

Appendix A

Economic Development Service – Quarterly Report – May 2025

1. Background

1.1 The Economic Development Service plays a key role in promoting sustainable economic growth and prosperity across the borough. Its work contributes directly to achieving Spelthorne Borough Council's Corporate Priorities, including:

- Economic development recovery and growth: supporting the vitality of our town centres, attracting inward investment, encouraging entrepreneurship and supporting business growth.
- Supporting local people: enhancing employment opportunities and skills development for residents, particularly young people and those furthest from the job market.
- Sustainability and Innovation: helping businesses move to more sustainable models and digitally enabled.

1.2 The Service Plan 2025/26 sets out key performance indicators aligned with the Corporate Priorities. These include targets to:

- Directly support at least 200 businesses and engage a further 750 indirectly
- Deliver 12 or more business related events with a combined attendance of 500
- Maintain a minimum 80% occupancy rate at the Spelthorne Business Hub, and
- Support over 400 economically inactive residents through the Jobs & Skills Hub

1.3 Key responsibilities of the team over this reporting period include managing the Spelthorne Business Hub and Spelthorne Jobs & Skills Hub, delivering business support programmes and events, including the annual Spelthorne Business Awards, engaging with businesses and key stakeholders including Surrey County Council and Heathrow Airport.

2. Summary of Key Achievements

2.0 In the period February – April the Economic Development Service has:

- Launched the seventh annual Spelthorne Business Awards
- Successfully concluded the Spelthorne Stronger Business Programme, supporting 80 business
- Progressed the Ashford Business Improvement District (BID) feasibility study
- Continued strong operations at the Spelthorne Business Hub, including planning for relocation
- Delivered ongoing support and training at the Spelthorne Jobs and Skills Hub

- Completed a branding and web development project for the Economic Development offer
- Contributed to the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group
- Recruited and inducted a new Senior Economic Development Officer

3. Activity Overview

Business Events

- 3.1 Business events are a core part of the Council's engagement strategy with local businesses, providing networking opportunities, insights into economic trends and platforms to celebrate business success
- 3.2 The Spelthorne Business Awards 2025 opened for entries on 10 March. Since that time the team has been busy marketing the programme with a outsourced social media campaign, local promotion through posters, banners and advertisements and mailers to potential entrants. On 30th April the team hosted 8 attendees at an application workshop to guide and support businesses through the process. The application deadline is 30 June and at the end of April, 22 applications had been received.
- 3.3 The annual NNDR Budget Briefing took place on 12 February, hosted by Sytner Land Rover at Sunbury and attracting over 30 attendees.
- 3.4 Additional events are planned with West London Chamber of Commerce, Surrey Chambers of Commerce, Business Surrey and the Spelthorne Business Forum.

4. Spelthorne Stronger Business Programme

- 4.0 The Spelthorne Stronger Business Programme was Spelthorne's post pandemic support initiative for small businesses. Delivered by contractors CPG, the programme offered a comprehensive support package including one to one business coaching, digital skills training, sustainability workshops and start up guidance, with services designed to address specific business needs and promote growth and resilience.
- 4.1 The contract concluded at the end of March 2025 having successfully delivered on its objectives and achieving strong outcomes.
 - A total of 80 businesses were supported over the programme, including 36 pre start up and start up businesses, and 44 existing micro and SME businesses
 - Businesses received 249 tailored one to one mentoring support
 - Fourteen workshops and webinars were hosted during the programme
 - 20 micro-grants awarded to support digital growth and innovation
 - 6 businesses received in depth digital asset reviews
- 4.2 Notable impacts include:
 - 85% of businesses reported revenue growth;
 - 94% improved their digital presence;
 - 18 new jobs were created and 19 jobs safeguarded.

- 20 businesses launched new products;
- 33 adopted new technologies or processes
- 17 entered new markets adopted new technologies or processes;
- 15 businesses enhanced their productivity
- 17 entered new markets.

A new business support tender process is currently on hold until permission is granted to proceed.

5. Spelthorne Business Hub

- 5.1 The Spelthorne Business Hub is an affordable and flexible workspace in Summit House, Sunbury on Thames. Operated under a revenue concession by CoTribe the Hub offers hot desking facilities, networking opportunities and tailored business support to new and established businesses.

During this reporting period occupancy remained strong at 84%, exceeding the 80% target.

Two successful 'Lunch and Learn' events took place on AI Trends (attracting 12 attendees) and How to Generate More Business with Your Phone (19 attendees).

Two new business members joined Clinquant (accountancy) and More Care Services (care home business); Ontoscale AI upgraded from hotdesking to office tenancy and four businesses exited.

Due to the sale of Summit House, plans to relocate the Hub to Staines are underway (details will be shared in separate committee paper)

6. Spelthorne Jobs & Skills Hub

- 6.0 The Spelthorne Jobs & Skills Hub is a dedicated employability service, based at Friends Walk, Staines. It supports residents, particularly young people and those facing barriers to employment work, with CV support, training, careers advice and job search assistance, as well as tailored case management through funded programmes, including the DWP/ SCC Workwell programme.

- 6.1 The Hub supports around 1000 residents annually. At the start of this reporting period the team had 117 open cases on the books, increasing to 194 by the end of April. Client demographics in February showed 67% aged 16-24) and 27% in the over 40 age group and at end of period similar breakdown with 64% of new cases in April from the 16-24 age group and 28% over 40.

- 6.2 Two training courses took place in the period: an accredited CSCS course in February (15 participants) delivered by partner, Functional Skills. The Hub team delivered an Over 45s workshop in April for 9 clients with 100% rating the workshop top marks in improving personal and professional development, and in answer in satisfaction with the work, 75% rated it excellent and 25% very good).

A customer satisfaction survey was tested internally in March and launched in April. 14 surveys were returned by the end of the month with 100% of respondents rating the support received from the Hub as excellent. There

was also positive feedback on the welcome received, likelihood of recommending the service to others and the Hub being both helpful and responsive.

- 6.3 The Hub's funding from UKSPF ended in March 2025 with outcomes reported in separate committee paper.
- 6.4 Since the end of 2025 the Spelthorne Jobs & Skills Hub has been the appointed local delivery partner for the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)/ Surrey County Council (SCC) managed WorkWell programme.
- 6.5 WorkWell aims to help people with health issues and /or disabilities to get back to work or remain in work by connecting them to local support providers.
- 6.6 During the reporting period, 22 cases have been identified for WorkWell support by the Hub's work coaches.
- 6.7 Surrey County Council marketing for the programme launched in April .

7. Ashford Business Improvement District (BID) Feasibility Study

- 7.0 A Business Improvement District (BID) enables local businesses to invest collectively in improvements to their trading environment. The Council commissioned a feasibility study to explore the potential for a BID in Ashford.
- 7.1 The study was undertaken by place management consultants Heartflood and completed in April 2025
- 7.2 As part of the study a business consultation survey was undertaken in the area with 76 surveys completed at close on 14 April. Findings showed 61% support for the BID in principle, 31% undecided and 8% opposed.
- 7.3 Further detail on the study, risks and options to consider progressing to next stage are set out in a separate committee paper.

8. Branding and Web Development Project

- 8.0 To better promote economic development services, we have undertaken a branding and web development project. Consultants, Air Social, were commissioned to design new logos and websites aligned with the Council's branding guidelines and accessibility standards.
- 8.1 The project was completed in March delivering branding for Business Spelthorne, Spelthorne Business Hub and Spelthorne Jobs and Skills Hub, aligned with SBC brand guidelines. Branding and new websites will go live in June / July 2025.

9. Strategic Engagement

- 9.0 The Economic Development Manager represents the Council on the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group Economic Development Sub-Committee and Heathrow Airport's Local Growth Task Group promoting jobs at the airport and procurement opportunities for businesses.
- 9.1 Visit Staines appointed the Economic Development Manager to its Board of Directors to contribute to the forward plans for the Business Improvement District.