

Councillor Neil Reeve, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development
Council Report, 21 July 2020

Economic Development Covid-19 Work Priorities

Pre-pandemic there were two members of the Economic Development Team but one post became vacant in mid-March 2020. There have been two full-time members of staff since mid-May 2020. The following have been the priorities for our work since mid-March.

- Initial focus was delivery of clear and consistent messages to local businesses about the Government guidance. The Economic Development Team has worked closely with the Communications Team on e-newsletters, the Leader's messages, briefing notes for Ward Members and Parish and Town Clerks, as well as messages targeted at local business networks.
- The Government business support package altered the focus towards the delivery of information regarding access to the support initiatives, both those being delivered by the District Council, initially the Business Support Grants, and the support offered through other agencies.
- Economic Development worked closely with Revenues and Benefits staff to deliver the Business Support Grants, and in the development of the Discretionary Grant Fund. Colleagues in the Customer Service Centre assisted with efforts to contact more than 300 businesses directly who were considered eligible for the Business Support Grant, according to Council records, but had not applied.
- The Economic Development Team has taken a lead in the re-opening of the town and village centres. Working closely with a wide range of partners, and internal colleagues we have established multi-agency partnerships for the three centres of Stansted Mountfitchet, Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow. We have agreed action plans for those three centres and have submitted a Grant Action Plan to Government with a plan to spend £80k on the re-opening between 1/6/20 and 31/3/21.
- Support was also provided to a number of villages with retail and hospitality businesses including Thaxted, Hatfield Heath, Newport, Stebbing and Felsted. This work was completed with support from Environmental Health Officers.
- There has been a promotion of the MiPermit app for use in the car parks. This will, we hope, reduce the use of the pay and display ticket machines.
- Work also continues to monitor the delivery of the Gigaclear contract to install superfast broadband. There have been some reported delays due to abuse of contractors in several villages across the district. Gigaclear have now produced a Recovery Plan and hope to be back on track by the end of September 2020.