



Business Survey – Cam, Dursley and Surrounds

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 1.1** The Cam, Dursley and Surrounds (“C&D”) business survey has been prepared in order to provide an up-to-date baseline of the current local business “demographics” against which future local economic development can be assessed, help identify any local business support needs and to assess the potential value of local business support.
- 1.2** The report has drawn its analysis from responses both to an online Business Survey but also to a wide range of publicly available data sources. By combining these sources the resultant analysis is as robust as possible and includes a local business database with over 1,200 lines of data.
- 1.3** There are in excess of 800 business in C&D, but only a third operate from what would typically be considered business premises – workshops, warehouses, shops, offices etc and around 56% have a single employee, many of whom work from home.
- 1.4** Historically, when considering local business needs, the focus has typically been on the adequacy of the provision of suitable premises for “traditional” businesses. The changing nature of business, accelerated by COVID-19, means that this is arguably of declining importance.
- 1.5** Despite the regular business “churn” (i.e. start-ups replacing closures), demand for retail and office space would appear to be in decline with reasonable availability of vacant premises in C&D. Demand for smaller industrial units remains relatively strong, with demand from start-ups but also from those working from home who have outgrown their spare bedroom/garage.
- 1.6** C&D can be characterised as having a relatively large number of professional, scientific, IT type service companies and, notwithstanding the closure of much of its large manufacturers in recent years, continues to see a greater proportion of manufacturing than the UK average.
- 1.7** The local employee market is a little older than the UK as a whole but better qualified; C&D has proportionately more residents with a Level 2 qualification and above than the national average (69% vs 59%). Larger employers highlighted the challenges in finding staff, which is not unsurprising in that national data suggests Stroud has one of the lowest proportion of jobseekers across local authorities in England.
- 1.8** 54 responses were received from the online Business Survey, and aside from companies with more than 50 employees, the demographics of respondents were broadly in line with other data relating to businesses in C&D.



- 1.9** The Business Survey responses highlighted that, despite their generally small scale, nearly half of respondents served markets outside the South West region and despite concerns around cost pressures and potentially weak customer demand (due to economic uncertainties), most were doing financially ok.
- 1.10** What emerged from the responses was that most businesses in C&D had a strong personal link to the local area and had a need for greater local business support, particularly around sales and marketing. Whilst caution is needed in interpreting the data (Business Survey respondents may have completed the survey in part to benefit their own business), this is consistent with the relatively limited local professional advice available for a community as big as C&D.
- 1.11** The preparation of this report has highlighted several key themes relevant to The Engine Hub CIC and its strategic objectives:
- (a) Supporting and connecting local businesses to help them thrive and grow;
Recommendation: *Whilst there appears to be interest in an informal business forum for C&D, such a forum would need to be of value to local businesses. This is best achieved through combining the opportunity to learn with an opportunity to network. The Engine Hub CIC to arrange a trial series of lunches based on developing marketing skills whilst providing the opportunity to meet other businesses over an informal lunch. If a success, informal research will provide input for subsequent topics.*
 - (b) Providing education and training so as to give local businesses and residents the opportunity to gain skills, develop opportunities and be inspired;
Recommendation: *The Engine Hub CIC to continue to actively develop links with local education establishments and provide advice and support to businesses including through the provision of the Team Radar.*
 - (c) Providing leadership and mentoring opportunities through developing successful local social enterprises.
Recommendation: *The survey did not identify any specific needs but The Engine is continuing to seek suitable opportunities alongside the Escape Room through developing community owned businesses that benefit our locality.*