

Economic Development Committee



Date of meeting: 25 January 2022

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. The previous update for the Committee was in November, so there has been limited opportunity and resources to move forwards in the intervening period, especially with the team focusing on delivering ARG grants to local businesses.
- 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.
- 1.3 A dashboard has also been produced and circulated to councillors; this illustrated the total level of unemployment in the borough, as well as within the 18-24 and over 50 age groups. Figures are then put into context by comparing Spelthorne data to the Surrey average. A new update will be produced in January 2022
- 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 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. The group has not met since July when restrictions were lifted but agreed to meet at a future date if there was a need to do so. No requests for meetings have been received since July.
- 'ER6' *Support/promote employment and training initiatives*: The I chose Local team were finalists in the Business Plan Competition and were also first Runner up for the CSR category in the Spelthorne Business Awards. The app is ready for businesses to start uploading their job opportunities ready for a February launch. BUPA are collaborating and will provide access to their mental health practitioners as a free service to any young person using the app who needs mental health support. Bounceback Street - This project will launch in 2022 as all resources are currently being put into launching the 'I Choose Local' app first.
- 'ER7' *Work with partners to bid for funding for a Youth Hub in the Borough*: The Youth Hub launched on December the 6th at the Business Incubator in Sunbury. The DWP met several young people on day 1 with a couple of referrals to the Youth Hub service. There have been two enquiries via email from the Bulletin Magazine article and we expect to have around 10 referrals within the first week. The Youth Hub Website is expected to launch on the 13th December subject to all GDPR checks being passed.
- 1.8 '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. The additional significant demand on officer time due to the processing of ARG grants has meant that this initiative will need to be postponed until spring 2022.
- 1.9 'ER9' *Prepare and promote our new business incubator*: The operator of the Hub is Co Tribe CIC and the doors opened for customers in September. As CoTribe are a Community Interest Company a mandatory 80% discount has been applied to the rates (full value £18k), which would have otherwise fell to SBC.
- 1.10 The operator CoTribe CIC collected the rent from the tenants, but after discussions with accountancy, this is being taken in-house from 1st January. There are plans to create new offices within the incubator to satisfy demand for this service. The incubator is expected to have a life-span of 5 years as it is earmarked by SBC for future development.

- 1.11 Tenders have been invited to put the offices in place, a total of 4 have been received. These range from £18k to £73k, and a decision will be taken by the time this report reaches the committee as to which one shows best value for money. The latest government advice regarding working from home has not helped matters with regards to attracting tenants, but discussions have taken place to instigate a marketing plan for hot-desking once the threat level has reduced.
- 1.12 ‘ER10’ *Promote opportunities in the Borough for the development of ‘green’ jobs*: The new 2022-2027 Economic Strategy will include actions to support a greener economy. The ARG funding has actually contributed to reduced emissions through grants that have replaced old inefficient equipment such as a laundrette washing machine which cost £10,000.
- 1.13 ‘ER11’ Promote ‘shop-local’ to our residents and promote ‘buy local’ procurement within SBC: The new 5-year Strategy will contain a number of activities with the action plan. A baseline is also being set with regards to the current amount of money spent by SBC in the borough so that we can measure the impact of changes made to procurement standing orders.
- 1.14 ‘ER12’ *Provide additional frontline support for Ashford, Sunbury and Shepperton businesses*: The extent of support provided by the Town Centre Manager (TCM) has now expanded to include shopping parade, where he has visited and raised awareness with regards to the ARG Equipment Grant. The TCM also attended and supported the Xmas Tree nights in both Sunbury and Ashford helping out with the organisation of the event which was appreciated and raised his profile further.
- 1.15 ‘ER13’ Work in collaboration with Staines-upon-Thames Business Improvement District (BID): The boundary of the BID has been widened to include the Thames Club, Staines Train Station and Fairfield Avenue. This will generate additional income as well as support for businesses situated in those areas. The BID Proposal document is not yet available at the time of writing this report, but copies will be made available to the Committee for 25th January.

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 The impact on equality and diversity issues is considered at every action

6. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 Use of the ARG funding has potential to have a positive impact on the environment through new equipment which is greener and less polluting.

7. Timetable for implementation

- 7.1 In accordance with the Corporate Recovery Plan.

Background papers:
There are none.

Appendices:
There are none