London Borough of Hillingdon
Retail Revival Evaluation Report

**Summary evaluation report for Residents' Services Select Committee
June 2023**

1. Executive Summary

1.1.   The Welcome Back Fund was allocated to councils across England from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to support the safe return to high streets. The fund allowed authorities to put in place additional measures to create and promote a safe environment for local trade and tourism, particularly in high streets as their economies reopened.

1.2.   As part of the Hillingdon Welcome Back Programme, Retail Revival was awarded a contract from August 2021 until March 2022 to provide specialist town centre expertise to support small independent businesses within town centres and local parades across Hillingdon.

1.3.   The scope of this programme was to support the businesses in reopening safely and attracting visitors and residents back to enjoying spending time and money in the town centres and local parades. The scope included:
- Organising a promotional event for each of the nine minor and local town centres between August 2021 up to February 2022
- Organising up to two promotional events within Uxbridge and the five district centres between August 2021 up to February 2022
- Delivering a Visual Merchandising programme to improve the appearance of shop fronts and provide a welcome across the town centres and parades
- Digital High Streets training to help small independent businesses across the town centres and parades adapt to on-line retail and encourage the increased use of film and social media to help businesses with more effective marketing.
- Temporary 'pop-up' use and/or screening of prominent empty shops and spaces within the town centres

1.4.   The focus for Retail Revival led activity area was:
- 1 x Metropolitan Centre: Uxbridge Town Centre
- 5 x District Centres: Hayes Town Centre, Yiewsley & West Drayton, Ruislip, ,Eastcote, Northwood
- 3 x Minor Centres: Ruislip Manor, Northwood Hills, Uxbridge Road, Hayes
- 6 x Local centres: Ickenham, Harefield Village, Harlington, Hillingdon Circus, Kingshill Avenue and Ryefield Avenue

1.5.   The project outputs achieved were:

Business confidence survey	100 Responses
Vacant shops survey	2 Surveys
Residents' survey	360 Responses
Business engagement	180 Businesses Visits
Stakeholder engagement	27 Stakeholders
Welcome Back events	21 Events
Visual merchandising support	63 Businesses
Digital high street training	131 Delegates
Pop up shop activation	1 Shop Activated
Increased footfall	16,400 Visitors
Businesses participating in events	333 Businesses

2. Background

2.1. The Welcome Back Fund was allocated to councils across England from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to support the safe return to high. The fund allowed authorities to put in place additional measures to create and promote a safe environment for local trade and tourism, particularly in high streets as their economies reopen.

2.2. Following ERDF guidance, a European Regional Development Fund compliant tender was published 5 May 2021 for returns by 4 June 2021 including a specific lot for:

Specialist Retail/Town Centre expertise to support small independent businesses within town centres and local parades. Scope of services to include:
- Organising a promotional event for each of the nine minor and local town centres between August 2021 up to February 2022;
- Organising up to two promotional events within Uxbridge and the five district centres between August 2021 up to February 2022;
- Digital marketing training to help small independent businesses across the town centres and parades adapt to on-line retail and encouraging the increased use of film and social media to help businesses with more effective marketing.

2.3. The 15 town centres and local parades which were the focus for activity were Uxbridge, Ruislip, Ruislip Manor, Ickenham, Eastcote, Northwood, Northwood Hills, Yiewsley and West Drayton, Hayes, Harlington, Uxbridge Road, Harefield, Kingshill Avenue, Ryefield Avenue and Hillingdon Circus.

2.4. From tendering, Retail Revival were successful in winning the commission. This report describes the activities undertaken and the programme outputs and outcomes achieved.

3. Development Phase

3.1. During the development phase of the project Retail Revival researched local need and gathered baseline data with which to manage the success of the interventions. The results of the surveys and the engagement activities also informed the content and design of the Welcome Back Programme.

3.2. The following project activities were completed in August and September 2021:
- Business Confidence Survey
- Shopper Confidence Survey
- Vacant shops audit
- Stakeholder engagement meetings
- Business engagement meetings

4. Business Resilience Survey (Aug-Sep 2021)

4.1. During August and September 2021 initial face-to-face contact with businesses, BID managers and Chambers of Commerce representatives in the town centre priority areas, enabled the Retail Revival project team members to meet potential beneficiaries, introduce the objectives of the programme and build trust.

4.2. A business card was designed and printed to support business research and engagement. This was distributed during unannounced personal visits to over 500 businesses from

across the borough and it included a QR code to help businesses complete an online business resilience survey. 100 respondents completed the survey which comprised 10 questions, the responses described the effects of Covid-19 on local businesses and listed their business recovery needs. The results of the survey were used to design the 'Hillingdon Welcome Back Programme' so that the support could be tailored appropriately.

4.3. The results of the business resilience survey are provided in appendix 1, the headline findings included:

- 42% respondents said their business was established and thriving before Covid-19
- 61% respondents said that since Covid-19, their business was running at a reduced or compromised operation
- 10% said their business was now at a critical level
- 91% respondents said there was demand for their products
- 99% respondents had accessed some government business support; 61% took advice on how to open their business safely, 55% received some grant funding and 41% had used the coronavirus job retention scheme (furlough).
- When asked how they had adapted their business in the light of Covid-19, 48% of respondents said that they had not adapted their business at all
- 27% had increased their use of social media for business
- 16% had started to sell new services or products
- 11% started a delivery service
- 5% developed a new online shop
- When asked how well prepared they were for future lockdowns or restrictions due to pandemics, 20% of respondents said they would not be at all adversely affected, 33% said they would not survive and 44% said they had some measures in place to cope with future restrictions but that they would still be negatively affected.
- When asked about future support 72% of respondents said further grant funding would help them, 66% wanted events or activities to increase footfall by bringing people back to the high street and 36% wanted support to help them promote their business online.

5. Shopper's Survey

5.1. A shopper's survey was designed and hosted on Survey Monkey, an online survey platform during September 2021. Researchers based across the borough invited shoppers to complete the survey, either face-to-face or online. Shoppers who were unable to spend time with the researcher were provided with a card with a QR code link to the survey for them to complete in their own time.

5.2. 363 Responses to the survey were received. The full results of the shopper's survey are provided in appendix 2. Shoppers were beginning to return to the high street after Covid-19 and were becoming more confident about using town centres for entertainment, to shop, eat and drink in cafes and use other services.

5.3. The results identified changes to shopping habits; 46% of respondents said they would use the Internet for shopping more than they did before Covid-19 and 36% said they would visit the town local high street or shopping area less than they did before Covid-19.

5.4. The majority (93%) of respondents primarily get their information about Covid-19 including, shop opening hours and service deliveries, from the Internet and 16% from social media. This demonstrates how important it is for local businesses to have a strong online presence to reach local customers.

6. Stakeholder Engagement

6.1. In every town Retail Revival worked with the local community champions throughout the project lifetime to understand their ideas for event delivery.

6.2. Most stakeholders demonstrated a clear passion for their communities and a desire to support activities. In some town centres without an active chamber of commerce, the coordination of town centre events has been taken on by the local resident's associations.

6.3. Stakeholder's local knowledge and community networks proved to be invaluable and crucial to the success of the programme, stakeholders helped in the following ways:
- Provided free space for event delivery;
- Promoted activities to their contact databases;
- Provided resources e.g., Uxbridge College art students made collages of famous local residents to use for a retail trail in Uxbridge;
- Provided historical information about past local events;
- Suggested themes, suitable locations for event activities and useful local suppliers, and
- Supported or attended the events on the day

7. Vacant Shops Audit

7.1. An audit of vacant shops was completed in 11 of the shopping districts in Hillingdon in August 2021 before the Welcome Back intervention and then repeated in March 2022 in 15 of the districts to understand if commercial vacancy rates had reduced over the project lifetime.

7.2. Uxbridge, Hayes, Eastcote, Northwood, Northwood Hills, Ruislip Manor and Uxbridge Road had increased numbers of vacant shops with Northwood increasing their vacancies from 5 to 12 shops. The remaining towns lowered their vacancy rate or remained the same (see table 1).

Table 1: Vacant Shop Survey Hillingdon

Town	No. units ground floor	Vacant Units - Aug 2021	Percentage vacancy rate	Vacant Units - Mar 2022	Percentage vacancy rate	Varience
Metropolitan Centre						
Uxbridge Town Centre	396	17	4%	18	5%	1%
District Centres						
Hayes Town Centre	206	7	3%	8	4%	1%
Yiewsley & West Drayton	156	14	9%	13	8%	-1%
Ruislip Town Centre	140	12	9%	11	8%	-1%
Eastcote Town Centre	143	5	3%	9	6%	3%
Northwood Town Centre	77	5	6%	12	16%	10%
Minor Centres						
Northwood Hills	97	5	5%	8	8%	3%
Ruislip Manor	136	1	1%	3	2%	1%
Uxbridge Road, Hayes	116	2	2%	3	3%	1%
Local Centres						
Ickenham	47	0	0%	2	4%	4%
Harefield Village	46	5	11%	5	11%	0%
Harlington	25	1	4%	1	4%	0%
Hillingdon Circus	42	4	10%	4	10%	0%
Kingshill Avenue	37	1	3%	1	3%	0%
Ryefield Avenue	14	1	7%	1	7%	0%
Totals		73		99		22%

7.3.   The statistics are to be treated with caution; some shops appear permanently closed when they might be used for office space or other commercial use and others have shutters which appear permanently closed making it difficult to identify as vacant. It is difficult to attribute business closure to one specific factor. It is widely believed that Covid-19 has expedited the demise of some retail chains who were expected to close anyway as a result in changes to the way people shop.

8.   Business Engagement

8.1.   A sample of 180 businesses across the town centres of Hayes, Ruislip, Yiewsley and West Drayton, Ickenham, Ruislip Manor and Uxbridge received personal visits to identify their needs and secure participation in the programme.

8.2.   For many, reduced footfall was an issue. Covid-19 had interrupted the shopping habits of residents who had previously been used to shopping locally and using high streets for socialising and eating out. Recovery was beginning at the time of research, however businesses felt that shoppers were still reluctant to dwell. They felt shoppers were becoming used to shopping online and were keen to get them back into their high streets. Few shops had adapted to selling online, increasing their social media activity, or providing free local delivery services. The reasons given for this lack of adaptation included:

- They did not have the resources to set up and service an online shop and were reluctant to invest capital to commission a suitable online platform. Cost containment was a primary concern, they did not have, or they wished to hang on to savings, as the future was so uncertain.
- They had put staff on furlough and therefore did not have the personnel to upload stock, manage an online shop and deliver goods sold from it. Some shops have very few employees and they felt that they would not have the time or inclination to run a shop online alongside their high street shop as managing the two well would require a sophisticated stock control system and a lot more resource than they had access to.

- They felt that the prices they would have to charge to compete with existing online traders would not provide them without enough profit to make it financially viable. They do not have the buying power that multiple online businesses have cultivated.
- Their business was not suited to selling online, their goods were perishable, or difficult to post and survive in transit, and product returns were a problem. Online shopping provides customers with enhanced rights to return goods after purchase. A higher proportion of goods sold online than in shops, are returned, sometimes after use, for full refunds and this reduces the value of the stock and makes it difficult to manage cashflow.
- For some selling online was intimidating, they had not embraced the use of technology for business and felt they were now 'too old' to learn.
- The use of social media for business is not a quick win, businesses need to maintain a stream of relevant content to build followers and convert them into customers. It can take years to establish results and many business owners, even after they have dipped their tow in the water, feel that this is 'not for them'.

8.3.   The majority of businesses were highly receptive to the delivery of town centre events to attract people back to the high street. They were shown a series of images to highlight some of the potential event activities available as part of the Welcome Back programme and they selected their preferred choices. Retail trails, family craft activities and mascots received the most votes in every town.
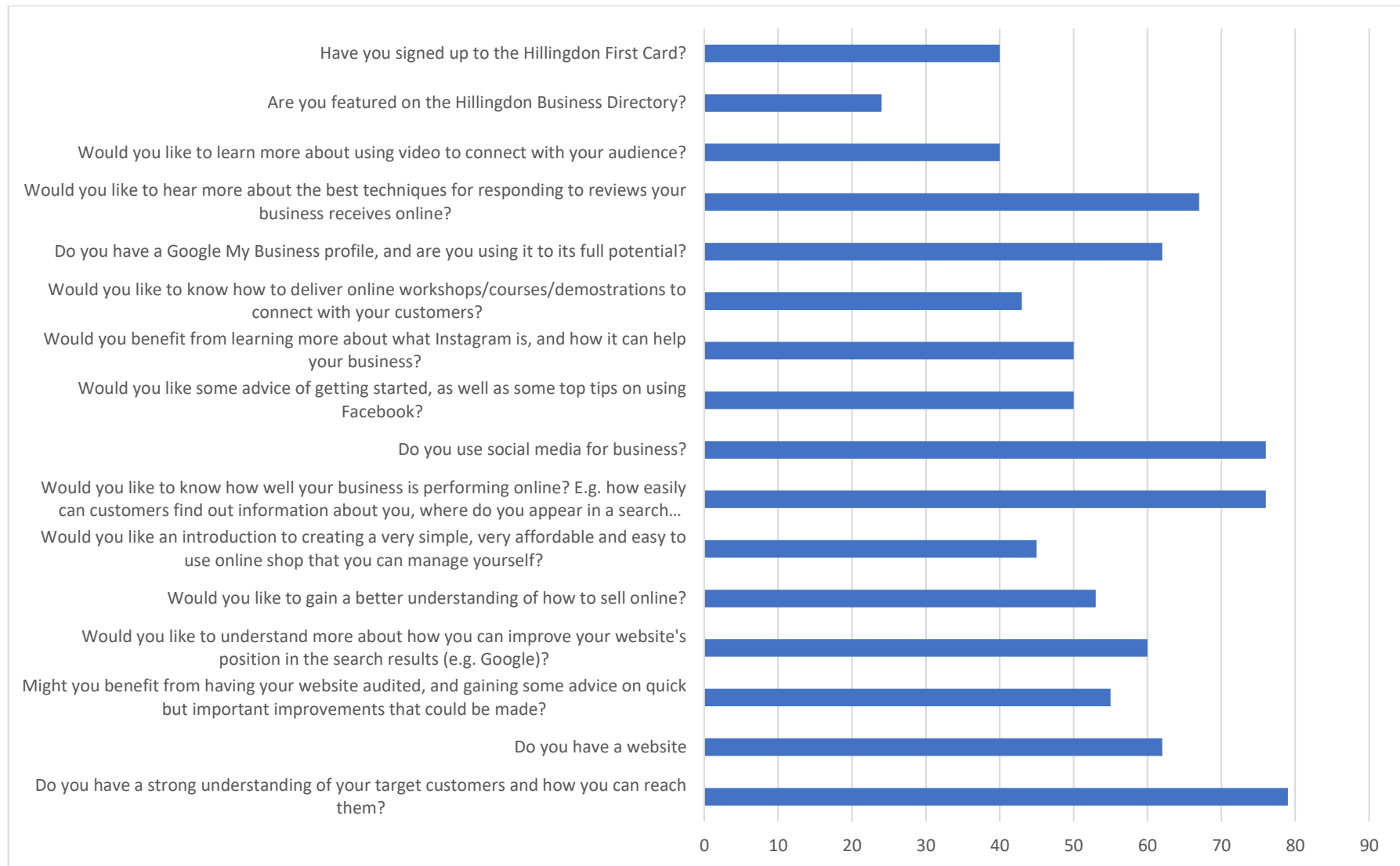
8.4.   The increase of vacant shops and the lack of variety of products sold locally was cited as an issue for some towns. The traders in Northwood Hills were particularly concerned about some businesses closing for half days and keeping irregular opening hours. They also felt that the high street lack variety and had become dormant during the pandemic.

8.5.   During the face-to-face engagement businesses were asked if they would like support with window dressing and interior display techniques. Images of before and after shop windows were shown to the shops as examples. Apart from one business in Ickenham, the majority said they would not attend visual merchandising training and felt they could dress their windows themselves or that window dressing was not important for their business. Business did however like the window art images and thought that would enliven town centres. They said it was something they could not do themselves but that it would have impact if a theme was used in all shops to tie the high street together.

8.6.   During the face-to-face engagement businesses were asked to complete a digital business support need analysis questionnaire to help identify their training needs. 58 businesses completed the questionnaire, and their results were collected and collated and have been supplied as an attachment to this report. A summary of the responses has provided in table 2 below, the greatest training needs are:

- 62% of business have a website and 55% would benefit from a website audit to test its functionality and optimisation
- 60% wanted support to increase their Google ranking
- 76% wanted help to understand how well their business was performing online
- 67% wanted more information about how to respond to customers online reviews
- 50% wanted more information about improving their use of social media for business

Table 2: Digital Training Questionnaire Results

Question	Value
Have you signed up to the Hillingdon First Card?	40
Are you featured on the Hillingdon Business Directory?	24
Would you like to learn more about using video to connect with your audience?	40
Would you like to hear more about the best techniques for responding to reviews your business receives online?	67
Do you have a Google My Business profile, and are you using it to its full potential?	62
Would you like to know how to deliver online workshops/courses/demostrations to connect with your customers?	43
Would you benefit from learning more about what Instagram is, and how it can help your business?	50
Would you like some advice of getting started, as well as some top tips on using Facebook?	50
Do you use social media for business?	76
Would you like to know how well your business is performing online? E.g. how easily can customers find out information about you, where do you appear in a search…	76
Would you like an introduction to creating a very simple, very affordable and easy to use online shop that you can manage yourself?	45
Would you like to gain a better understanding of how to sell online?	53
Would you like to understand more about how you can improve your website's position in the search results (e.g. Google)?	60
Might you benefit from having your website audited, and gaining some advice on quick but important improvements that could be made?	55
Do you have a website	62
Do you have a strong understanding of your target customers and how you can reach them?	79

9.   Business Support

9.1.   As a result of the engagement and business surveys a training programme was designed to meet business needs. The programme was produced in electronic format (appendix 3) and hard copy detailing the support available; this was distributed to over 600 independent businesses across the borough.

9.2.   The training programme offered three methods for businesses to access the support, these were: online through recorded webinars, face-to-face through group training courses or through live webinars.

9.3.   An online portal was created with short webinars each lasting up to 40 minutes comprising 'how to' guides for businesses to watch at any time. Businesses were invited to pause the webinars at intervals to complete the actions suggested by the trainer.

9.4.   Each webinar was designed to provide businesses with the opportunity to improve their online visibility and efficiency, improve their customer service and reputation, increase their social media following, improve their social media content and sell more. The webinars were:

- An Introduction to Selling Online
- Google My Business
- Selling Online with Ebay
- Selling Online with Shopify and Wix
- Audit your Own Website
- Facebook – Getting Started and Top Tips
- Instagram
- Responding to Online Reviews
- Search Engine Position

9.5.   Four live webinars were held at different times and on different days to open access to as many people as possible. Businesses needed to book the training through the project co-ordinator, and they were then sent a link to join the webinar.

9.6.   After the webinar delegates were invited to receive tailored 1-2-1 support from the digital marketing tutor. The tutor made bespoke videos for delegates to help them make specific changes to their websites, google profiles and review sites.

9.7.   Two Instagram courses were held in the Civic Centre in Uxbridge for delegates to attend in person. This included a practical photography workshop where the tutor brought props and lighting equipment to help delegates understand how to best photograph their products for selling or promoting online.

9.8.   The training outputs are detailed below:

Training	Delegates Booked	Delegates Attended
Business Websites: How strong is yours? (Zoom)	9	5
Google My Business (Zoom)	12	5
Search Engine Optimisation (Zoom)	9	7
Online Reviews: are these affecting your business? (Zoom)	11	4
Product Photography (Workshop)	16	9
Instagram for Businesses (Workshop)	10	9
Selling Online - an introduction (Webinar)	n/a	15
Selling Online with Ebay (Webinar)	n/a	15
Selling Online using Shopify / Wix (Webinar)	n/a	14
Audit Your Own Website (Webinar)	n/a	15
Facebook - Getting Started & Top Tips (Webinar)	n/a	3
Instagram (Webinar)	n/a	11
Responding To Online Reviews (Webinar)	n/a	2
Search Engine Position (Webinar)	n/a	17
Totals		131

9.9.   Bookings for business webinar courses were low. Each business received the programme by email and hard copy and received at least 2 visits to prompt them to attend. Before each webinar Retail Revival visited local businesses to remind them of the training and sent email reminders before each webinar to reduce drop-out form those who had booked.

9.10.   Bookings were fairly encouraging for the face-to-face courses. The numbers could have been higher, some businesses were unable to take time off during the day to attend the course and some felt they had to travel to Uxbridge and would have preferred the course to be delivered at a more local venue to them. There is not an ideal time slot for training independent businesses as opening hours vary across sectors. Many Hillingdon businesses have evening economies including convenience stores, catering and entertainment businesses which

make evening courses difficult to attend. Micro businesses find it challenging to leave a business for up to four hours to attend a training course, local businesses explained that they have staff shortages because they cannot find suitable employees, or they have had to reduce staff numbers since the pandemic.

9.11. The drop-out rate was high particularly for the first Instagram course and the webinars. Reasons provided included staff illness; the courses coincided with a national outbreak of the new Covid Omicron variant, and needing to go to a job price estimation at short notice.

9.12. Retail Revival re-visited 100 businesses across the town centres to ask them why they had not visited the training portal to watch the recorded webinar programme. These businesses included those who had completed the digital marketing questionnaire and had indicated that they wanted support. As a result of this visit 31 logged on to the portal there and then and said they would watch some of the webinars when they had more time and 6 said that they would watch them at home as they did not have the data to watch them on their mobile phones.

9.13. Ten businesses received over 8 hours of training and 1-2-1 support. 3 of those unable to attend the courses were linked with trainers for individual training support.

9.14. It can be concluded that 1-2-1 individual training is the preferred method of support for small and independent businesses. When they require support, they like to speak to someone either face-to-face in their own business or via telephone or zoom. Training courses need to be short and locally delivered. The need to drive to courses and park their car in a trouble-free manner or walk or use easy public transport is also an important consideration for businesses.

9.15. Three delegates that attended the Instagram courses were younger members of staff and had been 'sent' to training by an older business owner. They were being tasked with the responsibility to deliver the social media strategies on behalf of the business. Many older and more established businesses felt that it is too complex and expensive to learn how to adapt their sales and marketing strategies to embrace technology.

10. Window Dressing

10.1. As a result of the engagement and needs analysis, window art was installed to make businesses across sectors more aesthetically pleasing and to attract shoppers.

10.2. Over 50 businesses received window art themed to match the events. A sample of the art is provided below. The art was very well received by shoppers and businesses and many requested window art on a regular basis, which although outside of the scope of this contract, they might be willing to partially subsidise. Good window art is time consuming to apply, each window takes on average 2 hours to complete, more if the window needs to be cleaned and prepared beforehand or if the business requires large designs. Although Retail

Revival has a team of window artists, independent commercial artists charge between £250 and £600 per window dependent on design.

10.3.   A valentine themed example is shown below.

11.   Event Delivery

11.1.   As a result of the findings from the development stage research, an events programme was designed to attract shoppers back to the high streets across Hillingdon. 21 Events were delivered at weekends and school holidays between October 2021 and May 2020 attracting an estimated 16,400 people to the shopping centres of Hillingdon, (table 3).

11.2.   The programme and style of events were determined by the following variables

- There was a short lead time between commission and event delivery, it was adequate for the planning and delivery of a small event, however more time would have enabled a longer advertising window particularly for the first set of events.

- The size and capacity of the event was dictated by the event delivery budget which was £4600 per event. As the activities were free for participants, the budget needed to fund all consumables and activities. The events were small in nature, but they were highly visible, and visitors felt they had plenty of activities and interesting things to do at each one. Larger events like light switch on events and those requiring sound, staging and performers will require higher budgets.

- The space and facilities available in each town influenced the event set up and capacity. Where space was limited, we used private or community space. In Harlington we were able to hire the church car park, in Ickenham we used the community hall for cookery demonstrations and in Uxbridge we used the Pavilion Shopping Centre event space. Event space does have to be visible and accessible to make the event successful. The libraries in every town were highly accommodating as were the charity shops who offered rooms for performers to use for changing and comfort breaks.

Table 3 Welcome Back Events

Town	Name of event	Dates	Trail Participants	Businesses particpating	Estimated footfall
2021					
Uxbridge	Heritage Weekend	1/10/2021 and 2/10/2021	18	12	600
Ryefield Avenue	Pumpkin Festival	26/10/2021	86	12	200
Ickenham	Pumpkin Festival	27/10/2021	199	22	650
Eastcote	Pumpkin Festival	28/10/2021	318	30	1200
Yiewsley & West Drayton	Pumpkin Festival	29/10/2021	53	20	350
Hayes	Music Festival	20/10/2021	n/a	25	400
Ruislip Manor	Christmas Festival	20/11/2021	300	25	6000
Kingshill Avenue	Christmas Event	27/11/2021	86	12	200
Harefield	Christmas Event	02/12/2021	200	20	1500
Yiewsley & West Drayton	Christmas	04/12/2021	100	15	1000
Northwood	Christmas	18/12/2021	200	20	450
Ruislip	Christmas	19/12/2021	103	25	300
2022					
Uxbridge	Love your Independents Day	12/06/2022	350	15	800
Northwood Hills	Half Term Fun Day	14/06/2022	216	15	600
Uxbridge Road	Half term fun day	15/06/2022	104	10	350
North Hillingdon	Half term fun day	16/06/2022	200	15	600
Harlington	Half term fun Day	19/06/2022	77	10	100
Ruislip	Art Day	26/02/2022	230	15	600
Eastcote	Food fun day	05/03/2022	297	15	800
Northwood	Food fun day	12/03/2022	160	15	500
Hayes Town Centre	Canal Festival	29/05/2022	TBC	TBC	TBC
		Totals	2947	333	16400

11.3. A retail trail featured heavily in each event. These were designed to encourage shoppers to look for something in up to 25 shop windows across the town centre in order to win a prize. Each trail was set to include the whole high street and secondary shopping streets. Businesses really appreciated the additional footfall on event days and shoppers looking in their windows. Craft activities were also very popular and attracted children and their accompanying adults of all ages and genders.

11.4. Table 4 details some of the feedback provided by participating businesses across the town centres. Overall, they benefitted from additional footfall, and even if they did not sell more on the day, they felt that they had raised their profile to potential customers in the future. The businesses are keen for events to continue.

Table 4: Business Feedback on Events

West Drayton	We saw an increase in footfall on the days of the event, we saw people looking at the window displays and then coming into the business.
West Drayton	We saw a lot of families on the day of the event looking and pointing at the window.
Yiewsley	The events attracted families to the high street. It would be great to see more similar events in the future as it brings new people into the local area.
Ickenham	Not sure it made a direct increase to sales on the day, but I feel it probably attracted people back to the business in the future. It was amazing to see so many families in the High Street with activities for children
Ickenham	It was a positive event for us as Ickenham as a community really get into events and local activities. We saw lots of families out and about on the day. It's nice to have some community fun.
Ruislip Manor	Previous events have caused us issues and we took less trade but last year's one was a lot better we took more money than usual. We would like more events like this in the future to bring more people to the area.
Ruislip	I like the events they bring people into the town and looking at the businesses. It's another way of advertising and promoting the area to local people
Ruislip	It was nice to see activities along the High Street and we have seen new people visiting the business since the event happened. It would be nice to have more events in the future perhaps an evening Christmas shopping event similar to Ruislip Manor
Harefield	I was very, very busy and didn't manage to leave until 9pm usual I shut at 5.30pm. It was nice to see lots of people and would love to see the event develop and grow.
Harefield	It was great to have an event, it bought more people into the business, and we would like to see more events in the future.

12. Vacant Space Activation

12.1. A selection of the vacant shops was assessed for their suitability for activation, physical improvement or for temporary use during event days e.g., for children's craft or cooking workshops, for reading groups or music activities, for exhibition space, to decorate with window art or to house displays of merchandise sold by local artists or independent businesses.

12.2. In Uxbridge Retail Revival worked with the Chamber and BID to identify space for event delivery and to activate as a temporary space for a heritage centre as a part of a wider High Streets for All bid feasibility. Space located in the Pavilion Shopping Centre was made available to a local arts collective who were looking to display their works.

12.3. Retail Revival brokered an arrangement for them to take one of the vacant shops in the centre to display their art as a community group. They were required to keep the enterprise as an exhibition (not commercial) but could take payment for products outside of the shop, and we negotiated a rent-free period between December 2021 and March 2022 so the centre could claim a rates reduction.

Figure 1 Community Arts Pop Up Shop

12.4. In other areas, the barriers to activation included:
- Vacant properties are often managed by agents who need to contact the landlord to request permission to activate their space. There is the

necessity to rely on these agents to 'sell' the concept of activation to the landlord and communicate the benefits and ideas accurately and in a compelling manner. This often does not happen.

- If the agent is not benefitting directly by very short meanwhile uses then their motivation for brokering temporary use is often not sufficient enough for them to do so. Their assurance that they have indeed contacted the landlord needs to be taken on face value.

- The properties available are often unsuitable for purpose, they might have health and safety or aesthetic issues or be configured in a manner that cannot be adapted for use.

- It has been difficult to find an agent or landlord, if shutters are down and there are no contact details the only way of determining ownership is through land registry.

- The landlords are worried about insurance and damage to property and if the activation is very short term or purely aesthetic then they become risk averse and can see little benefit in collaboration.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Business Resilience Survey (Aug-Sep 2021)

Appendix 1 Business Resilience Survey Marketing Literature

The government has allocated Hillingdon Council funding from a European Union programme (the European Regional Development Fund) to enable it to welcome people back to town centres safely as we recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The results of this survey will inform a programme of support for businesses which will include digital marketing and enhancement of window displays. A programme of events will increase footfall for each of the borough's main town centres, and many smaller shopping areas, to welcome shoppers as they emerge from the pandemic restrictions.

For more information, please contact Sally Williams, Retail Revival Ltd. 07889 173101

Question 1: In which of the following sectors does your business operate?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Business administration and support services	1.00%	1
Construction	2.00%	2
Creative and digital industries	0.00%	0
Engineering and manufacturing	0.00%	0
Financial and professional services	2.00%	2
Food and hospitality	30.00%	30
Hair and beauty	11.00%	11
Healthcare	2.00%	2
Motor trades	2.00%	2
Retail and wholesale	36.00%	36
Tourism and leisure	2.00%	2
Transport, logistics and storage	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	12.00%	12
TOTAL		100

Question 2: How many employees do you have?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1-9	82.00%	82
10-49	5.00%	5
50-249	3.00%	3
250+	10.00%	10
TOTAL		100

Question 3: Which of the following describes the stage your business was at before Covid-19

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Start-up - started business on or after March 2019	10.10%	10
Growing - increasing turnover, taking on employees, growing customer base	19.19%	19
Surviving - just about turning a profit	17.17%	17
Established - thriving business, with strong customer base	42.42%	42
Expanding - new products or services, new premises, increased customers	11.11%	11
TOTAL		99

Question 4: Which best describes your current trading situation since Covid-19?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I am permanently closing my business	1.00%	1
I am in a critical situation, permanently closing my business might be necessary	15.00%	15
I have closed my business temporarily but intend to re-open	1.00%	1
My business is running but on a reduced or compromised operation	61.00%	61
My business has not been significantly affected by COVID-19	10.00%	10
The business has grown	5.00%	5
My business is healthy because I have diversified as a result of COVID-19	4.00%	4
Other (please specify)	3.00%	3
TOTAL		100

Question 5: Has your supplier network been affected by Covid-19?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
My supply chain has been totally cut off	1.00%	1
I can access some of the products/services that I need	41.00%	41
I can access most of the products/services that I need	38.00%	38
My supply chain has been unaffected by COVID-19	20.00%	20
TOTAL		100

Question 6: What impact has Covid-19 had on the demand for your producs/services compared to pre-Covid-19?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
There is still no demand	9.00%	9
There is now some demand	56.00%	56
There is now good demand	31.00%	31
There is now excellent demand	4.00%	4
TOTAL		100

Question 7: Which of these government support measures have you accessed (tick all that apply)?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Guidance on when and how I can open my business in a safe way	61.62%	61
Business Support Helpline England - enquiries@businesssupporthelpline.org or Tel: 08009981098	7.07%	7
Advice form HMRC Covid Helpline (including Time to Pay) Helpline Web Page	15.15%	15
Guidance on advice to provide to staff	35.35%	35
Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme	11.11%	11
Cash grants e.g. Small Business Grant, Retail Hospitality & Leisure Grant or the Local Restrictions Support Grant	55.56%	55
Business Rate retail discounts for properties	37.37%	37
Discretionary grant scheme	4.04%	4
Bounce Back Loan	31.31%	31
Self Employment Income Support Scheme	14.14%	14
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (Furlough)	41.41%	41
Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG)	13.13%	13
Restart Grant	12.12%	12
Other (please specify)	18.18%	18
Total Respondents: 99		

Question 8: How have you adapted, expanded or diversifed your busiuness as a result of Covid-19? (tick all that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I have not adapted, expanded or diversified my business at all	48.00%	48
I have a new online shop	5.00%	5
I have started/ increased my use of social media to raise my business profile	27.00%	27
I have started selling new products/services	16.00%	16
I now take orders by telephone	11.00%	11
I now offer a delivery service for my customers	11.00%	11
Customers are able to book reservation or pick-up slots using an app	2.00%	2
I now sell my products/services in additional physical locations e.g. on the high street, at markets etc.	1.00%	1
Other (please specify)	14.00%	14
Total Respondents: 100		

Question 9 How well prepared is your business for future lockdowns or increased Covid-19 restrictions?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
My business would not survive a future lockdown	33.00%	33
I have some measures in place to continue income streams but my business would be adversely affected	44.00%	44
I am fully prepared for future lockdowns, my business would not be adversely affected	20.00%	20
Other (please specify)	3.00%	3
TOTAL		100

Question 10: What further support would help your business to stabilise and grow?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Further grant funding	72.73%	72
Events to increase the town centre footfall	66.67%	66
Support to promote my business online	36.36%	36
Support with employment and human resources	11.11%	11
Support with business and financial planning	17.17%	17
Support to add or update my profile on the Hillingdon business directory	36.36%	36
Window dressing and shop layout advice to help me improve the look of my business	26.26%	26
Empty shop activation projects to fill the empty shops in my high street	24.24%	24
Other (please specify)	18.18%	18
Total Respondents: 99		

Appendix 2: Shoppers Survey (Sep 2021)

Appendix 2 Shoppers Survey Marketing Literature

Appendix 2: Results - Shoppers Survey

Question 1: How confident do you feel about currently visiting your local high street shopping area?
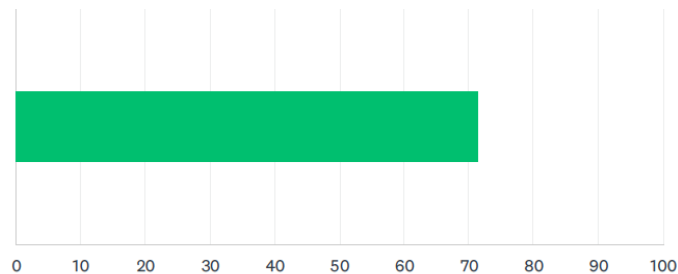
ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	71	25,773	361
Total Respondents: 361			

Question 2: Where do you currently get information about businesses, for example opening hours, delivery services, and Covid safety measures? (tick all appropriate responses)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
The Internet	93.11%	338
Telephone the business	6.34%	23
Ask a friend or relative	14.05%	51
Through social media	16.53%	60
Through direct mail from the business itself	4.96%	18
Other (please specify)	6.89%	25
Total Respondents: 363		

Question 3: As Covid safety measures are relaxed which of these safety measures is the most important in making you feel at ease? (tick just one response)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Social distancing	21.21%	77
Limited shopper numbers inside businesses	7.99%	29
Seeing people cleaning inside businesses	11.29%	41
Face coverings	41.32%	150
Hand sanitising stations	7.44%	27
Seeing people in official positions monitoring social distancing	4.41%	16
None of the above	5.79%	21
Other (please specify)	0.55%	2
TOTAL		363

Question 4: Which of these would prevent you from visiting your local high street or shopping area during the Covid pandemic? (tick all appropriate responses)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Other people not practicing social distancing	64.74%	235
A lack of general business cleanliness and hygiene	58.95%	214
Uncertainty about how I should behave	4.41%	16
A high volume of people in town centres increasing risk of COVID-19 transmission	57.30%	208
Narrow pavements making social distancing difficult	26.45%	96
Having to queue to enter businesses	42.42%	154
An inability to pay using cash in many businesses	13.77%	50
An inability to pay using cashless payment in some businesses	19.28%	70
An inability to find a clean and open public toilet	38.84%	141
Having to use public transport to get there	22.87%	83
A lack of baby changing facilities	2.75%	10
Other (please specify)	7.71%	28
Total Respondents: 363		

Question 5: How do you think Covid has affected your future shopping habits? (Tick all appropriate responses).

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I will visit my local high street or shopping area more than I did before COVID-19	14.09%	51
I will visit my local high street or shopping area less than I did before COVID-19	36.74%	133
I will use the internet to shop more than I did before COVID-19	46.13%	167
I will use the internet to shop less than I did before COVID-19	2.21%	8
My shopping habits will return to normal when all COVID-19 restrictions end	38.95%	141
Total Respondents: 362		

Question 6: What would make you increase the use of businesses in your local high street or shopping area? (tick all appropriate responses).

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
If they had an online shop	26.82%	96
If they offered a delivery service	29.05%	104
If they operated a click and collect service	32.12%	115
If they had improved COVID-19 safety measures in place	43.02%	154
If they had a website providing essential information including their opening hours	29.61%	106
Other (please specify)	19.83%	71
Total Respondents: 358		

Question 7: Now restrictions have been lifted do you feel comfortable particpating in the following activities? (tick all appropriate responses)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Eating out in cafes and restaurants	81.28%	291
Visiting a pub or nightclub	35.47%	127
Visiting a beauty salon for a treatment	53.63%	192
Visiting an exercise class, gym or leisure centre	35.20%	126
Using an indoor play centre	16.20%	58
Using an outdoor playground	50.00%	179
Sitting on a public bench	70.67%	253
Visiting an outdoor market	75.98%	272
Viewing a new house	36.59%	131
Using a public toilet	43.85%	157
Total Respondents: 358		

Appendix 3: Business Support Programme

Digital marketing training for Hillingdon businesses

Businesses across Hillingdon are invited to participate in a short programme of free training to help them improve their digital marketing practices.

The support is provided by Hillingdon Council and is delivered by Retail Revival Ltd as part of the Welcome Back Programme.

HILLINGDON
LONDON

Free Practical Workshops

We are holding two workshops at the Civic Centre in Uxbridge to support businesses that would like to improve their Instagram efficiency. The only requirements are that you have an Instagram account and a smartphone, no other expertise is required.

To book please email sally@retailrevival.org.uk or telephone 07889 173101

Workshop 1 - Product Photography
Monday 7 March 10.30am – 1.30pm

This practical workshop will teach delegates how to style and photograph their products for promoting and selling online. The workshop will discuss mobile phone cameras, composition, lighting, editing, equipment and use of props.

What you need to bring:

- 2-3 products to photograph
- Your mobile phone
- It would be helpful for you to have Instagram downloaded to your phones to use on the day of the workshop, but this is not essential

Workshop 2 - Instagram for Business
Monday 14 March 10.30am – 1.30pm

Instagram is a powerful business tool that can help grow your business.
Learn how to improve your Instagram presence and knowledge including how to auto-schedule, use hashtags, find and boost audiences, style your grid, use stories, highlights and reels.

What you need to bring:

- Your mobile phone
- Instagram downloaded to your phones to use on the day of the workshop

2.

Free Zoom Workshops

Our live webinars allow interaction with our digital experts, to book please email sally@retailrevival.org.uk or telephone 07889 173101

Business Websites: How strong is yours?

Our E-marketing expert will show you how to improve the appearance, speed and efficiency of your website. This is perfect for businesses that have websites and would like to make improvements to them.

Wednesday 2 March
10am-11am

Google My Business

Google hosts a business profile for all high street businesses which potential customers use to make buying decisions. Our E-marketing expert will show you how to populate your Google Business profile and maximise the use of it to attract more customers.

Thursday 3 March
5.30pm-6.30pm

Search Engine Optimisation

Search engine position can be so important in getting your business found by the people in your area who are looking to buy exactly what you sell. Our E-marketing expert will help you to understand how you can drive traffic to your website and use materials to achieve a better search engine ranking for your website.

Wednesday 9 March
10am-11am

Online Reviews: are these affecting your business?

People are searching for you and your competitors online, they want to find information about your business, this includes what other customers have said about you and your products and services. This webinar discusses the platforms that customers use to review your business, and how you should respond to both positive and negative reviews.

Thursday 10 March
5.30pm-6.30pm

3.

Free Webinars & Resources

Scan the QR code below to find a series of easy-to-follow videos and resources to help you make fast and free improvements to your digital marketing. The support is available throughout March, learn at your own pace and in your own time.

For further information please contact:
Sally Williams, Retail Revival Ltd.
07889 173101
sally@retailrevival.org.uk

European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

HM Government

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