

**Minutes of the Economic Development Committee
29 September 2022**

Present:

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

Councillors:

C. Bateson	J. Button
C.F. Barnard	V.J. Leighton

Substitutions: Councillors M. Beecher (In place of R.J. Noble)

Apologies: Councillors A. Brar

32/22 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 9 June were agreed as a correct record.

33/22 Disclosures of interests

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

34/22 Questions from members of the Public

There were none.

35/22 Ward Issues

There were none.

36/22 BID Manager Verbal Update

The Committee received a presentation from the Visit Staines Business Improvement Manager on the BID2 Business Plan April 2022 – March 2027.

The Business Improvement Manager highlighted achievements from the last five years in relation to events, marketing, security and safety, attractiveness of the town centre and business support and set out plans for the next five years. These included purple flag status for safety in the town, training for BID rangers and security officers, an expanded number of events, particularly

in the summer, sponsorship of key events, such as Staines-upon-Thames day, and publicity for the town. They would seek grants and funding, where available.

The Committee **resolved** to note the presentation on the Staines BID2 Business Plan for 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2027 and to invite the BID Manager to report to the Committee in six months' time.

37/22 Presentation from Heathrow Airport Limited on skills and employment post the COVID-19 pandemic

The Committee received a presentation from the Education, Employment and Skills Manager and the Local Authority and Business Engagement Lead at Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL) on skills' development and employment assistance for local people following the Covid-19 pandemic. HAL hosted an employment and skills academy, an employment brokerage facility, shared apprenticeship scheme and employability workshops. It worked with local councils and employers at the airport. Approximately 2,500 Spelthorne residents were employed at Heathrow.

Looking forward, HAL wanted to encourage sustainable travel to the airport and acknowledged the lack of local public transport. They offered a presentation on Refresh Heathrow 2.0 – HAL's sustainability strategy. The Committee advised that this might be more appropriate for the Environment and Sustainability Committee.

The Committee suggested that HAL be invited to speak to the Environment and Sustainability Committee and requested a copy of the presentation to this meeting.

The Committee **resolved** to note the presentation from Heathrow Airport Limited.

38/22 Incubator - Monitoring

The Committee received a report on the SBC Business Incubator situated at Hanworth Road, Sunbury-on-Thames. The owner of Co-Tribe, the company running the Business Incubator, attended to answer questions. The Committee noted that not all of the KPIs had been achieved, largely due to Covid-19 and renovations to the building which had affected lettings.

The Committee noted a more positive outlook now that the building was fully operational. Marketing had commenced and the current position showed most of the offices had been let and several customers were renting hot desks. The concept was not-for-profit and for the centre to aid the growth of small businesses in the community by providing additional evening sessions, one-to-one business support and networking events.

The Committee noted a funding commitment from Shepperton Studios for the next five years.

Alternative options considered and not agreed were inviting the Economic Development Team or another company to run the centre.

Councillors were invited to visit the Business Incubator.

The Committee **resolved** to agree the preferred option to maintain the current arrangement, and review again at the Committee Meeting to be held on 15 June 2023 (provisional date).

39/22 Draft Economic Prosperity Strategy

The Committee received a report from the Economic Development Manager and Senior Economic Development Officer on a draft economic prosperity strategy for 2023-2028. This document contained a detailed action plan. Also attached was the SBC Local Economic Assessment for 2021.

The 2023-2028 strategy referred to recent and anticipated challenges, such as Brexit, Covid-19, inflation and the current energy crisis, and stressed the importance of Spelthorne's preparation for those areas over which it had control. It was an evidence-based assessment of the local economy. The Committee noted that no other local council produced such a detailed plan.

There was discussion of working with other local authorities and Surrey and whether this directly benefited businesses and residents in Spelthorne. The Spelthorne Business Forum would be invited to assist. The Committee made suggestions for improvements to the strategy, including whether the £5,000 current spending limit for budget holders, intended for use with local suppliers could be increased to £10,000.

The Committee thanked the Economic Development Manager who was retiring at the end of the year. The Committee noted the strategy had been designed with existing resources. If resource levels changed within the Economic Development team re-prioritisation of objectives might be required.

It was agreed that the Chair and the Economic Development Manager would write to Surrey County Council to seek information on plans to improve educational attainment and qualifications in the Borough.

The Committee **resolved** agree that a draft economic prosperity strategy was required, and that a final version of the strategy should come back to Committee on 12 January 2023.

40/22 Draft Town Centres Strategy

The Committee received a draft town centres' strategy report and action plan from the Town Centres Manager. The town centres of Ashford, Shepperton

and Sunbury and the shopping parades in the Borough had emerged from the pandemic healthier than expected. The report set out small scale, active interventions designed to benefit these retailers and noted that survivability was based on sustainability. The Committee noted increasing engagement between retailers, small businesses and the Council.

The Council noted that long term road closures due to work on the replacement Southampton - London oil pipeline in Ashford had had a negative impact on the businesses there. The Council was liaising with businesses in order to keep them updated and mitigate issues, where possible.

The Committee suggested improvements to the draft town centres' strategy. The Committee agreed changes in relation to parking with a view to revising the action on car parking charges at some of the local shopping centres.

The Committee **resolved** to agree the report, subject to the changes discussed at the meeting.

41/22 Revenue Monitoring Report (Qtr 1 April-June)

The Committee received the quarter 1 revenue monitoring report relating to economic development as at 30 June 2022 from the Chief Accountant.

This report had previously been discussed at the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee in September. The Chief Accountant highlighted the projected £96,000 overspend on revenue expenditure against budget. Income from Staines Market was forecast to be lower than projected due to a slower than expected recovery post Covid-19.

The Committee **resolved** to note the £96,000 projected overspend as set out in the quarter 1 revenue monitoring report for the Economic Development Committee against its budget as at 30 June 2022.

42/22 Surrey Delivery Board - Economic Development Stream

The Committee received a report on the Surrey Delivery Board in relation to economic development activities from the Group Head Regeneration and Growth. Whilst monitoring activities of the Surrey Delivery Board fell within the remit of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee (CPRC) an update relevant to Economic Development had been requested. This information had previously been reported to CPRC in September.

The report set out opportunities for aligning economic development across Surrey by collaborating with other local authorities.

The Committee **resolved** to note the progress which had been made to date on collaboration and partnership working between districts and boroughs and Surrey County Council and the next steps as outlined in the report.

43/22 Forward Plan

The Committee considered the forward plan for future committee business.

The Committee **resolved** to note the forward plan and to add the following items to the forward plan:

- Economic Prosperity Strategy: 12 January 2023
- Review of Staines BID: 15 June 2023
- Incubator monitoring: 15 June 2023

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

44/22 Exclusion of Public and Press

It was proposed by Councillor Fidler, seconded by Councillor Barnard, and **resolved** that the public and press be excluded during consideration of the following item, in accordance with paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 A of the Local Government Act 1972.

45/22 Exempt Report - Service Plan (as part of the 23/24 Budget Process)

The Group Head Regeneration and Growth presented the Service Plan for Economic Development to the Committee.

Members were invited to ask questions and provide feedback on the service plan.

The Committee **resolved** to note the Service Plan for Economic Development.