

Let's Talk Business: South Cambridgeshire IWM Duxford 16 March 2018

Summary of outcomes and Q&A



Workshop Session

At the end of the event we collated all of the sheets that were completed during the workshop session and from the feedback forms we received. Summaries of the key barriers identified and the areas for further support are listed below.

Barriers

- the timing, processes and costs of public sector tendering
- difficulties in accessing the supply chains of bigger businesses in the area
- costs caused to businesses by transport infrastructure and congestion
- the availability of affordable housing and of skilled workers
- access to finance
- the availability of affordable employment land and premises with car parking

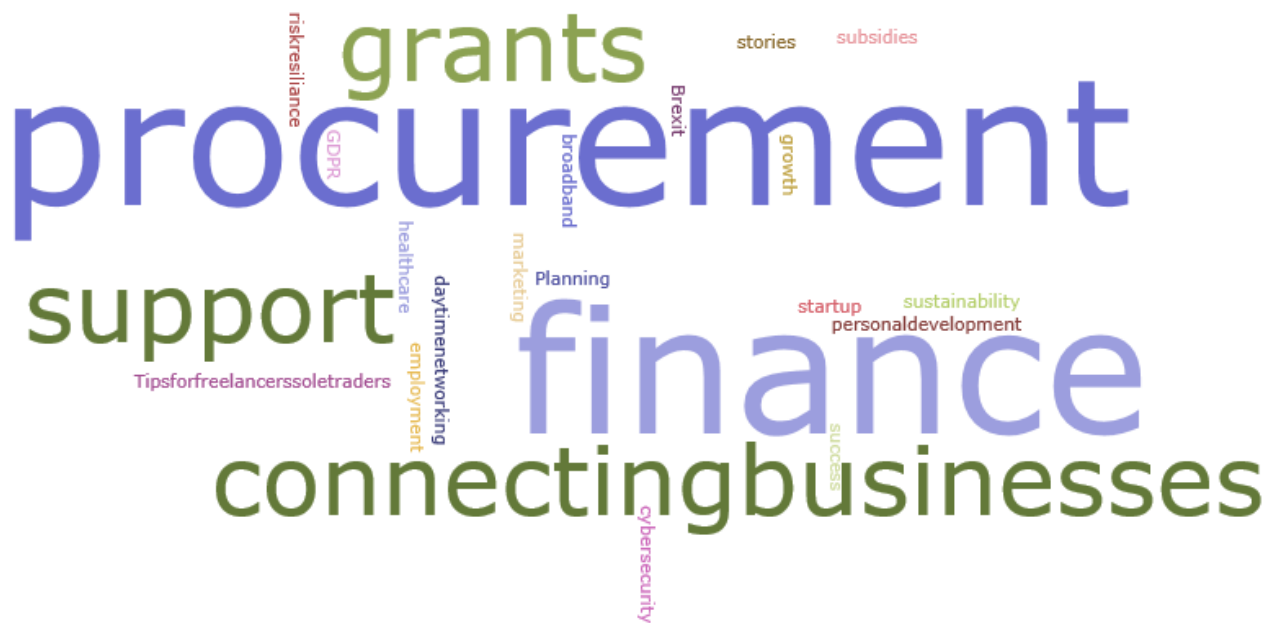
Opportunities for further support

- advice and funding for start-ups, micro, SME and growing businesses
- improved transport planning and public transport
- finding sites and premises including non-tech offices and hot desking
- the provision of more affordable housing
- provision of infrastructure and incentives for home working
- connecting small companies with bigger businesses
- communicating opportunities and promoting networking
- business rate reliefs
- skills support for management and employees



Suggestions for future business workshops

In the feedback forms we ask the business that attended what topics you would like any business workshops to cover. We thought that a word cloud would be an interesting way to display your responses.



Q&A

We received a range of questions on the day of the event and on the feedback forms that we circulated. We thought that it would be useful to share the answers with everyone who attended.

Procurement

What proportion of businesses that have contracts with the council are from the local area?

We have analysed the top 20 suppliers (in value) and 44% of those contracts are being provided by Cambridgeshire based companies.

As our Procurement Officer outlined at the meeting, there will be a number of factors impacting on this figure, including the fact that many of our contracts cannot be provided by local suppliers, for example, the purchase of Refuse Collection Vehicles.

It is also worth mentioning that for the other contracts, although UK based companies have been awarded the contract, many of the companies hire localised sub contractors or local based staff in support of those contracts and often they use local suppliers for materials. This provides value in jobs and employment to the local economy.

We are working to encourage local suppliers to bid for the Council's contracts. We held an event in January to help business to understand the South Cambridgeshire District Council procurement process and we also recently included an article 'Local firms urged to bid for contracts' in the spring edition of the South Cambs magazine which goes to all households in South Cambridgeshire.

We would recommend that businesses interesting in supplying the council register for our electronic portal <https://procontract.due-north.com/Login> and the Government's portal www.gov.uk/contracts-finder (both are free of charge).

Can local businesses be prioritised?

The Council is keen to encourage local businesses to tender for its contracts, either independently or as part of a supply chain or consortium. However, we cannot prioritise local companies, but we will do everything we can to help business understand and navigate the tender process.



Does South Cambridgeshire District run tendering courses?

From time to time, the council runs events on supplying to the council – our last one was in January 2018. If you would like a tendering course, please email us on openforbusiness@scams.gov.uk.

You can find out what contracts are out to tender on the LGSS website www.lgssprocurementportal.co.uk/. Click “current opportunities”.

Start-up support

Is there a special interest group for start-ups?

NWES, www.nwes.org.uk/start-your-business/, offers free support to people who want to start a business in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

There is also a lot of information on the support available to people who want to start a business on our website www.scams.gov.uk/content/starting-a-business.

We have a list of business networks on our website (www.scams.gov.uk/content/business-networking) although they are not specifically for start-up businesses. You could also search on Facebook, Meetup and Eventbrite - there's a lot happening in the Cambridgeshire area, so try a few groups and see which ones work best for you.

Micro and small business support

What is being done to help support micro and small businesses?

Signpost2grow (<http://signpost2grow.co.uk/>) can help you to navigate the wealth of support and advice for all businesses, including micro and small businesses, available in the area. You could also have a look at our webpages which provide information on the support available for both start-up and growing businesses www.scams.gov.uk/services/business-support.

Is there support or advice for applications for funding?

The Council does not provide this support, but others do – have a look at our new web pages www.scams.gov.uk/services/business-support.



Mentoring

What support is available to support mentoring?

MentorsMe www.mentorsme.co.uk/ is a national initiative that connects mentors and people who want to be mentored.

Funding

What funds are available for early stage tech companies?

If you take a look at our Grants and funding webpages you may find loans or grants you could apply for, although we don't list anything specific for tech start-ups www.scams.gov.uk/content/grants-and-funding.

You could also contact both Signpost2grow and Innovate UK www.gov.uk/government/organisations/innovate-uk/about who will have information on the wide variety of sources of support that are available within the South Cambridgeshire area.

What R&D funds are available?

Our new webpages have a specific section on research and development funding within our Grants and funding webpage www.scams.gov.uk/content/grants-and-funding.

Land and premises

What land is available for offices?

South Cambridgeshire currently has three Enterprise Zones that have land available at Cambourne Business Park, Cambridge Research Park and Northstowe. We're looking to develop our offer and will publicise new opportunities as and when they become available www.scams.gov.uk/content/enterprise-zones.

You can find other land through the Estates Gazette Property Link <https://propertylink.estatesgazette.com/>, or other commercial property websites.

