

**Written response to question / issue
raised at Council**

Meeting Date: 27th April 2021

Public / Private*: Public

Minute Reference: C.74/21 – Portfolio Holder Reports

Written response to: Cllr J Bomford

Written response from: Cllr P Nedved

Resolution / Question:

(4) 'That the Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder investigate the potential establishment of a 'Supply Local Carlisle Project' (potential wholesale suppliers and exporting as opposed to importing of products) and provide a written response to Councillor Bomford.'

Response:

As part of the Reopening the High Street Safely programme, the Buy Local Carlisle project was funded to deliver the following:

- One to one mentoring to support local businesses as they deal with the impact of COVID 19
- Provision of expert business advice and / or signposting to appropriate support as required
- The development of a Buy Local Carlisle business directory which allows local businesses to raise their profile. They can advertise their services, post job adverts, promote their offers etc. The directory has the potential to not only encourage business to business transactions but also business to customer and therefore supports the local supply chain
- Carlisle Ambassadors also circulates tender opportunities, offers advice on marketing and promoting businesses, as well as support for the local supply chain. For example, today Carlisle Ambassadors posted (via LinkedIn) about local distribution centres and help with working with distributors and suppliers.

The idea for the above project arose from the establishment of a Small Business Support Group for Carlisle Businesses Facebook group. This group was set up by our Carlisle Ambassador project manager and supported by Carlisle Ambassador businesses. It was set up in May 2020 as a communication tool to get key information out to our local SME's who the Council finds difficult to reach. The group has now over 4,700 members and growing.

The members frequently transact business, seek recommendations for local suppliers and support each other with information and best practice. The Directory is aimed at giving these businesses a platform to ensure that local businesses continue to support each other, learn from each other and do business together which helps keep our local supply chains intact and help our SME's recover from the pandemic.

The Buy Local Carlisle business directory has over 325 listings as of April 2020 and members of the Facebook group are encouraged to take up their free listing.

Link to the Buy Local Carlisle Directory - <https://buylocalcarlisle.co.uk/>

The first round of mentoring delivered bespoke mentoring to 66 business with 163 hours which exceeded targets for the project overall while making 14 referrals to the LEP for further support. The project has been a very well received by local businesses and due to the high demand, we were able to secure additional funding from RHSS to continue the delivery of the mentor programme up until the end of June 2020. The second round already has 55 businesses registered for mentoring.

These projects have evidence the kind of support our local SME's need to support them into recovery, preserve our local services and strengthen the supply chain to ensure a robust and sustainable local economy. At the moment there is no additional funding to continue to support the directory or the social media channels other than through the good will and support of Carlisle Ambassadors. The mentoring programme will close at the end of June 2020.

Date: 25th May 2021