

Formal Council Questions and Responses

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1 **Question to the Leader of the Council : 2024/06 - Additional Support in hospitality sector**

Councillor Fouweather asked:

At the last council meeting the council announced that it would be extending the rate relief for hospitality businesses in the city centre.

You will recall that I supported this initiative but stated that I would be monitoring the success of the project.

In the past month three hospitality businesses have closed in the city centre two of them stating that the city centre is just not viable.

Clearly the help offered by the council is not enough and more needs to be done to help struggling businesses survive in order to keep the city centre vibrant and prosperous.

With these recent closures in mind can the cabinet member tell me what can be done in addition to the rate relief scheme to help the hospitality sector in the city centre?

Councillor Mudd responded:

All City Centre businesses are entitled to apply for funding which has been well publicised. There is currently the business rates relief available for all eligible hospitality, retail and leisure businesses and over £540,000 of rates relief was applied in 2022/23, and £637,000 in 2023/24. This is in addition to financial support for new start up businesses and growing businesses through the City of Newport Business Fund. Additional funding for viable businesses is available via the Accelerated Growth Grant, but ultimately the viability of a business fundamentally depends on the business offer and the number of people using it. There is business advice and support available from a number of organisations, not just the Council, however we have engaged Welsh ICE to enhance the advice and support we are able to provide to businesses.

The Council also hosts and supports a growing number of successful events in the City Centre, the most recent being the Lunar New Year celebration which saw huge numbers of people lining the streets and using local businesses. The Newport Wales Marathon at the end of the month is the next large event to take place in the city centre and we have also announced that the Food Festival will continue as a 3 day event this year. This event allows our hospitality businesses to showcase and promote their offer. We have also delivered a new What's On webpage which has been very positively received with lots of businesses and groups advertising and promoting their events. Since November there have been over 4000 'hits' on the webpage.

As you are aware the Council is also committed to encouraging additional non-retail uses into the city centre in order to boost footfall and support all of our businesses. As an

example, the proposed new leisure and wellbeing centre and the Coleg Gwent City Centre campus will significantly increase leisure and learning footfall and result in more local spend.