

ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY MEETING 5 NOVEMBER 2020

BRIEFING NOTE – BUSINESS WEEK 2020

1. This report provides an overview of Darlington Borough Council's Business Week 2020.
2. Darlington's Business Week provides a series of events to support, guide and help local businesses. The 2020 programme was focussed around supporting businesses recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. The 2020 schedule was an entirely virtual experience, brought together by the Business Investment Team.
3. Business Week consisted of 17 on-line activities, including the launch event with a keynote address from Tees Valley Mayor, Ben Houchen, information sessions, and a series of business development workshops. Business Week was also supported by networking events hosted by Darlington Business Club and Tees Valley Business Club.
4. Key partners involved in delivering Darlington Business Week 2020 were:-
 - (a) Tees Valley Business
 - (b) FW Capital
 - (c) Save the High Street
 - (d) Business Doctors
 - (e) Trident Manor
 - (f) Department for International Trade
 - (g) DigitalCity
 - (h) Darlington College
 - (i) HR2day
 - (j) Harvey & Hugo
 - (k) North East Chamber of Commerce
 - (l) Nepo
 - (m) Tedco
5. Business Week brings together this range of local companies, partners and business support organisations to provide free informative and engaging sessions to help local businesses build resilience, help recovery, and learn how to diversify and find new opportunities via new and existing customers.
6. In addition, there were also dedicated support sessions for those wishing to start their own business. There has been some good positive feedback from participants, many glad to be able to participate and engage in the programme of activities.
7. There were more than 250 registered sign-ups for the Business Week events, including 36 for the finance and funding event. Due to the virtual nature of the

events, it is difficult to state exact numbers who participated. There was some drop off for the events, both beforehand and during live web broadcasts.

8. One event (focussing on workforce skills development was cancelled due to low numbers of pre-registrations. However, those that had signed up for the event were contacted and provided one-to one advice and information.
9. As part of Business Week 2020, the council hosted its first ever virtual Jobs Fair, providing information and links on employment opportunities currently available in the Darlington area. The event was held entirely on-line as a Facebook live event, and provided details of more than 100 live vacancies, together with a range of training and volunteering opportunities. In addition, details of a number of measures to assist jobseekers with the support they need to progress were shared. Analysis shows that more than 75 people visited the event.
10. Business Week 2021 will commence on 4 October 2021.

Ian Williams
Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

Andrew Perkin
Ext 6308