

Report on	1. Mid Ulster District Council Traders Engagement
Date of Meeting	15 th April 2021
Reporting Officer	Head of Economic Development

Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below.
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>Mid Ulster District Council Traders Engagement A series of Trader engagements took place across the five towns within Mid Ulster. Led by the three Regeneration Managers the meetings were designed to provide an opportunity to our local Traders to discuss what further support and initiatives they would welcome from the Council over a 4 month period as they re-open after the lockdown</p>
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Mid Ulster District Council Traders Engagement Over the week commencing 7 March 2021 there were 10 Traders meetings across the five main towns within Mid Ulster. In each of the three main towns Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt 20 Traders were invited to the meetings and in Coalisland and Maghera, 10 traders were invited in each of these towns. Generally, the meetings were well received by the Traders. The overall feeling was positive and Traders are looking forward to shops opening up.</p> <p>There were many areas discussed and the issues of rates relief, grants for utilities or rent assistance were important and the Traders hoped that the Council would be lobbying these matters on their behalf at the highest level.</p> <p>Appendix 1 includes a table which summarises the traders comments from each town and details the name of businesses that contributed.</p> <p>Key points summarised across the 5 towns are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rates Holiday extended for 12 months, with a phasing in of rates thereafter. • All would like to see Council lobbying Government for further support measures.

- Click n Collect – would like to see this available for all businesses as some businesses felt the current arrangement is unfair, allowing only some businesses to provide this service.
- Financial Assistance towards
 - Utility Costs
 - Stock – assist with purchase of new stock and loss of old stock
 - Recovery Start Up Grant
- Substantial Investment for Town Centres such as in England - e.g. Future High Street Funds but not available in NI. Taskforce needs to extend membership to include rural independents & come forward with a substantial financial package for Town Centres.

Car Parking discussions are summarised as:

- Introduce a reduced car parking rate similar to Christmas for Dungannon and Magherafelt
- Do not provide all day free car parking in Dungannon and Magherafelt
- Maintain free car parking in Cookstown for foreseeable future
- Look to increase parking time to 2 hours for on Street car parking in the towns

Immediate Actions to be considered:

- Marketing and Promotion
 - Need a sustained social media video/promotional campaign for each of our five towns to support traders
 - Trader videos to be sustained over six months post lockdown and reflecting the needs of the towns
 - Influencer videos to be rolled out
 - Develop a Mid Ulster Gift Card which has the support of Traders
 - Focus on building business & customer confidence
 - Marketing needs to be town focused
 - Tourism now seen as a key ingredient going forward for towns
 - Need a sustained approach to marketing – not all at the start when businesses reopen.
 - The distinct characteristics of each town should be reflected in our support going forward
 - Regular music activity to happen in each town when it is safe to do so.
- Dereliction
 - Focus on dereliction and schemes to help such as LOTS scheme, Wraparound scheme, Empty to Occupied Scheme.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants Programmes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Research potential grants programmes as rolling programmes for assistance in recovery phase & targeting businesses whose shop front/internal layout needs updated. ○ Research potential extension to Covid Scheme to assist with businesses reopening • “Support Local” is a key message • Voucher Scheme proposed by NI Executive – needs to be spent locally.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial:
	Human: Mid Ulster District Council Traders Engagement Officers time
	Risk Management:
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
5.0	Recommendation(s)
	It is recommended that Members:-
5.1	Mid Ulster District Council Traders Engagement Note update report on officer engagement with a representative sample of Mid Ulster traders which details the initial types of support they require assistance with to re-open after lockdown.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	Appendix 1 – Traders Engagement Report and Consultees – March 2021