

Appendix B

Food and Drink directory

In April this year the Council facilitated the creation of a Food and Drink directory to promote businesses / organisations that were operating during the Covid 19 lockdown period. The directory was successful with over 100 businesses being included and fulfilled 3 key short term aspirations:

1. To serve our local communities by providing local alternatives to acquiring essential items
2. To support local businesses during a difficult period
3. To alleviate pressures from supermarkets and to minimise the risk of not being able to social distance when shopping

We are aware of the strengths that the food and drink sector provides to the South Somerset economy, not just in the case of employment but in contributing to our visitor economy through providing local attractions with local food and drink and by creating a unique selling point for the area.

Upon producing the Food and Drink directory the Economic Development Team agreed to lead a further piece of work to seek additional benefits including:

- A strengthened food and drink sector within South Somerset
- The creation of new supply chain opportunities for local producers
- A reduction in food miles, leading to environmental benefits
- A reduction in the use of supermarket visits, leading to a reduction in travel and environmental benefits
- Some research states that local food is of a better quality and holds higher nutritional values which will lead to health benefits for local residents

We are requesting £2,000 of funding from each Area to continue this piece of work to a greater extent. It should be noted that we hope each Area will contribute to establish better value for money and a combined offer for South Somerset however for this reason we do require approval from each Area. Activity is likely to include:

- Re-visiting the directory and using a proportion of the funding to enhance it, promote it further and develop a more robust communication strategy
- To target certain sectors to seek additional businesses to include within the directory – these will be based on recommendations from the tourism team so it aligns with enhancing our visitor economy
- To establish a web presence and to make the directory more interactive (for example an online map)

Supporting the food and drink sector features in the Council's Economic Development Strategy as an 'Elected Member Priority' as well as being a key element of the Economy Covid 19 Recovery Strategy. In terms of an Area Priority, this will contribute to the Economy Priority of *"to continue to support key businesses including work with the Chamber of Commerce and other partners"*.

Joe Walsh, Specialist Economic Development will attend committee to answer any questions you may have.