

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY WELLBEING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SEPTEMBER 2020

Title:

Economic Recovery Project – Recovery, Change and Transformation Programme

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Liz Townsend, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Leisure & Dunsfold Park

Head of Service: Zac Ellwood, Head of Planning & Economic Development

Key decision: No

Access: Public

1. Purpose and summary

- 1.1 This is an update report on progress of the Economic Recovery Project within the Council's Recovery, Change and Transformation Programme. It demonstrates how the local economy is an integral part of community wellbeing.

2. Recommendation

It is recommended that members note progress made and comment on future activities and priorities.

3. Background

The Economic Recovery Project was initiated as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been implemented to understand the impact on the local economy, understand the Council's ability to support the local economy and to establish any future actions required. It captures the work of the Economic Development Team as well as other actions by the Council that have supported the local economy. The Project reports to the RCT Programme Working Group and Board.

The economic health of the borough is clearly critical to the wellbeing of the local community in terms of prosperity, employment and opportunities. Waverley's economic health in relation to the rest of the country can be seen through Grant Thornton's recent Sustainable Growth Index which placed Waverley **23 out of 324** authorities. In comparison locally, Guildford were rated at 11, Surrey Heath 16, Elmbridge 20 and Runnymede at 9.

This index was based on areas beyond traditional measures of economic growth including:

- Prosperity
- Dynamism and opportunity
- Inclusion and equality
- Health, wellbeing and happiness
- Resilience and sustainability
- Community, trust and belonging

SCC are looking at this and the GVA datasets for Surrey to inform their activities moving forward.

Economic Recovery Project

At initiation, the Project defined eight key objectives:

- Undertake early SWOT analysis
- Develop and adopt interim Covid-recovery focused Action Plan for Economic Development Strategy (to cover next 12 months) – including SMART targets for more immediate task and finish actions
- Temporary restructure of Economic Development Team to re-purpose and resource it to be able to respond more effectively to Covid emergency – including focused administrative support and potentially additional officer(s) in short term
- Develop Collaboration Strategy for building and enhancing links with other authorities and partners (e.g. Inward Investment Coordinator at SCC, Business South EM3 LEP) avoiding duplication of effort and ensure value for money.
- Develop/purchase CRM system and robust database of Waverley businesses to enable better understanding of our exposure to economic impacts of Covid-19 and enable detailed, in-depth market sector analysis.
- Supporting the local workforce – providing or sourcing retraining and upskilling opportunities, including online training offering and dedicated library of resources. - Links to Waverley Training Services, Job Clubs, DWP etc.
- Revisit content and focus of Business Waverley website to ensure strategic approach towards local economic recovery
- Develop and publish updated Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan (longer term Strategy)

The Project is moving forward well with the SWOT completed as well as all associated project management documentation.

The Action Plan and the Reopening High Streets Safely fund (RHSS) are currently the main focus of work alongside the ongoing business support work of the Economic Development Team.

Action Plan

The Action Plan is nearing completion, it should be noted that many of the interventions have been implemented already given that the Economic Development Team and other Council Services began acting immediately in March before the RCT Programme had been created.

Within the Economy Recovery Action Plan, there are around 50 actions for the Economic Development Team to carry out, in partnership with colleagues and external organisations. These include activities such as the establishment of a new Business Task Force (which has had two meetings), the production of a new Waverley 'welcome pack' to encourage businesses and investment to locate in the borough, and the purchase and use of a new FAME database of useful local business data. Measures that have already been implemented successfully include a Covid-19 resource hub on the Business Waverley website, 'open for business, social media videos, downloadable signs and business impact surveys.

Reopening High Streets Safely Fund

When the Government announced that funding would be available for reopening high streets safely and that Borough Council's would be responsible for its spend, this task was incorporated into the work of the Economic Development Team. Liaison with local Town/Parish Councils and chambers of commerce resulted in a decision to share the funding and for each to lead on interventions appropriate for each area.

We are awaiting approval of several projects submitted to Government in order to claim back our allocation of the RHSS fund (up to £111,000). Proposed projects include:

- Waverley wide – purchase of FAME business analytics/database, footfall counters, facemask poster templates, open for business promotional videos, virtual high streets.
- Cranleigh Parish Council – Social distancing pavement and street signage.
- Godalming Town Council – Open for business advertising campaign, street hand sanitisers.
- Haslemere Town Council – Open for business advertising campaign.
- Farnham Town Council – Open for business advertising campaign, street hand sanitisers, social distancing pavement signage, facemasks, information campaign to businesses, social distancing planters.

It is important to note that there is strict criteria on eligible spend as it is European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding. We await a Government Contract Manager to be allocated to Waverley to help ensure eligibility which may result in some of the interventions not being able to be funded. The target is to complete funding agreements in September and October 2020 and so this will be the time that the Councils will be able to start to deliver the schemes.

It is hoped that members will note progress made and endorse, or make comments on the Economic Development Team's activities.

4. Relationship to the Corporate Strategy and Service Plan

This report directly relates to the Corporate Strategy objective of '*A thriving local economy, supporting business and local employment*', and also indirectly to all of the others.

5. Implications of decision

5.1 Resource (Finance, procurement, staffing, IT)

Additional resources, and redeployment of staff, to support the Economic Development team's activities have been/are being discussed internally.

5.2 Risk management

A risk register has been completed for the project.

5.3 Legal

Two colleagues from legal services are working to support the project, including the funding agreements to deliver to RHSS fund.

5.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion

There are no direct equality, diversity or inclusion implications in this report. Equality impact assessments are carried out when necessary across the council to ensure service delivery meets the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

5.5 Climate emergency declaration

The Economic Development team is supporting numerous strands of work which encourage greener and more sustainable business practices.

6. Consultation and engagement

The Economic Development team, chaired by the Portfolio Holder, has held meetings with the four Chambers of Commerce, Town Clerks and other local businesses throughout the Pandemic and start of the recovery to seek their thoughts and share knowledge.

7. Other options considered

7.1 Not applicable.

8. Governance journey

8.1 Executive.

Background Papers

There are background papers, as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972).

CONTACT OFFICER:

Name: Catherine Knight/Gill Dally

Position: Economic Development Manager/Project Officer

Telephone: 01483 523584

Email: Catherine.knight@waverley.gov.uk

Agreed and signed off by:

Legal Services: date

Head of Finance: date

Strategic Director: date

Portfolio Holder: date