

**Minutes of the Economic Development Committee
16 November 2021**

Present:

Councillor C.F. Barnard (Chairman)
Councillor V.J. Leighton (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

A. Brar	J.T.F. Doran	H. Harvey
S. Buttar	T. Fidler	

Substitutions: Councillor C. Bateson (In place of L. E. Nichols)

Apologies: Councillor M. Gibson

In Attendance: Councillor M Beecher.

556/21 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2021 were agreed.

557/21 Disclosures of interests

There were none.

558/21 Questions from members of the Public

There were none.

559/21 Ward Issues

There were none.

560/21 Update from the Town Centre Manager

Covid-19 had initially impacted on the newly appointed Town Centre Manager's ability to engage with businesses. Meetings with individual businesses and surgeries had however now started happening.

Businesses were being supported in a variety of ways including reducing their energy costs through identifying the cheapest available tariffs via the cost savings scheme pilot project. The pilot had cost approximately £5,000 to implement, but had saved businesses in excess of £10,000. This figure was expected to grow further in due course.

A number of other projects were taking place such as the renovation of the Sunbury Cross underpass, the creation of a business hub and a grants scheme for equipment.

Engagement with other local business representatives such as the Chamber of Commerce was now taking place, along with building links with residents' associations. Work would continue to take place on engaging with smaller business parades and areas of limited engagement.

The report was noted.

561/21 Staines BID Renewal - Verbal Update

The current business improvement district (BID) was due to end in March 2022. 94% of last year's levy had been collected, which compared favourably to many other BIDs. There were discussions with local businesses about expanding the BID as part of a new application to the Secretary of State. Detailed engagement with businesses was needed for the application to be successful as it required a certain level of support.

The report was noted.

562/21 Additional Restrictions Grant Monitoring

The next phase of the Additional Restrictions Grant was now commencing. There would be a focus on business recovery from Covid-19 and strengthening operations. This would be done by providing training, improving the use of technology such as developing businesses' online presence, and providing grants for equipment.

There was discussion about the processes for approving grant applications and monitoring the use of any money that had been provided. It was reported that whilst it was not possible to monitor every business's use of grants due to staff capacity, spot checks would be taking place and business cases would be reviewed before any grant was awarded. Case studies would also be identified, with a view to promoting the success of the scheme. The committee requested that businesses be invited to participate in a survey after approximately six months had passed.

Officers were thanked for supporting businesses and providing a comprehensive package of support.

The report was noted.

563/21 Local Economic Assessment

The local economic assessment (LEA) was a detailed piece of work that took place every five years. A precis of the key findings of this LEA was provided. There had been progress on educational attainment in particular. Spelthorne was also home to more businesses now than before the pandemic. This potentially hinted at a number of job losses and the affected individuals starting businesses with their severance packages.

There was discussion about how the LEA would be used to prioritise projects. This would be taken on board when the Economic Strategy was drafted.

The success of the recent Spelthorne Business Awards event was lauded. Such events provided a good opportunity to promote Spelthorne as somewhere that welcomed businesses. Officers were thanked for their efforts.

The report was noted.

564/21 Monitoring of Economic Development of Corporate Recovery Plan

There had generally been good progress made on the Corporate Recovery Plan. Pop up shops had however been difficult to move forward due to complications with business rates and demand for units from other businesses.

The location of the youth hubs was clarified. They were sited in areas of high footfall, with the aim of maximising engagement with young people and their families.

The Economic Strategy was expected to encourage recruitment and skills fairs that provided opportunities for businesses to engage with people of all ages. It was hoped that the fair would take place at Kempton Park Racecourse on market day to maximise attendance.

The report was noted.

565/21 Revenue Monitoring Q2 (July - Sept)

There had been an overspend in the economic development section of the revenue budget. This was primarily due to a pandemic related reduction in income from Staines market.

The report was noted.

566/21 Capital Monitoring Q2 (July - Sept)

The report was noted.

567/21 Forward Plan

The item relating to Heathrow Airport had been delayed due to there being limited information released by the airport's operator.

Neighbourhood Services were leading on the Sunbury Cross rejuvenation project. The reasons for its delay would be explored with the group head.

The chairman would explore the possibility of a Sunbury masterplan with officers.

The forward plan was noted.

568/21 Urgent business

There was no urgent business.