

Economic Development Committee



Date of meeting: 21 September 2021

Title	<i>Recovery Plan Update</i>
Purpose of the report	To note
Report Author	<i>Keith McGroary Economic Development Manager</i>
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	<i>N/A</i>
Corporate Priority	Economic Development
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: <i>Note the report</i>
Reason for Recommendation	<i>Not applicable</i>

1. Key issues

- 1.1 Update on the Economic Development aspect of the Corporate Recovery Plan. The reference letters below relate to those within the Corporate Recovery Plan.
- 1.2 'ER1' *Continue to monitor, measure and understand how COVID has affected local businesses and adapt to respond to impacts.* A survey with businesses was conducted in May / June 2020 but the number of replies was very low and were unable to make much use of the data. The low return rate was probably connected with the impact of COVID on businesses and people not going into work. A new survey has been circulated within the Spelthorne business community targeting those businesses that have 10 or more employees, that survey closes on 31.8.21.
- 1.3 A dashboard has also been produced and circulated to councillors; this illustrated the level of unemployment in the borough as a whole as well as within the 18-24 age group. This dashboard information will continue to be made available.
- 1.4 'ER2' *Provision/signposting of advice and support:* The Spelthorne website has been continually updated throughout the COVID period; additionally, specific items of news, particularly regarding jobs have been circulated via our communications team through social media.
- 1.5 'ER3' *Keep under review the Council's discretionary grant policy:* A separate report in relation to the Discretionary Grant also known as the ARG is provided for this meeting and covers this area.

- 1.6 'ER4' *Implement our new Economic Development Recovery Plan*: This has been absorbed within the Corporate Recovery Plan.
- 1.7 'ER5' *Continue to work with the newly developed Jobs and Recovery Task Group*: This group has met on 3 separate occasions so far and consists of representatives from A2D, Job Centre Plus, Brooklands College and Runnymede Council. The main purpose of the group is to share information and what projects or initiatives that each member of the group is working on so that there is the opportunity to enhance delivery through synergy whenever possible so that duplication of effort is reduced.
- 1.8 'ER6' *Support/promote employment and training initiatives*: Collaboration between BUPA, a local company called Click-26 and Brooklands College has resulted in an initiative that has enabled students to build an APP (I Choose Local) to obtain opportunities for work or jobs, this has just reached its testing stage and has equipped many of the students involved with new skills by developing the APP in-house. Another project called 'Bounce-back Street' involving the same group and largely funded by BUPA involves a scheme whereby low paid, low-skilled and unemployed young people are provided training to help write CV's, improve self-confidence (for interviews) and identify transferable skills. A location has not yet been identified but is hoped to be launched in late October.
- 1.9 'ER7' *Work with partners to bid for funding for a Youth Hub in the borough* A separate report has been submitted to cover this area.
- 1.10 'ER8' *Set up pop-up-shop where budding entrepreneurs can test the market in advance of setting up a business*: This has proved extremely difficult to implement, especially with the many requirements needed to comply with COVID regulations as well as the various lockdowns that have taken place.
- 1.11 'ER9' *Prepare and promote our new business incubator*. The Spelthorne Business Hub was formally opened on 11th June by the Mayor. On 30th July an event was held here at the instigation of Cllr Buddhi Weerasinghe for Sunbury businesses. Those in attendance and main speakers were the Honourable Kwasi Kwarteng MP and Michael Coughlin Deputy Chief Executive of Surrey County Council. Kwasi has indicated that he will also hold surgeries there in the future for businesses situated in Staines, Shepperton and Ashford. The operator of the Hub is Co Tribe and the doors opened for customers on 2nd August. We have 3 businesses that have already moved into the newly created office space and around a dozen more who have visited and are considering becoming members. The contract to operate the building and lease is expected to be signed by 20th August. At the moment the training room is not in use due to some fire regulation concerns which have been addressed and are now waiting for building control to sign it off which should happen w/c 16th August. On 15th September 2021 a visit will take place to attend a Live Networking & Meetup event for Creatives in Richmond The Orange Tree Pub 45 Kew Road TW9 2NQ <https://tinyurl.com/3v352kcm> as a means of pro-actively engaging with this high tech / digital sector where we will promote the Hub as a business location.
- 1.12 'ER10' *Promote opportunities in the Borough for the development of 'green' jobs*: This was going to be promoted through the Additional Restrictions Grant funding, but because of restrictions on how this grant can be spent, that source cannot be used to support this initiative. However, once there is

capacity within the team, this will be a key task and will be an area that will certainly be included within the new 2022-2027 Economic Strategy.

- 1.13 'ER11' Promote 'shop-local' to our residents and visitors and promote 'buy local' procurement within SBC: The team has worked closely with the procurement team and this has resulted in a change to procurement standing orders which now compels a manager with a budget to purchase items under £5k (whilst still achieving value for money) within Spelthorne or if not within Surrey; permission from a Head of Service is required to buy low-cost items / services elsewhere. Discussions have been taking place with a number of providers that can supply an APP that would encourage people to buy local, but at present there has been no convincing evidence. A project on this matter has been tried in Woking and has been met with resistance from both retailers and shoppers alike, so this is likely to lapse as a project.
- 1.14 'ER12' *Provide additional frontline support for Ashford, Sunbury and Shepperton businesses:* A town Centre Manager has been appointed and is currently holding surgeries for businesses within each of the towns every week.
- 1.15 'ER13' Work in collaboration with Staines-upon-Thames Business Improvement District (BID: There are 2 representatives from SBC on the BID Board. The BID is up for re-election in February 2022. Through the levy, more than £300k additional money is generated annually in order to help improve the competitiveness and attraction of the town. The decision on how that money is spent is through the commitments made within the BID Proposal Document and through the BID Board.

2. Options analysis and proposal

2.1 Not applicable

3. Financial implications

3.1 Not applicable

4. Other considerations

4.1 There are none.

5. Equality and Diversity

5.1 Not applicable.

6. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

6.1 Not applicable

7. Timetable for implementation

7.1 In accordance with the Corporate Recovery Plan.

Background papers:

There are none.

Appendices:

There are none