

# Business Recovery Plan Update and Cost of Living

# Business Recovery Plan – Update of successful projects

1. **The Economic Recovery Fund** – first year of activity £2 million allocated with 15 district centre projects.
2. **Summer in the Outdoor City visitor campaign** – 2021 summer events
3. **Low carbon business support project** – 78 out of 135 SY businesses receiving support – audits and grants
4. **A new more dynamic Welcome to Sheffield website** – up to 60% increase in traffic
5. **Supporting the city’s local high street independents** – continuation of Business Information Officers on all our high streets.
6. **Helping to stimulate more start ups in the city**
  - Launchpad – SY start up and early stage business support
  - Active partner in the Sheffield Incubation and Acceleration Network –
  - Team South Yorkshire – delivered new accelerator programmes
  - New Tech Welcome – funded through SYMCA to entice new tech businesses into SY grants for first 12 months
7. **Freelancer Fund through The Sheffield Culture Consortium** - £297k of funding to a sector not supported through other funds.

## Cost of Living – data and anecdotal feedback

1. **City Centre Footfall improved but not at pre pandemic levels** – Week 44 2022 was 287,679 – the same week in 2019 was 321,876. Improved from last year but not at pre-pandemic levels. Total visitors for 2022 to date is 36.7% up on 2021.
2. **No of new businesses opening is down 8%, whilst business closures are up 14%** for same period last year.
3. **Increase in Health and Safety notices and closures for imminent risk served by SCC** – issues include non compliance with maintenance issues lack of running water.
4. **Sharp rise in energy costs and cost of supplies** - Recent budget statement leaves even more uncertainty
5. Anecdotally more high street businesses are up for sale or considering it post Christmas and opening hours reduced

## What we are doing to help – Business Workstream CoL

- **Support from Information Officers** – 40 high streets/19 precincts
  - Helping businesses understand energy prices and bills
  - Finding ways to save and make more money
  - Working through Council processes and referrals to other services – waste, planning, business rates, environmental health, employability and skills
  - Resolving issues with cashflow
  - Supporting to close safely where necessary
- **Communication is key**
  - Disseminate advice widely supported by Chamber and Bid
  - Postcards and resources delivered by teams, website and video campaign
  - Translated into nine languages

# Postcard advertising business support services

**Our business support team is here to help with cost of living challenges!**



**We know the cost of living is making things difficult for businesses right now.**

**Business Sheffield exists to help businesses across the city succeed.**

**Our friendly, expert team can give you free in-depth, one-to-one support on things like:**

- Getting your head round energy prices, bills and contracts
- Finding ways to save and make more money in your business
- Working through Council processes
- Understanding support from the government
- Resolving issues with cashflow

**If you'd like help with anything to do with your business, call us on 0114 224 5000 or email [businesssheffield@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:businesssheffield@sheffield.gov.uk)**

Visit our website for guides to help you manage the impact of the cost of living on your business  
[www.sheffield.gov.uk/costofliving](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/costofliving)

[www.welcometosheffield.co.uk/business](http://www.welcometosheffield.co.uk/business)

# Five resource sheets for businesses



## Energy suppliers, contracts & bills

We know energy bills, and worries about whether you're getting the best deal, are putting lots of extra pressure on businesses right now.

This sheet will help you navigate the process of switching energy contracts; know what to do during energy sales calls; and look out for extra money you could be paying on your bill.



### Is it the right time to change your supplier?

Before trying to change your supplier, it's important to make sure you can end your current contract. Many business supply contracts are fixed term, and businesses should be confident that they are able to move to a new supplier before committing to a change.

Before you decide to change your supplier:

- Explore measures you could take to reduce your demand for energy supply
- Make sure you understand your current contract rates and terms, as well as the implications of moving to a new supplier - and whether you can break any existing contract.
- You should also be aware of how to spot fraudulent or rogue utility companies and brokers.



### Energy sales calls and careful contracting

If you get a cold call from an energy company:

- Don't agree to anything you haven't got in writing or had time to think through.
- Don't say 'yes' at any point - even that could be taken as an agreement to enter a contract, and could be upheld legally. Almost no suppliers provide for a cooling-off period in which a contract may be cancelled.
- Don't give your name, business name or address.
- Do hang up and research what they're selling yourself if you're interested. Read all information and contracts carefully and work out the benefits and any hidden risks.
- Do get advice from someone you trust if you're not sure.

Remember, someone who really wants to help you won't confuse you, get annoyed or put pressure on you. Be aware that fraudsters may impersonate Ofgem, or pretend to be supplying a government rebate/grant.



- Read your current and new contracts carefully - and take note of the termination clauses. You may be required to give very long notice of a change (often ninety days). If you don't, you may be 'rolled over'.
- Energy companies are required to give you notice when a contract is due for renewal, but not all contracts make this clear. Be aware, be prepared and make a note of the renewal date in advance.
- Your bill will have a QR code on it. This code contains all the information you would need to compare and switch energy tariffs, including supplier name, tariff name and your annual usage, making it easier to find a better supplier.

If you'd like help understanding bills or contracts, call Business Sheffield on 0114 224 5000 or email [business@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:business@sheffield.gov.uk)



### Paying your bill

- It is not uncommon for energy suppliers to send additional bills to customers in an effort to get back money lost due to their own internal system errors. These mistakes go unnoticed as customers rarely read their electricity bills. If you do not understand your bill, ring Customer Service at your supplier.
- Check your own meter readings regularly, even if you have a Smart Meter (they can make mistakes).

Check you're being billed for the right meter

- Are all the meters in your premises your meters? You may be paying for somebody else's energy if you are in an older building!
- Check all your meters for their 'meter reference number' - then check your energy bills (or your annual statement) for the same 'meter reference numbers' and immediately tell your energy supplier if they don't match.

Make sure you cancel your energy supply if you move

- If you have moved premises, make sure you have contacted your energy suppliers, or you may still be paying for your previous address.

If you're worried about paying your bill, contact your supplier before you miss a payment.

Often, suppliers can help you manage the payment, for example by making a payment plan. This is much more likely to be possible if you haven't already missed a payment.



## Saving energy for food businesses

There are lots of ways you can reorganise things in your food business to save energy, while keeping yourselves and customers safe.

This guide will help you think through what could work for your business, identify any risks and ensure you avoid them.



## Saving energy in your business

There are lots of ways you can reorganise things in your business to save energy, while keeping yourselves and customers safe.

This guide will help you think through what could work for your business, identify any risks and ensure you avoid them.



## Taking control of costs & income

In these extraordinary times, going back to basics and reviewing your income, outgoings and business model can help you to find a way through.

This guide will help you get to grips with your cashflow; understand what each product costs and brings in; and think through whether the concept behind your business still serves you in the current climate.



## Support with bills

This sheet lists some of the support available for bills in your business, and how it works.





# DON'T BE AFRAID TO PIVOT YOUR BUSINESS

**Esther Morrison looks at how going back to basics and getting creative with your concept could help you weather tough times**

Part of owning a business is being agile and prepared to make creative changes to cope with shifts in the market. Visiting high street businesses across the city as a Business Information Officer, I see how brilliant Sheffield businesses are at this. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic I've seen lots of businesses making exciting and brave decisions to adapt to changing consumer habits and keep themselves going. The rising cost of living is asking even more of you and you may feel there's probably little left to gain by pivoting your business. To refresh your thinking and find a new direction in these difficult times, can I suggest going back to basics?

If you're a business struggling with the impacts of the cost of living, one of the first things I'd suggest you do is to recalculate the gross margins of every product that you sell. Subtract the cost of making or buying the item from its selling price, to work out how much you're making from it. Don't forget your energy costs as well as your staff costs.

At the same time, track your sales to confirm how much of each item you sell. In lean times, it may help to focus your business on those products that are making you the most money or are really helping you get people through the door. Items with low margins and low sales could be paused for now, stored if they're not seasonal or sold online to make more space in your premises.

This is a good jumping-off point to consider the concept behind your business and whether it's serving you right now. Customers' priorities are changing radically as they make tough decisions about how to spend their money and a concept that would have made them choose you a year ago may not sway them now. Are you willing



to modify your concept to keep your margins at a level where you can pay your salaries and bills? For instance, you might be a restaurant with a great selection on your a la carte menu – but right now, you might find a fixed-price set menu helps you avoid waste and your customers know in advance what they'll be spending with you.

Your customers are a vital asset when thinking about your concept. Customer motivation may not be the same as your personal motivation and could be very different even from six months ago: understanding this could improve your bottom line. While they're in your business, chat to them about why they like shopping with you.

For instance, let's say you run a refill shop with lots of ethically sourced products. If you find out that your customers are more motivated by a desire to reduce

food and plastic waste, you could modify your marketing to highlight that element of your offer. It's all about matching your message to your customer's internal messaging.

My colleagues and I have been in business for a long time, seen some very tough times and we know things are especially hard right now. If you're feeling drained at the prospect of pivoting your business yet again, and struggling for ideas, that's okay – you're not on your own. Find ways to talk to other business owners in your sector or on your high street – it's easier to be creative with someone to bounce ideas off, and you might find ways of making things better for all of you.

**Our team's also here to give free support with any challenges you might be facing in your business. Call us on 0114 224 5000 or email [businesssheffield@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:businesssheffield@sheffield.gov.uk)**

## Cost of Living - Support for other sectors

- **6 Growth Advisors** – 4 funded from SYMCA Recovery Action Plan monies for critical 1-2-1 support
- **2 Tech-Scale Up Advisors** – supporting tech starts and scale ups to access equity investment - £15 million and counting
- **Productivity grants** – 103 Sheffield SME's (307 SY) successful projects, 161 jobs created
- **Digital grants** – updating digital systems and processes. Supported 99 out of 196 SY SME's to successfully apply.
- **Low Carbon audits and grants** – inundated since its inception. 1-2-1 specialist support, free energy audits and grants towards project costs. 78 of 135 businesses supported are Sheffield businesses.



## Business Recovery Group – wider sector representation Alexis Krachai, Chair, Business Response Group

1. Recent budget statement leaves businesses in even more uncertainty
2. Other businesses likely to be affected by rise in energy costs and no continuation of support
3. Businesses and organisations continue to speak to Government
4. Business Response Group has a role to play – Work with Chamber, CBI and FSB to feed into Government the impact on our local business base
5. Share and jointly brand and disseminate comms messages with Chamber and other partners on myth busting and support for businesses

# Future Funding Priorities for Business Support

1. ERDF and other funding sources end June 2023
2. SPF for business support £14 million
3. Progress report on local business support identified 3 key areas –
  - Providing a broad and inclusive “total business support” offer
  - Stimulating enterprise and growth
  - Accelerating r and d and innovation
4. Government announcement – imminent
5. Funding available in 2 phases:
  - **Phase 1** – Fully costed **LOCAL** proposal submitted to SYMCA to fund Business Information Officers. Enable ERF funding to continue activity into Year 2. We await outcome.
  - **Phase 2** – Progressing at **REGIONAL** level and developed with partner organisations including South Yorkshire local authorities, SYMCA and both Universities
    - Identify regional priorities, encourage collaboration, cut duplication, whilst still allowing for local priorities and nuances
    - Not just SPF but gainshare and future Innovate UK rounds

# Business Support Regional Priorities and regional leads for programme development

1. Launchpad and early stage support – Barnsley
2. Productivity and Digital grants for business – Barnsley
3. Specialist Advisor (based on RAP Advisor activity) – Sheffield
4. Low Carbon – Sheffield
5. Innovation – Hallam University
6. Intrepreneurship and entrepreneurship – Hallam University
7. Incubation/coworking – SYMCA
8. Supply Chain and Internationalisation – SYMCA
9. Skills linkages – Doncaster
10. Finance – SYMCA

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# Race Equality Commission – progress so far. Sheffield City Council and Sheffield Chamber

Agenda Item 10



## Since the REC Hearing – progress so far

1. Continuation of support on the high street
2. Bringing together business facing services of the Council – Cost of Living response good example
3. **Communication** and case studies that resonate with the business audience – Chamber, SCC and the Bid
4. **Widening our engagement with BAME businesses** – utilising this new business base as critical friends –
5. Taking our support from a centric model to one that meets people where they are
6. **Support and challenge** - our regional partners in future delivery of business support
7. **Accessing investment** – Lloyds Bank, Supporting black owned businesses, Chamber – British Business Bank start up loans targeted at BAME businesses





# United Women's Affiliation Group



1. New to Sheffield – now over 70 members
2. Listen first, build rapport then support
3. Accessing relevant courses and developing their business ideas through 1-2-1 support, counselling and therapy courses, digital and English language support
4. Informing future business support



## Chamber – Council development

Build a Council which is inclusive and representative of the business base.

Chamber Council is representative body of the membership. Sheffield Chamber has modified its recruitment process so it is more inclusive and diverse to:

- better represent a wide range of business sectors in the city
- include more individuals that are representative of our community as a whole

Latest intake of 8 people to council there are a further 2 people of colour adding to our existing more diverse membership.

Council is a progression to our Board so this is a first step towards a more inclusive and diverse board of Directors.

Choosing venues for all events that are more inclusive and accessible.



## Build a future Advisory Business Board

1. Meets the overarching aim of the REC that Governing Bodies and city partnerships increase diversity and reflects the diversity of our business base.
2. Propose alongside the BRG, Sheffield Chamber that we develop a new Sheffield Business Board – advisory capacity
3. It will be representative
4. Inform how businesses access and engage with other business facing services within the Council
5. Shape future business support proposals
6. Timescales – to report back to the February Committee with a clear Terms of Reference and suggested Membership



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