

To all supporters of the Staffordshire economy

My Ref: PA / TK 185

Your Ref:

Date: 2 June 2020

Dear colleague

Staffordshire Means Thriving Start-Ups – our new entrepreneur programme

There is a silver-lining to the particularly dark cloud that is Covid-19.

Following the 2008 recession, Staffordshire saw a significant increase in the number of brand-new start-up businesses, and all the intelligence suggests that this may well happen again following the Covid-19 outbreak.

It is the case that sadly not all businesses will survive the pandemic, but what we can do is make sure that we are here for those entrepreneurial-minded individuals that need the push that Covid-19 gave them to set up for themselves.

The County Council's 'Staffordshire Start-Up Programme' is for those individuals and aims to help 200 new businesses set up each year for the next three years.

Delivered by the Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce on behalf of Staffordshire County Council, it is an online programme of support and mentoring about how to set up a business, but with a particular focus on being robust to any future crisis that may impact on the economy and business.

It is primarily targeted at those who have lost or at risk of losing their job because of Covid-19. It is also for those who recently set up their own business prior but could not make it work because of the outbreak. It is about how to be robust, future proof and tech-savvy, as much as it is about finding and entering the right market. It is about gaining confidence and spotting the early warning signs if anything like Covid-19 is on the horizon again and knowing how to overcome them. In this way it is highly complementary to the other types of business support that is already out there.

SMEs are the lifeblood of the Staffordshire economy, and this is just part of how we will help start-ups grab that silver lining. We would welcome your support in spreading the word to any entrepreneurs that your organisation may be aware of. The Growth Hub is now accepting applications for a July start. More information is available [here](#).

In terms of the wider picture, we are also liaising with the borough and district councils to help them with reopening high streets safely following their receipt of monies from the European Regional Development Fund from the government. We are here to support the districts with this important work; whether it is offering guidelines (on the fund itself, on safe erection of noticeboards or seating areas within the highway, for example) or working on bespoke solutions in localities, including highways operations.

With 15 June fast approaching, when we hope far more retail establishments will be able to open, we are pulling out all the stops to make sure that businesses have what they need to plan and reopen safely. The government has produced [updated guidance](#) for these businesses, including [prepared posters and social media content to display that they are Covid-19 secure and ready for business](#). We would welcome your support in promoting this and recommend that your own organisations consider using the [ready-made social media content](#) to help businesses get to the information they need.

Although there are many challenges to come, I do feel that we are starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel and am keen for our economy to restart to protect jobs and restore people's livelihoods, when of course it is safe to do so. There is no doubt that we will see many challenges ahead, and sadly some businesses will be lost, but the county will see a renewal and growth once again.

I will be introducing our Recovery and Renewal Strategy in my update to you next week; highlighting a roadmap to how Staffordshire will continue on its path to being one of the highest performing economies in the country. Our ambition for this has not changed. In fact, we are more determined than ever.

Until next week, stay safe.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Atkins', written in a cursive style.

Philip Atkins, OBE
Leader of the Council