

Stirling Council's Communities and Performance Service E-newsletter



June 1 2020

Welcome to the first newsletter from Stirling Council's Communities and Performance Service. This is a wide portfolio of services including Economic Growth, Culture, Tourism and Events, Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, Housing Management, Strategic Commissioning, Customer Services and Transformation Policy and Performance.

This newsletter aims to keep businesses, communities, partners and stakeholders up to date with the work of the Service, not only in response to the current COVID-19 crisis, but also current projects, and forward planning for recovery.

These are undoubtedly challenging times. Over the last weeks teams across this Division have worked with partners in a collective response to support businesses, residents and communities.

We look forward to working with you as we face the new challenges and opportunities together as they emerge over the coming weeks and months.

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Stirling businesses access over £16 Million in support (Economic Growth, Culture, Tourism and Events)



Reacting swiftly to the needs of the business community in the Stirling area to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 Pandemic, Economic Growth and local business support partners, including STEP and Business Gateway, responded immediately to provide support and advice.

[The Invest in Stirling website](#) has become a dedicated resource for businesses to access accurate up to date information on the support available to Stirling based businesses. This is supported by targeted social media as well as a weekly e-bulletin to all Stirling businesses. To receive this e-bulletin contact investinstirling@stirling.gov.uk.

A business support hotline and dedicated e-mail address, managed by experienced Economic Development Officers from Stirling Council and STEP Advisors has been operational since the end of March. Over 375 businesses have taken advantage of this service to navigate support and funding as it has become available - a lifeline to businesses.

Working with colleagues in Revenue and Benefits over 1,900 applications to the Covid-19 [Business Grant Scheme](#) have been processed, with over 1,400 grants awarded, totalling over £16 million.

"I can't tell you how much of a relief this is. Although no one is buying from us, the bills still keep coming in. This will tide us over and will mean we can remain in business until things improve. Without it, we would have had to shut down. Thanks again - you have quite literally saved a business."

The team is currently managing the [Newly Self Employed Hardship Fund](#) which aims to support newly self-employed whose circumstances left them ineligible for other available grants and funding. Over £100,000 of grant funding has already been paid, and applications continue to be processed.

"Just received the grant into my bank account this morning and it's like a weight has been lifted from my shoulders. This money means so much to me and my family and I can't thank you enough for helping to guide me through the process. It genuinely means the world to all the people and families that have received support. Thank you so much."

With an immediate and unexpected upturn in business in some sectors for products and services a [Jobs Portal](#) has been created. This allows local businesses to advertise and promote locally to help meet demand.

Other support packages are currently being developed including an e-commerce voucher scheme and portal and the creation of local business networks to lead on recovery and future growth.

To continue providing support as sectors re-open, we want to hear about the successes and challenges of businesses locally. Contact investinstirling@stirling.gov.uk

Overwhelming Community Response (Community Development)



A foundation of strong partnership working between Stirling Council, Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise, the third sector, local businesses and an incredible response from communities has led to a co-ordinated community response to COVID-19.

Ensuring everyone who needs it can access support in the best way possible continues to be the priority for Stirling Council and partners. Anyone in the Stirling Council area facing difficulty and in need of assistance can access dedicated Community Support by phone (01786 404040), email (communitysupport@stirling.gov.uk) or an online form ([access here](#)).

Local Co-ordination Teams

To react to requests for assistance Local Co-ordination Teams (LCTs) have been set up, one for each of seven electoral wards. Focussing primarily on food, vital medication, and helping to guard against social isolation, LCTs are led by officers from the Community Development Team and supported by the Council's Customer Service, Economic Development and Communities teams as well as key partners Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise and Trossachs Search and Rescue.





Community Response

Over 66 organisations, over 1,300 community volunteers, registered to be part of the Community Response to COVID-19 and tie in with the LCTs. The Community Response Groups have been supplemented with local volunteers responding to both local and national recruitment campaigns. As well as the essential support around very basic needs, Local Community Response Groups also deliver home cooked meals for the most vulnerable, encourage young people to write letters to isolated people, sew scrubs and wash bags for NHS staff, and fundraise.

Funding for local groups

To support the vital activities provided, 33 local Community Response Groups have been able to access £17,000 from the Food Fund created to support communities during the

COVID-19 crisis.

Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise (SVE) and Stirling Council have supported local third sector groups to access funding which not only allows them to extend essential services in this time of crisis but to survive into the future and continue to provide their vital services. SVE has been included in the national distribution of the Wellbeing Fund and Supporting Communities Fund and to date, organisations in the Stirling area have been supported to access more than £250,000 in grants from the national funding streams. This money is going back into our communities and frontline third sector organisations most affected and making the biggest difference at this time.

Stirling Resident

“Just wanted to say thank you for your very prompt help yesterday. Lesley was in touch with me straight away and within a very short time had arranged for one of the volunteers to do a shop for me. It was delivered an hour which is absolutely brilliant. I feel so much more at ease now knowing there is someone I can contact locally, even if I don't actually need to use them. I am of a self-reliant generation which doesn't take easily to asking people to do things for me but they were so nice and convinced me that if there was any help that I needed, I just had to ask.”

Torbex Community Council

“We are all still doing our day jobs, looking out for neighbours and of course taking care of our own families. It's uplifting to be thanked for such small tasks which clearly make such a difference.”

Partnership working with Start Up Stirling (Regeneration and Inclusive Growth)



Teams across Stirling Council have been working with Start Up Stirling, Stirling's Food Bank, to make sure that financially vulnerable households across the Council area can access support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Residents who contact the dedicated Community Support service and disclose that they are struggling financially are supported by the Advice and Welfare Reform Team. Working with the resident to undertake an income maximisation assessment this team can also make a referral for food support to Start Up Stirling. This approach provides a sustainable support system for families meeting the immediate food need while working towards longer term financial security.

Stirling Council has been able to partner with Start Up Stirling in a variety of ways allowing the charity to respond to a huge increase in referrals. The Albert Halls, with its large, open hall areas has provided a socially distanced and safe space for an ambient supplies goods store. Using the Council's supply chains has facilitated the purchase of £20,000 of essential supplies, supplementing the many donations the charity is still welcoming from local businesses and residents. Staff and volunteers have also been provided with hand sanitiser. Dedicating two vans and drivers on a daily basis means that every referral, including urgent cases, has been met within a day. This support from the Council has helped Start Up Stirling provide essential food supplies to over 1,100 families during March and April.



Stirling Council is delighted to work with the fantastic, hard-working team of staff and volunteers at Start Up Stirling who continue to do a tremendous job to support families experiencing financial hardship. Start Up Stirling is an invaluable partner in Stirling's response to lockdown working together to ensure those left most vulnerable in the crisis have the support they need.

Compassion During Crisis (Registration Service)

In reaction to emergency legislation set out by the Scottish Government on 26 March, [Stirling Council's Registration Service](#) has been operating its service remotely across a 7 day week to ensure prompt service to residents.



Weddings, civil partnerships and citizenship ceremonies can't take place at the moment, a source of real disappointment to many couples and their families. All those who should have been celebrating these occasions have been contacted and will be provided with

alternative dates and arrangements. The team keeps in touch with couples eagerly waiting to hear if restrictions might be relaxed in time for their big day. Many couples have been in touch to talk about how to rebuild carefully made plans, grateful that Registrars can keep them informed with updates from Scottish Government.

Due to the changes, new parents have been unable to register births registrations since the start of lockdown. This is a worrying time for new parents, concerned that their new-born hasn't been registered within the usual statutory time limits. Registrars have provided reassurance on the extension of deadlines for registrations, as well as practical advice on how to register the baby with their local GP surgery and apply for child benefit before the registration has been completed.

Of course, one the most distressing aspects of the COVID-19 crisis is how families dealing with bereavement are having to cope with the circumstances surrounding the death of their loved one. From the Registrars' point of view, everything possible is done to ease the situation for all those who contact the Service. The revised legislation has been implemented quickly and effectively working with NHS and Funeral Directors to ensure that no further worry or pain is added to the burden of families facing bereavement at this difficult time.

Despite challenging circumstances, working across Services and with partners the Registration Service has continued to deliver an exemplary service to Stirling's residents, with compassion and understanding.

