

**Minutes of the Economic Development Committee
12 January 2023**

Present:

Councillor S.C. Mooney (Chairman)
Councillor T. Fidler (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

C. Bateson	A. Brar	V.J. Leighton
C.F. Barnard	J. Button	R.J. Noble

Apologies: Councillors A.C. Harman

In Attendance: Councillors M. Beecher

1/23 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 29 September 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

2/23 Disclosures of interests

Councillor Mooney declared that she was a councillor and a cabinet member of Surrey County Council.

3/23 Questions from members of the Public

There were none.

4/23 Ward Issues

There were none.

5/23 Economic Prosperity Strategy / Revised Town Centres and Shopping Parades Strategy

The Committee received the Economic Prosperity Strategy 2023 – 2028 and Revised Town Centres and Shopping Parades Strategy 2023.

Small changes had been made to both documents following suggestions from the Committee at its last meeting. Educational attainment, working with other authorities, increasing local procurement and on-street parking had been addressed. The Committee noted increased collaboration between local districts and boroughs in Surrey including the provision of 1-2-1 business support with Runnymede.

The Committee **resolved**:

to agree the Economic Prosperity Strategy 2023 – 2028, and

to agree the Revised Town Centres and Shopping Parades Strategy 2023.

6/23 Additional Restrictions Grant Update

The Committee received an update on the additional restrictions grant (ARG), of £3 million from central government to support businesses during the pandemic. Money had been allocated in tranches as the economic development team had thought best.

The Senior Economic Development Officer reported that grants were initially used for business survival, but later on for business growth and included shop front grants, equipment grants, business support, 1-2-1 business coaching, digital media marketing training, and website development.

The Town Centre Manager reported on positive feedback from a survey of local businesses, where two-thirds of the respondents so far expect their businesses to remain the same or grow. The Town Centre Manager would continue to push for business growth and initiatives which assisted local people.

A representative from Pro-actions, a business support consultancy, gave a short presentation on the assistance provided to small business owners via 1-2-1 support, seminars at the Spelthorne Business Hub, advice on strategy, planning and sales, budgeting forecasting, and profit and loss control.

The Committee noted that helping businesses to be more sustainable was included within one of the projects in the Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan.

The Committee noted the recommendations from the Internal Audit (IA) review and the difference in risk appetite between the IA and economic development departments.

The Committee congratulated the economic development team on its success in distributing the ARG grant and on winning a national award from the Federation of Small Businesses.

The Committee **resolved** to note the report on the Additional Restrictions Grant update.

7/23 Youth Hub

The Committee received an update on the Spelthorne Youth Hub which included statistics for the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) who had provided the funding for an initial period of 12 months.

Additional funding had been obtained from the DWP for two work coaches to continue the support for the youth hub under a new “Jobs and Skills Hub” banner. The Council would use money from the Shared Prosperity Fund for two more work coaches for “bounce back street”, a new facility to assist over 40s back into work. The youth hub would now be incorporated into the wider Jobs and Skills Hub and would be open to any resident who needed advice regardless of their age.

The Committee noted the increased footfall since the youth hub had moved to the former Decathlon store opposite the bus station in Staines and that many young people who were walking into the hub for support were not recorded on government figures as they were not receiving benefits. The Committee noted an appetite for apprenticeships and the continuing work with NEETS (those not in education, employment or training), including mental health support, confidence building workshops, and the use of external providers. The youth hub worked with Brooklands College and was looking to extend its outreach to local schools.

The Committee noted the ability of the work coaches to work remotely and to meet candidates in different locations, including the Business Hub in Sunbury which they used one day a week.

The Committee **resolved** to note the report on the Spelthorne Youth Hub.

8/23 23/24 Budget

The Chief Accountant presented the following items for the Committee’s areas of responsibility: a net expenditure budget for 2023/24, a detailed budget report, fees and charges, and growth bids for economic development. There were no savings bids or capital impact bids.

The Chief Accountant explained the budget setting process and how it had changed from last year as a result of Member feedback. The Committee noted that this was a balanced budget which took inflation into account and that there were no substantial increases for economic development.

The Chief Accountant presented the budget report and explained that the intention was to make the Business Incubator cost neutral. The economic development team were confident that expected rentals for both the Business Incubator and the Elmsleigh Centre would be achieved. However, they expected income from Staines Market to reduce due to inflation. There was ongoing debate as to which cost centre Staines Market should come under.

The Chief Accountant reminded the Committee that the growth bids for the Economic Development Officer and Town Centre Manager were both fully funded and, as such, were in line with Council guidance to recruit only for fully funded or statutory posts. The Committee supported both of the posts.

The Committee **resolved** to recommend the draft 2023/24 Budget to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

9/23 Feedback on 23/24 Budget Setting Process - Economic Development

The Committee was invited to provide feedback to Officers on the budget setting process for 2023/24.

The Chief Accountant reported on changes from last year, such as bringing the budget setting process forward to enable Members to review service plans at their September committee meetings and providing sufficient time to discuss the budgets fully at the January meetings. Ongoing changes to the Centros finance system should also improve budget setting next year.

The Chief Accountant requested consensus feedback from the Committee and was particularly interested to receive any recommendations for improving the budget setting process.

The Committee **resolved** to note the discussion.

10/23 Forward Plan

The Committee considered the forward plan for future committee business.

The Committee agreed to invite the manager of the Staines BID to speak at its June meeting.

The Committee noted that the review of the Economic Prosperity Strategy and Town Centres Strategy was a recurring item and that the next review would be at the June meeting.

The Committee **resolved** to note the forward plan for future committee business.

*Pro-*actions

BUSINESS COACHING & SUPPORT



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