

An Update on our Business Associations Network



The Vibrant Economy Task Group was originally set up in 2014 to support the East Suffolk Partnership's vision around creating a vibrant business ecosystem by working with independent place-based business groups and organisations.

Over the last six years the group, which consists of representatives from local business groups, has helped officers within the Council's Economic Development Team shape a valuable and bespoke programme of support for micro and small businesses as well as the numerous business associations across East Suffolk. This has included tailored training, networking events and a grant programme which has provided close to £71,000 of funding through the successful Business Association Development Fund.

The group were about to launch another round of the fund when COVID-19 hit so they agreed to continue with the grant programme but include an additional theme to the criteria which was around 'supporting business groups to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak in mobilising support for their business community'. To date three applications have been approved to Bungay Business and Events Association, Felixstowe Chamber of Trade and the Framlingham Covid-19 Response Team.

In Bungay they wanted to make changes and updates to their current website to enhance the 'Welcome to Bungay' message for new businesses to the town as well as improve how local retailers and market traders were promoted.

In Felixstowe, the Chamber of Trade applied for funding to provide their members with a subscription to the zoom video conferencing tool along with an enhanced social media presence. Roger Abbott, Chair of the Chamber said; "Having access to zoom has enabled us to continue with our committee meetings as well as host a number of networking events whilst still providing that vital service for our members and wider business community. The Business Association Development Funding is also allowing us to boost our social media presence and acquire some training for members so that we can provide more sophisticated video conferencing meetings and webinars. This will help our members adapt to the "new normal" conditions as small and large local businesses start re-opening and seek new ways to attract customers and trade. We have also been using Zoom to arrange virtual networking for all Chamber members and these are proving popular, with growing attendance and participation".

In Framlingham, the application was from the Covid-19 Response Team which is made up of the Town Council, HOUR Community and Framlingham Business Association. Eileen Coe, Clerk of the Town Council said; "We were extremely fortunate that we were able to secure £1,700 from the East Suffolk Business Association Development Fund to help pay for the signs, hand sanitisers and extra work to our www.framlingham.com website which has all

the up to date town and business information on as well as our Fram Home but not Alone newsletter. We have been very fortunate that our regular Market traders have been able to continue providing a much needed service to residents and whilst the Market traders all have hand sanitisers, it was agreed that the next step should be to provide hand sanitisers for the public to use around the market area.



*Framlingham Market Supervisor and Fishmonger
Darren Smith using the newly installed hand sanitiser*

The Business Association Fund is still open for applications, to view the guidance and application form please refer to <https://eastsuffolkmeansbusiness.co.uk/business-support/resources/business-associations-and-networks/>

If you have any questions on the eligibility criteria or application form, please email vibranteconomy@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

Economic Development Team June 2020.