

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 20 MAY 2021

**Question to Philip White
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills**

By Cllr Hussain

Question

Because of personal circumstances, many residents in the county slipped away from the COVID economic safety net, very often we hear their financial hardship experiences, what will the council do to assist them?

Reply

At the time of any significant global economic shock which results in a recession there will unfortunately be parts of the labour force which will be disproportionately impacted through the loss of work or pay. Beyond the extensive Government business and job support that has been put in place such as the furlough scheme, self-employment income support and the Government relaxing the criteria for Universal Credit, so that those that have lost earnings as well as people out of work can now claim locally, the County Council have put in place an extensive COVID-recovery, renewal and transformation strategy, Staffordshire Means Back to Business.

To aid local businesses with their recovery and transformation as we move beyond the crisis there are an extensive range of business loans e.g. The three-year Staffordshire Business Loan Fund will provide loans from £10,000 to £150,000 to companies across a range of sectors.

The £5.4m Staffordshire Means Back to Business Support Scheme provides further support and incentives to help businesses and the workforce and includes:

- Small Business to Thrive Financial Support Grants of between £2,000 and £5,000, and support schemes.
- Incentives of £5,000 to businesses to recruit, retrain and train apprentices
- Free Training Top Up for Employers with grants of up to £5,000 for businesses to help quickly adapt business models to become more viable and sustainable

Residents that are looking for work can access a wide range of new COVID-19 response and recovery interventions such as the Countywide Redundancy and Recruitment Triage Service to support residents back into work, the local delivery of the Government's Kickstart scheme to support young people into work and the Government's Restart scheme to help local unemployed residents that have lost work in hardest hit sectors to reskill and upskill into growth sectors such as digital

and the green economy. The Redundancy Triage Service has supported over 1,600 people with a positive progression to jobs and further training of 29% so far.

Be assured the Council will not stop working to find ways to support our communities. The County Council recently made its own submission to central governments Community Renewal Fund to deliver new and more ways to support citizens. But it does not end there, it is also looking at further ways that it can continue to support as many people and businesses as possible now and into the future.