and loans to support the regeneration of towns.

The tourism and events sector has been particularly hard hit during the pandemic. The Council continues to work closely with the sector and will actively promote the County to visitors when it is safe to do so. This will capitalise on the anticipated growth in 'staycations' and day visits during 2021.

The Council administers the Welsh Government's retail relief scheme which is designed to support businesses on the High Street and in the leisure and hospitality sector where members of the public visit. In 19/20, we have awarded £11.4m to 1400 businesses. It is not known whether the scheme will continue into 2020/21 as no decisions has been made or announced by Welsh Government.

On top of this relief, we also look to support business through the various other reliefs available such as the Small Business Rates relief scheme and the Discretionary Rates relief scheme. Full details of all the schemes currently available can be found on our webpage here.

<https://en.powys.gov.uk/businessraterelief>

The pandemic has brought to the fore the importance of digital connectivity in modern life, influencing how communities and businesses work, communicate and access services. Many parts of Powys lag significantly behind the UK and Wales in terms of good quality reliable broadband and mobile connectivity. The Council is working collaboratively with UK Government, Welsh Government, and suppliers to support and accelerate the roll out of improved connectivity and to support the local economy.

The Mid Wales Growth Deal reached a significant milestone in December 2020 with the signing of the Heads of Terms by the Welsh Government, UK Government, and the region's local authorities. This provided a commitment of £110M to deliver a deal that will help transform the economy of the region. Work is underway to develop strategic projects that will help support economic growth over a 10-15 year period.

The Growth Deal will provide a major opportunity to stimulate new investment and jobs opportunities in Powys to help support economic recovery. The Council will also be actively pursuing other funding opportunities such as the UK Shared prosperity fund to maximise opportunities and benefit to the County.