

Brockley PC Meeting 2 Feb 2021: DC Report

1. Support for businesses is still available

I have had a few conversations over recent weeks with local businesses, most of whom wrongly assume that government support and grant schemes have ended. There are many businesses that NSC are simply not reaching, and with tons of financial support and free business advice available, I am hoping that the PC might help me to promote some of this locally.

The message is simple. Any business looking for additional support should email [business@n-Somerset.gov.uk](mailto:business@n-somerset.gov.uk) and the team will help. Just to summarise what is available right now;

- Multimillion pound grants available
- How to apply – via the Council or 'In North Somerset' websites:
 - <https://innorthsomerset.co.uk/covid-19-support/small-business-grants-information/>
 - <http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/community-safety-crime/emergency-management/covid-19-north-somerset-together/information-organisations-businesses-groups>
- Long-haul support: bespoke advice via telephone Contact Centre & the Business Team to help and support
- Payments are Grants, **not a loan** – no requirement to repay
- Grants provided are to cover fixed costs, not loss of income or wages
- Businesses are often eligible for multiple grants for the same period of restriction and against multiple episodes of the local / national restrictions
- Businesses providing 'Take Away' service or trading via an alternative mechanism may still be classified as 'Closed' under the scheme
- Businesses receiving 100% retail or small business relief (paying zero Business Rates bills) are still eligible for a grant
- Rated businesses may be eligible for top-up grants under the discretionary schemes (ARG & NSC Hospitality Sector scheme)
- Mistakes must be funded by the local authority
- Businesses can claim back sick pay for staff who have had to take time off due to having Covid
- Retail, hospitality and leisure businesses and small businesses received business rate relief 20/21 – we continue to lobby government for this to be extended to next year
- Self-Employment Income Support is still available
- Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme – Government guaranteed loans for larger businesses up to £5m. Interest free for 12 months
- Bounce Back Loans - Government guaranteed loans for SMEs up to £50k. Interest free for 12 months
- Furlough extended to 30th April - Employees receiving 80% of their current salary for hours not worked

2. Bristol Airport Appeal

On 30th November 2020, Bristol Airport Limited submitted updated information that superseded some of what was included in the initial planning application. Bristol Airport Limited said this update was needed in response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The additional information was given a new reference number of 20/P/2896/APPCON so it can be distinguished from the information submitted prior to the planning application being decided. The additional information included an addendum to the Environmental Statement and associated documents, including a Parking Demand Study addendum, Transport Assessment addendum, Forecast Report and Economic Impact Assessment addendum.

The consultation on the additional information closed on 6 January 2021. All the comments received have been sent to the Planning Inspectorate so that they can take them into account when considering the appeal.

3. Winter Grants

The Council has received £523,000 from the Government's Covid winter grant scheme to assist low income families and individuals with mainly food and fuel costs for the months of December to March.

The council is keen to see this money distributed to help those children and families most in need. Any money not allocated by the end of March will have to be returned to the Government.

Initially, vouchers were distributed to all children entitled to free school meals, including in early years settings, and care leavers of £15 a week for the two weeks of the Christmas holidays.

Families and individuals who need more help can apply through the Welfare Provision Scheme. Go to www.n-somerset.gov.uk/wps, or call 01934 888 035 or 0800 138 5665, 10am to 4pm, Monday to Friday.

4. Online Access Support

A free service aimed at increasing the level of basic digital skills and abilities in North Somerset residents is now available.

North Somerset Council's digital inclusion project 'Get Connected' is open to low income residents on Universal Credit or with little or no qualifications.

The council has 120 laptops available for loan for a period of 12 months to eligible residents. They will be supported throughout the year and encouraged to sign up for courses which aim to improve their confidence, employment prospects and connectivity and reduce social isolation.

'Get Connected', which has been funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, will help people to:

- get and set up free IT equipment for them to take home
- learn how to use it and access IT courses
- use the laptop to go job hunting and find work
- access useful online services
- feel confident in the digital world
- get connected with family and friends.

To find out more about the scheme, residents can contact the council's digital inclusion project co-ordinator Jane Goodison on 07990 805 512 or jane.goodison@n-somerset.gov.uk.