



Economic Development, Transport and Tourism Scrutiny Commission

Date of Commission Meeting: 17 September 2020

Economic Recovery Plan

Report of the Director of Tourism, Culture and Investment

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Mike Dalzell
- Author contact details: 0116 454 4551 mike.dalzell@leicester.gov.uk

Suggested content

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report updates on the work to develop an initial economic recovery plan for the city

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the contents and comment on this report.

3. Supporting information

Background

- 3.1 The COVID 19 pandemic has caused a major economic crisis across the UK but this has been exacerbated in Leicester by the extended lockdown and restrictions that have hindered the re-opening of the city economy. Work has been underway to prepare an economic recovery plan but the publication of the plan has been held back until the local position becomes clearer. It is hoped the plan will be published formally in October 2020.
- 3.2 The Plan will help to re-set the agenda for the city given the negative comment in recent months that has overshadowed our positive image as a fast-growing economy and an attractive place to do business. The Plan will commit resource to developing and sharing positive stories about the city with key audiences through a structured communications plan for the next 12- 18 months.
- 3.3 The Plan will stress that we have a strong pipeline of new development both from the private sector in places like Waterside and the public sector through the universities and the NHS plans for hospitals. We continue to be a great location and have new strategies for driving further new investment including online resources, marketing collateral and enthusiastic city ambassadors. It will quote developers and others confirming their confidence in the future of the city.
- 3.4 The significance of the council's own capital programme as a driver of investment and change in the city will also be emphasised including for example to continue improvements to the public realm and to revamp St Margaret's bus station. The council has already acted quickly to create more safe corridors for cycling and walking and will develop longer term plans to strengthen these initiatives.

- 3.5 The Plan recognises the serious challenges that rising unemployment poses for the city. Youth unemployment is already higher than in 2009 and widely forecast to worsen in coming months. The Plan will set out how the council will use and extend the government's new Kickstarter programme for young people, including both directly employing people within the council and indirectly working with the private sector on the extension of contracts for vulnerable individuals.
- 3.6 Negotiations are under way to use space at the Adult Education centre as a central Youth Employment Hub to co-ordinate support for the Kickstarter programme. Negotiations are also under way with DWP to locate additional staff that they will recruit in council neighbourhood centres.
- 3.7 Working with both universities the Economic Regeneration service has secured £840k from the European Social Fund to create more than 70 paid internship opportunities for 2nd year students with local businesses as part of an overarching graduate retention strategy. The Plan will also include resource for the council to employ new graduate project officers and new apprentices. Many will be focused on support for new 'green economy' initiatives, reinforcing the council's climate emergency plan.
- 3.8 The council will call on other major employers in the city to similarly support and extend the government's schemes and in particular to support the employment and training of our most vulnerable groups who face becoming further marginalised. The council will use its procurement and planning powers to drive new social value schemes that maximise benefit from investment, working alongside community and voluntary organisations.
- 3.9 The council is investing £500k to support shopping centres across the city including resource for new shop fronts, new street furniture and other initiatives to improve local environments. Central government resources have been used to create a new pop up picnic area at Green Dragon Square, to increase capacity for outdoor seating, extend licenses and provide grants to enable businesses to buy new outdoor equipment. These have been very popular.
- 3.10 The council will step up plans to develop a new training facility for the textile sector and will work with local businesses, trade unions and statutory agencies to improve regulation, tackle bad practise and promote the positive opportunities to grow the sector and restore its reputation.
- 3.11 The Plan recognises that fresh thinking and new ways of working are needed to respond to the long term challenges and opportunities created by the pandemic. Working with the universities, local businesses and residents the council will establish work streams to explore key questions around home working, the future of the city centre, the scope for a 'green recovery', how to support sectors that are experiencing specific challenges such as retail, hospitality and the visitor economy and how to ensure vulnerable communities can best be supported.

4. Financial, legal and other implications

- 4.1 The implications of each aspect of the plan, (financial, legal, impact on climate change, and equalities), will be identified as the plan develops. As is noted in the

report, positively supporting the climate emergency plan and off-setting the negative impacts of economic recession on inequalities are important themes.

5. Is this a private report? - No

6. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why? - No