

**Minutes of the Economic Development Committee
22 June 2021**

Present:

Councillor C.F. Barnard (Chairman)

Councillors:

A. Brar

J.T.F. Doran

H. Harvey

S. Buttar

M. Gibson

L. E. Nichols

Apologies: Councillors V.J. Leighton and T. Fidler

In Attendance: Councillor C. Bateson

162/21 Disclosures of interest

There were none.

163/21 Economic Development Committee - Terms of Reference

The Committee's Terms of Reference were circulated with the agenda for the meeting.

Resolved to note the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

164/21 Economic Development Team

To introduce this item a short video, which had been produced by the Team to attract businesses to the borough in support of its inward investment role, was shown to the Committee.

The Economic Development Manager and the Senior Economic Development Officer gave an overview of the work the team was involved in to help promote the economic vitality of the Borough.

This included: the distribution of the Welcome Back Fund (an extension of the re-opening High Streets Safely Fund), Recovery Plan, Spelthorne Business Awards, Economic Assessment, Economic Strategy 2022-2027, Additional Restrictions Grant, Youth Hub and Youth App, Apprentice Levy, Spelthorne Business Hub and Inward Investment.

Members asked the officers questions about specific areas of their work and their objectives and targets. The Group Head for Regeneration and Growth responded to a question from a member on how the Team measured its success and agreed it would be a helpful exercise to seek the views of local businesses on how well they thought the Team was doing.

The Economic Development Manager indicated that the involvement of the Committee was key to the development of the new Economic Strategy and a report on an updated Local Economic Assessment which will underpin the new strategy would come to the Committee at its next meeting.

It was agreed that a copy of the Local Economic Assessment and the current Economic Development Strategy would be provided to members for their information.

Resolved to note the report on the work of the Economic Development Team.

165/21 Impact of the pandemic on the local economy

The Senior Economic Development Officer detailed the economic impact of Covid-19 on Spelthorne business and employment. She explained that the Economic Development Team were identifying where the most support was required and implementing strategies to assist local businesses with recovery.

The Economic Development Manager explained the Economic Development Recovery Action Plan, outlining the measures the Council would be taking to assist its communities (both residential and business) to recover from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. He clarified that there was £1.6m remaining to be allocated from the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) by 31 March 2022. He advised that the team had undertaken a survey with local businesses on how the money can best be spent to support them and would like to discuss the results of this with a task group of members from the Committee.

In response to a member's comment on the importance of including targets in the Recovery Action Plan (RAP) against which success could be measured, the Group Head for Regeneration and Growth confirmed that general targets on outcomes would be included in the RAP before the wider Corporate Recovery Plan was considered by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee on 15 July 2021.

The Chair proposed that a Task and Finish Group, comprising Councillor Leighton and two other members of the Committee, be set up to consider the Council's policy on distribution of the ARG funds. Councillor Nichols proposed Councillor Fidler as this was a topic of interest to him. Councillors Buttar and Gibson also volunteered.

Resolved to:

1. Note the impact of Covid-19 on the local economy report and the associated impact on business report, attached at Appendix 1.
2. Agree the draft Economic Development Recovery Action Plan, which sits within the wider draft Corporate Recovery Plan, as attached at Appendix 2.
3. Agree that a regular report comes to each Committee meeting setting out how the team is delivering on the economic development elements of the Corporate Recovery Action Plan.
4. Set up a Task and Finish Group with membership comprising Councillors S. Buttar, T. Fidler and V.J. Leighton, to discuss the Council's policy on spending the £1.6m Additional Restrictions Grant.

After the Economic Development Committee meeting on 22 June 2021, with the agreement of the Chair, Cllr Buttar would be replaced by Cllr Gibson at the Task and Finish Group meetings.

166/21 Training

The Committee considered if additional training would assist to increase their level of understanding and knowledge in any areas of economic development. The Chair advised that the Senior Economic Development Officer had offered to run a session on how skills and employment cuts across all areas of the economy. The members agreed this would be of interest.

The Chairman encouraged members to attend a meeting of the Spelthorne Business Forum to learn more about businesses in the Borough.

Resolved that the Committee receive a training session on skills and employment from the Senior Economic Development Officer at a future date.

167/21 Forward Plan

The Committee considered the Forward Plan for future business and was informed that a report from the Additional Restrictions Grant Task Group would come to the next meeting.

Resolved to note the items for future meetings on the Forward Plan, subject to the addition of a report from the Additional Restrictions Grant Task Group at the next meeting.