

Leicester

Economic Recovery

First Steps

Foreword

Covid-19 has delivered a seismic economic shock across the whole country and the extended lockdown in Leicester has put additional pressure on local businesses.

There is no doubt the economic challenges we face are enormous and the future remains uncertain but our communities have shown tremendous resilience in coping with the pandemic and can be proud of what we have already achieved.

This plan concentrates on what the council can now do quickly to help. This plan will establish a new Leicester Board of the city's major anchor organisations to champion economic recovery and respond to the challenges of climate change, poverty and inequality. Together we are the city's biggest employer, customer and developer. We can provide jobs, trade and support the city's key sectors. Collectively we can make a significant difference during a difficult time.

However innovative and helpful this maybe though, the task of rebooting the economy has to be led and financed by central government. The council has not got the resource or the powers to finance businesses, subsidise wages or waive VAT. In this Plan we call on central government to make new powers and resources available at a local level so that we can more effectively drive economic growth.

Our first priorities, working with local businesses have been to establish safety and confidence so that people can return to workplaces, public spaces, shops and places of entertainment. Huge progress has been made already. Work to improve our streets and spaces has been accelerated with new cycle routes and more space for pedestrians.

Our economic fundamentals were and remain strong. Leicester has been buzzing for years and will be again. Leicester is a great place to do business, a hot bed of innovation and remains a growing city with ambition.

The council's capital investment will continue to reshape our public realm, improve our transport infrastructure, grow the green economy, create exciting new visitor attractions and prompt others to invest.



City Mayor, Sir Peter Soulsby

However, we must understand the significant challenges that lie ahead. Cities are changing. How and where we all shop and work is changing at a speed like never before. Consequently all over the world, the spaces that cities have previously provided for work and retail are being rethought. Leicester is no different and we must understand, respond effectively and embrace this change so that the city can continue it's development fairly and sustainably.

And of course, recessions relentlessly expose and harden existing inequalities. As unemployment rises, more qualified workers may push those already on the economic margins even further away. Young people may struggle and more vulnerable groups could find themselves cast adrift. We must not allow this to happen. A focus for this plan will be for the council to prioritise recruitment for those who are most vulnerable. We call on other city employers and institutions to join us.

Now more than ever we need new ways of working, creative thinking and imagination so that these unprecedented challenges can be met, and our economic future is sustainable, inclusive and fair and supports healthy living and benefits everyone.

Sir Peter Soulsby. City Mayor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Soulsby'.



King Richard III statue in Cathedral Gardens

Creating new space for hospitality

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10 miles of new cycle lanes added within weeks

Supporting the Leicester Economy

1. Inspiring Confidence

1. Drive a multi-channel campaign highlighting what a great city Leicester is.
2. Develop a marketing and communications programme that conveys 'safety' messages in creative ways that also develop consumer and business confidence to attract people back to the city for business and enjoyment.

Through the new Transport Recovery and City Re-opening Plans the city council, working with partners, has already identified and delivered the critical interventions that will allow people to move safely around and keep our businesses and public spaces clean and safe. Campaigns to reinforce messages about safety, good hygiene and Covid-19 awareness have been targeted at communities throughout the city and these will continue.

Extended pavements, miles of new cycling routes and co-ordinated approaches to managing queues and tracking footfall density have all been put in place quickly. Enhanced cleaning regimes are operational, initiatives to create more

outdoor space for cafes are under way, actions to 'green' shopping streets have begun.

Detailed advice on Covid-19 risk management has been provided to businesses who are re-opening while a host of practical measures to support and encourage social distancing are in place. There has been proactive support from by the council's licensing and food and hygiene teams. The reopening of the city's night time economy was managed successfully by an excellent joint response by partners, much of this has been achieved working closely with business support organisations such as Leicestershire Police and the city centre BID Leicester company. That partnership approach will continue to be critical.

The city has pulled together through the extended lockdown. Despite the intense disappointment and the additional pressure and anxiety heaped on local businesses and residents, the city remains optimistic. Hundreds of volunteers delivering Covid-19 tests door to door is only one example of that resilience and determination.

2. Driving Investment

1. **Launch a new Invest in Leicester on-line platform showcasing the best investment and business growth opportunities throughout the city and county, targeting sectors that help us sustain and grow our economy.**
2. **Deliver a proactive communications plan to create new investment leads; use our social media channels to raise awareness of the city offer; support the private-sector led Team Leicester and develop the profile and impact of our Inward Investment Ambassador programme.**



Leicester University's new Space Park taking shape

Covid-19 arrived just at a time when the city economy was accelerating. Though some of that momentum has inevitably stalled the good news is that much of it will rebound quickly. Major investment is continuing and there is widespread confidence in the capacity of the city to bounce back. Despite Covid-19, new development is still coming out of the ground.

Although the bulk of the new actions proposed by this plan use revenue funds to tackle joblessness, the greater economic impact will come from the council's capital programme investment which alone is worth £160m and that of other partners which amount to many millions of pounds. Here are some examples.

- Leicester Space Park is taking shape with Phase 1 now emerging alongside a further 20,000 sq ft of new workspace adjacent to DOCK.
- At Waterside new residential communities are springing up next to the river with more than 350 units due to complete by end 2020.
- The construction of the first 17,000 sq ft office space at Waterside is underway and work is due to complete early 2021. This is the first of three office spaces totalling 55,000 sq ft.
- Hot on the heels of the new 250 bed Adagio / Novotel complex, 300 new bedspaces will come on stream before the end of 2021 at the old Granby Halls site, the refurbished former Fenwick store and at Haymarket House, with others in the planning pipeline.



New hotels and offices

- The city centre population has already doubled in recent years but there remains strong investor interest in new accommodation with more than 1500 new homes and apartments on site and in the pipeline at Waterside alone.
- The Connecting Leicester programme will further improve the quality of the public realm around the Clock Tower, pedestrianise Belgrave Gate / Church Gate, and St Martins, deliver upgrades for Horsefair St and Pocklington's Walk and extend new pedestrian and cycleways to neighbourhoods.
- A £13m revamp of St Margaret's Bus Station will begin in 2021.
- Feasibility work will be accelerated to bring forward new workspace in the Cultural Quarter, at Waterside, at the rail station, Gresham House (in the Old Fenwick site) and at Pilot House in King St.
- Leicester University's £200m Freeman's Common complex will complete in 2021.
- Work has started on a £1m refurbishment of 30,000 sq ft of space at Rutland House, paving the way for over 100 new jobs.
- Consultation has begun on a £450m Building Better Hospitals programme.
- The council is accelerating work with broadband and mobile network providers to increase consumer choice and competition and enhance the free WiFi offer.



Lane 7 bowling at Grand Central Station

New innovation space at Pioneer Park



3. Supporting Businesses

The LLEP's Business Gateway Growth Hub is the key co-ordination point for business support and advice. Excellent partnership working with business support agencies such as the East Midlands Chamber and the Federation of Small Businesses has enabled effective and timely business advice to local businesses around re-opening and re-engineering their operations and services.

BID Leicester has also provided advice, signage, technical solutions to support new ways of working, imaginative promotional campaigns and specific support for the Independent businesses in the city centre.

The city council was pro active to make businesses aware of the COVID re-opening guidance and more than 1500 secure check visits were carried out in the first couple of months after the Leicester lockdown was introduced.

It is clear that sectors such as hospitality and the visitor economy have been hit hard and will be amongst the last to recover whilst social distancing continues to restrict activity and consumer sentiment for travel and gathering remains weak.

The council is landlord to many businesses across the city already through managed workspaces such as at DOCK, Leicester Food Park and the LCB Depot. They are also platforms to promote all forms of business support whilst work on new workspaces at Pioneer Park and the old Fenwick building are under way.

1. Efficiently allocate business grant monies provided by central government.

The city council moved quickly to distribute grants to local businesses on behalf of central government. Some 6,500 businesses received the Small Business Grant and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants. More than £74m was distributed.

Government agreed to an additional £2.6m in business support recognising the greater burden on businesses arising from the extended lockdown in the city. Further support will be provided to compensate for closures required by the second national lockdown in November.

Frustratingly, as was the case throughout the country, some businesses were not supported if their rateable values didn't fit with government specified limits or because their activities were ineligible. This ruled out many established manufacturing businesses across the city, charities, gig economy and home workers and other self-employed businesses operated via Limited companies who didn't qualify for the Self Employment Income Support Scheme.

The city council launched a £3.5m Discretionary Business Support Scheme to address some of the gaps using remaining central government funds. The priorities were for charities, businesses in shared spaces that didn't have a separate rates liability, market traders, childcare settings, factories and workshops and key businesses with higher rateable values.

Picnic pop-up at Green Dragon Square



2. Support businesses to re-open safely and people to move safely.

As part of the plan to support re-opening, the council is developing initiatives to support businesses, particularly for the hospitality sector which have proved very popular. Initiatives include:

- Shop front improvement grants (up to £5k)
- Sustainable Travel Grants (up to £5k)
- 12 month free street café licence valid until September 2021
- Street café furnishing grant (up to £4k)
- Establishing a dedicated picnic area for diners in Green Dragon Square

3. Develop a programme to strengthen performance and image of textile sector.

We want to make sure that Leicester has the highest standards of employment; that workers are properly paid, well-trained, and work in safe environments. We want to support our factories to be the best they can, thereby growing an ethical, sustainable and productive economy.

The Leicester textile sector in particular has come under scrutiny amidst widespread allegations of poor and exploitative working practices. The sector employs approximately 10,000 workers across 1500 firms, across Leicester and Leicestershire, is an important plank of the city economy and the second largest concentration (to Manchester) of textile firms in the UK. We will work closely with suppliers, retailers, NGO's, sector organisations and enforcement bodies to support the textile sector and its supply chain.



New outdoor seating

Though the city council has no powers to check on working conditions inside a building, enforce the minimum wage, or monitor the legality of the workforce, it has been instrumental in recommending action to government and taking initiatives locally. Many of our leading textiles firms are dismayed by the negative publicity and a priority is to work with them to stress to the wider industry and the general public that the great majority of businesses fully abide with all legislative requirements and operate fairly and efficiently. The Council has also already appointed a co-ordinator to work with the various national enforcement agencies to improve intelligence sharing and co-ordinate action, the first post of its kind in the country. That post will be extended for two years to reinforce and consolidate the effective joint working in this area.

Considerable progress is being made to modernise the industry, increase productivity and create new employment opportunities. In recent years the council has provided bespoke business advice and used grant schemes to drive productivity improvements in the sector, particularly through leveraging better equipment. More than 25 firms have been supported with nearly £600k of grant finance that has leveraged £1.3m from businesses. Recent webinars have engaged textiles firms with essential information and guidance about Covid-19.

The council is prioritising resource to create a substantial textiles skills training initiative and is seeking investment and support from the industry and others to make this happen. Work will also promote the ethical and sustainability credentials of textile companies with an emphasis on life cycle analysis of products to encourage sustainability.

4. Working with partners, design effective business support for sectors in greatest need.

The council and its partners will look to develop other business support packages to address remaining gaps. Much of this work will be at a sub-regional or higher level and therefore the role of the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership will be crucial.

The pandemic will have long term impacts on the demand for skills and on how things are done. A key challenge for our employers, schools, FE and Higher Education institutions will be re-skilling to enable the future workforce and displaced workers to access new opportunities and deliver new services.

The priority now is interventions that keep businesses alive in the short term. In another six months we will know much more about the sectors that have been able to recover quickly and those that may have longer term need for support. This is a vital area that must be properly resourced by central government.



Supporting neighbourhood shops

Leicester Market food hall



5. Explore supply chain opportunities that can grow businesses and promote local buying and procurement.

Covid-19 has forced many businesses and institutions to consider the integrity and reliability of their supply chain. We can anticipate much greater reliance on local production, distribution and provenance. At the heart of the country's distribution networks Leicester and Leicestershire already enjoy a fast growing logistics industry though the knock-on effect of a "no-deal" Brexit will create a significant new challenge.

At a more local level, procurement choices and support for buying local could be crucial for independent businesses to survive. The council will use its procurement powers to encourage buying local and support campaigns from others such as the city centre BID to promote the local independent sector. It will also build on the council's social value charter that delivers economic, environmental and social benefit through the procurement and planning processes.

4. Celebrating Unique Leicester

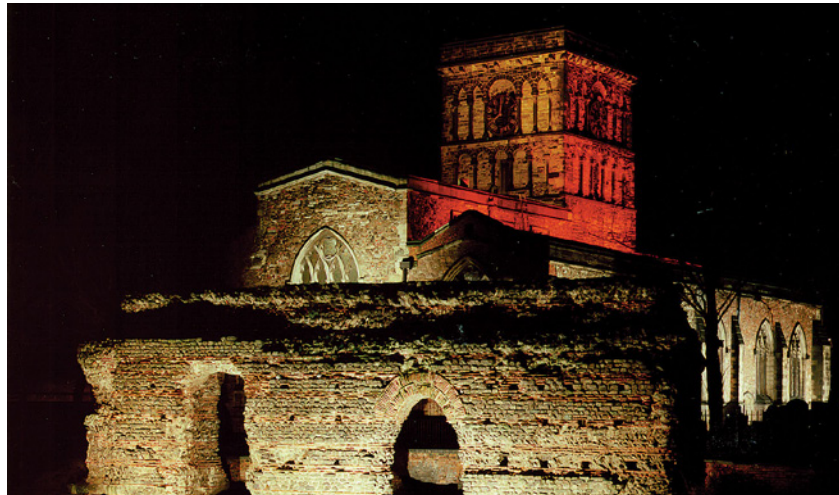
Our recovery plan draws on the qualities that make Leicester unique.

Our visitor economy will be driven by imaginative storytelling and investment in new attractions, building on the tourism growth plans launched in October 2019.

Our sense of enjoyment and love of coming together will be led by our diverse communities and driven by our world class arts, cultural and creative businesses.

Across the city there are plans for upgrading our cultural and heritage infrastructure. For example, the Phoenix 2020 project will deliver more screens and new digital galleries. A new heritage and learning centre will be the centre piece of the £11m + Leicester Cathedral Revealed project.

Light Up Leicester 2020



1. Deliver investment that improves the visitor economy offer and promotes the city.

The new visitor economy is starting to take shape. As overseas travel seems less attractive, new opportunities emerge in the growing 'staycation' market. The private sector is already delivering new accommodation. The council will invest to improve the visitor offer by:

- Relocating the Visit Leicester tourist information centre into the KRiii Visitor Centre in the heart of the Old Town
- Refurbishing the Jewry Wall museum to become a state of the art visitor attraction telling the story of Roman Leicester
- Extending and improving gallery space at Leicester Museum and Galleries (at New Walk)
- Creating new augmented-reality stories at Green Dragon Square and expanding our network of trails, heritage panels and guides
- Launching a new business tourism service
- Starting a major tourism campaign titled 'Uncover the Story' to tell unique stories about our major attractions to drive visitor traffic
- Working with partners such as the BID and Arts Council England to extend our festivals and events programmes to attract more people
- Working to reopen Haymarket Theatre with a new vibrant programme that complements existing city venues and engages all our communities



Savoy Street mural

2. Create a Cultural and Creative Industries Plan.

Work to develop a new plan for creative industries and cultural organisations was suspended due to Covid-19 and for many organisations and businesses the future remains uncertain. The impact has been severe at both ends of the spectrum with larger organisations like Curve and De Montfort Hall unable to operate while income streams have also dried up for the many freelancers who oil the wheels of the sector.

Though we are still a long way from normal, work has already re-started with organisations coming together to collaborate. Sharing data about audiences which we are and aren't working with will inform a strategy for engagement with those parts of the city missing out on the cultural offer. Other work streams include a focus on diversity and in particular a response to the Black Lives Matter movement.



Haymarket Theatre

Supporting our Communities

5. Jobs, Training and Skills

The hardest hit sections of the economy include retail, hospitality and the visitor economy with their disproportionately young and female workforce, though older workers needing to learn new (often digital) skills will also be impacted.

As recessions entrench existing inequalities, those already at the economic margin do worse i.e. the low paid, insecurely contracted, households and communities that have experienced multi-generational unemployment and low economic activity, young people not in education employment or training (NEET), care leavers, ex-offenders, people with disabilities, the low skilled etc. All the above can be magnified by the lens of ethnicity, with certain groups from black and asian backgrounds disproportionately disadvantaged.

Effective responses require partnership working with government agencies like DWP, with communities and voluntary organisations, training and educational providers and employers. The council will also work closely with the LLEP. The skills advisory panel of the LLEP and the economic recovery cell it facilitates are mapping issues and developing policy options. The LLEP is an important gateway to remaining European structural funds and shaping what will replace them including the proposed UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Many predict that intervention will gradually shift away from individual businesses and more to the support needed by individuals. The skills and retraining agenda will be crucial.

A recent city council scrutiny commission report also emphasised the importance of one to one support and mentoring for individuals. This enables a holistic approach to people with complex issues that improves their ability to secure and keep employment. Much of this has historically been funded in the city via ESF and / or anti poverty work funded by the National Lottery and other 'charitable' funders. It will be important for this plan to succeed that such work can continue.

Central government policy and resourcing also remains critical. More than 50,000 city jobs (from a city total of 176,000) have been directly supported by the Job Retention Scheme (JRS) and the Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEIS) through the first period of the pandemic. As the JRS scheme tapers it is not yet clear how many jobs will be retained but unemployment is rising sharply. Despite JRS unemployment levels have already climbed from 7,840 at February 2020 to 17,745 at September 2020.

Vulnerable groups will lose out competing for jobs against better qualified workers also forced to search for new work. We need to make sure central government schemes work well locally but also add value, particularly where the approach or resource level is inadequate.

The government's new Kickstart programme announced in July 2020 offers 6 month work experience opportunities for young people. It encourages employers by covering employee wages costs based on 25 hrs at the National Minimum Wage. Previous experience of the Future Jobs Fund and the Step Up programme suggests 6 months is too short to generate meaningful benefit for either employer or employee.

As an employer the council is committed to a significant re-structuring of the current workforce to create new opportunities for vulnerable individuals. That will be done by ring fencing vacancies to create new positions within our structures providing opportunities across all qualification ranges from vocational to graduate and across white collar and blue collar services.

- 1. As an employer the council will create 30 Kickstart posts to be for 12 months, paid at Living Wage Foundation rates targeted at individuals from vulnerable backgrounds.**
- 2. The council will seek support from the LLEP and other partners to create a fund that enables selected private sector employers to also extend Kickstart contracts within SMEs for individuals from vulnerable backgrounds.**

3. **The council will recruit an additional 30 apprentices across service areas with contracts of at least 18 months over the next two years, in addition to the current year figure (30).**
4. **The council will recruit at least 10 new Graduate Project Officers for minimum 12 month contracts in each of the next two years in addition to the current year figure (12).**

The council, working with partners, will encourage other employers to sign up to a Leicester Charter, committing themselves to similarly recruit vulnerable employees including young people, women, people with disabilities, BAME communities, care leavers, older workers etc. The council will also work with other large employers to pool apprenticeship levy funding to support local small to medium sized businesses.

5. **Develop a Leicester Charter to promote recruitment of vulnerable groups.**

The council will support the bid to create a new Institute of Technology to capitalise on the identity of Leicester with the space sector.

The new offer would combine Leicester College's track record in vocational-technical training, University of Leicester's expertise in space science and engineering and De Montfort University's excellence in digital and cyber skills.

Finding work



The council will work with DWP to place new work coaches in community settings across the city and to co-ordinate support for young people in the city centre working with schools, the Connexions service, voluntary and community sector organisations and local colleges.

6. **Co-ordinate support for young people and support Work Coaches in Neighbourhood settings.**

The adult education service will develop a minimum of 5 new sector based work academies for 50 individuals, working closely with DWP to identify new areas of job opportunity including within the public sector itself.

The council will work with DWP and other partners to enable people to switch into sectors such as construction, food, textiles, tech/space where we have already established pathways and set up similar pathways for other sectors with growth potential such as logistics and care.

7. **Develop at least 5 new SBWAs per year for the next two years.**

The council led Employment Hub will develop its online support offer, including new 'virtual' jobs fairs and a new redundancy and recruitment service working with Futures, DWP and the Adult Education Service. It will build on the work to promote apprenticeships in local schools and undertake research to map and then better link up local neighbourhood employers with job seekers in disadvantaged communities. Work is already under way to tie employment opportunities to the investment pipeline noted earlier and to other significant investments, e.g. the Fosse Park extension.









8. **Develop and extend the services of the Employment Hub.**

Covid-19 has shown how digital skills and devices support public engagement, remote working, distance learning and access to city services. However households that lack digital skills and devices or where family members must compete to use them are at a serious disadvantage. The council with third sector partners will develop a Digital Inclusion Project to recycle spare PCs, laptops and other devices to priority households and support people to use them.

9. Support Digital Skills.

Austerity economics for more than a decade has cemented economic insecurity and inequality. Many councils have been encouraging a focus on ‘inclusive growth’ to ensure that economic growth benefits all.

The council will use the ‘Framework for Inclusive Growth’ developed by the New Local Government Network (NLGN) to inform, assess and report on our economic interventions.

	 REGULATE	 INCENTIVISE	 SHAPE	 FACILITATE
 EMPLOYERS	Leverage Contracts	Business Support	Employment Charters	Seek input on Training and Education
 CITIZENS	Training Clauses	Graduate Retention Schemes	Reskilling Schemes	Communities Taking the Lead
 PARTNERS	Procurement Processes	Foster Inclusive Practice	Remodel Transport Systems	Bringing Stakeholders Together
 PLACES	Planning Policies	Environmental Sustainability	Reviving Spaces	Asset Transfer

A framework for cultivating local inclusive growth in practice

10. Use the Framework for Inclusive Growth to inform and report on our Plan.

Throughout the pandemic the voluntary and community sector along with a significant number of volunteers in communities have worked closely with the council and other agencies in supporting affected and vulnerable people. The Council is working on a future strategy around engagement and support for the sector.

11. Work with the Voluntary and Community Sector to assist vulnerable communities during recovery, including support for the role of volunteering in the development of new skills.



Supporting small businesses

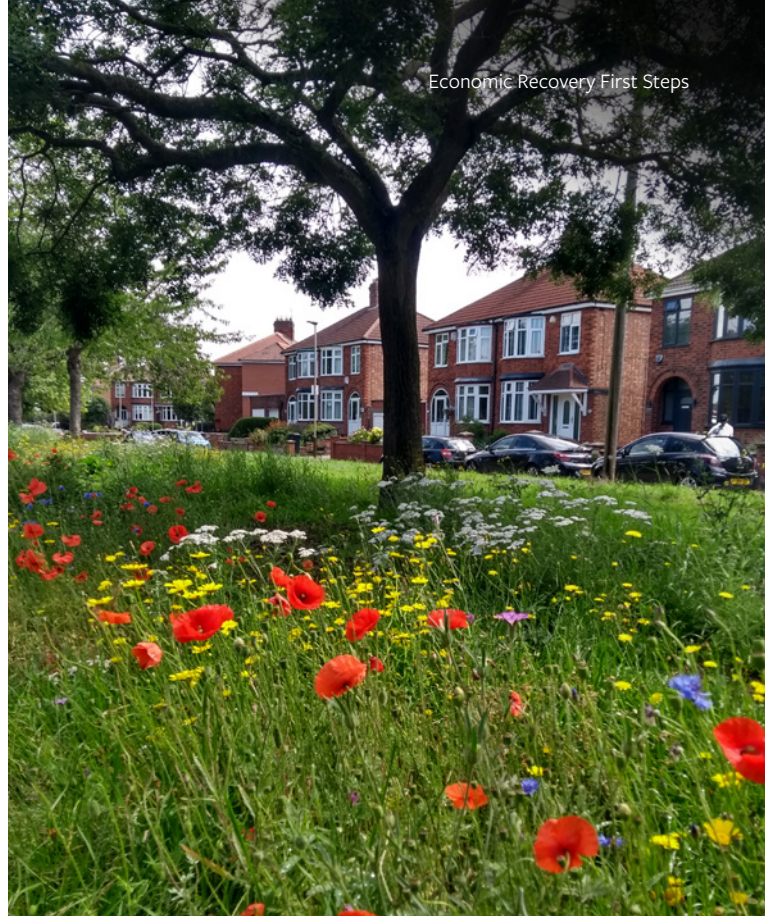
6. Climate Emergency and Green Recovery

We want to see investment that helps deliver a green recovery and carbon neutrality by 2030. This will make the city more resilient by ensuring new developments and refurbished buildings require less energy and are more resilient to inevitable rising energy costs. Our detailed strategy for tackling the climate emergency can be found online – **strategy documents**. There is considerable scope for the council to work with other partners such as the hospitals and universities to ensure that all large scale capital projects contribute to climate emergency priorities and maximise benefit for local residents. Here are some of the key actions that will help drive a green economic recovery.

1. **Support green jobs, tackle the climate emergency and make more environmental data available on the city's Open Data Platform.**
2. **Undertake a feasibility study on smart sustainable districts with a net zero carbon footprint and that support green growth and employment.**



Encouraging cycling



Biodiversity begins at home

- **Saffron Lane – phase 2 housing** – Building 38 new A-rated energy efficient, low-carbon council houses
- **Loft insulation** – £100,000 per year to upgrade loft insulation in council housing
- **Boiler replacements** – £3.2 million per year for new modern, energy-efficient A-rated condensing boilers with heating controls
- **LED communal lighting** – At least £150,000 per year to replace lighting in communal areas on council housing estates with energy-efficient LEDs, until all areas completed
- **Cycling and walking pop-ups** – Delivering road-space reallocation, light segregation and pavement widening in local shopping centres
- **Green BELLE** – Grants to support small and medium-sized businesses to save energy, cut costs and reduce carbon emissions
- **Decarbonisation** – The government's £1bn Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme offers grants to fund energy efficiency and low carbon heat upgrades. The council are discussing schemes with fund managers Salix Finance
- **Green Homes** – Council has secured £1m for E-on to deliver solid wall insulation, air source heat pumps and solar water heating and energy efficiency measures to 100 homes



New thinking needed

What Will Help

7. Tapping New Ideas

Covid-19 has been hugely disruptive and damaging to the economy but it is also driving new innovation and challenging long held assumptions. The technology solutions that support remote working won't disappear. The growth of the paperless office has been dramatically accelerated. The potential (and shortcomings) of home working is beginning to be better understood. The re-definition of many historically low paid occupations as 'essential' also challenges current arrangements for contracts, pay, job security and status.

The scope for greater economic activity at local level via more home working and less commuting and the consequent challenges for city centres are becoming apparent. The desirability of building on community action and the growth in neighbourly contact is obvious. The need to shorten supply chains, to support local production and provenance through procurement and to tackle digital exclusion have all been reinforced.

The city must come together to respond to the challenge of the Black Lives Matter movement and tackle racism with new thinking and increased urgency.

How we organise our working lives in future, how organisations rethink their property requirements, how the city centre re-invents itself and how economic momentum can support a 'green' recovery are key questions.

Organisations across the city are already working on a Smart Leicester strategy. The significant shift to home working and development of technology solutions arising from the pandemic will accelerate the move to a more connected digital city run in real time.

Many institutions are already embarking on this re-imagining of the future. De Montfort University has been working with staff and students to consider how we can build a better city. As part of this recovery plan the council, working with partners and particularly the universities and business support agencies will develop a range of seminars, workshops and research projects. This will create a menu of new ideas, opportunities and challenges that will drive a longer term plan and vision for the city. The council will launch a Smart Leicester City Challenge offering small grants of up to £5k to stimulate innovative projects that benefit the city.

- 1. Create a programme of research, seminars and workshops to accelerate new thinking.**



Working together for better progress

8. Partners, Progress and Planning

Economic recovery will engage employers across the public, private and third sectors, business support organisations, communities, educational and training providers, trade unions, investors, property developers and others. Developing effective solutions will require us to build and strengthen existing partnerships and create new ones.

Individual partnerships and projects will have their own targets and ways to measure progress. At the level of the city economy it is also vital that we create a meaningful way to see if we are making progress.

The council will work with partners to generate a regular reporting mechanism, updated at least quarterly. That data will be made available on line through the city’s Open Data Platform and will combine elements such as unemployment and claimant data, retail occupancy data, local intelligence, footfall data etc.

1. Establish an on line tracking mechanism for city economic recovery.

The plan for economic recovery in the city clearly needs to align with other council plans for transport, regeneration, tourism, tackling the climate emergency, anti-poverty initiatives and developing a Smart city. Beyond the council the strategies of our key partners including Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP), the city centre BID and the Midlands Engine will be crucial.

Central government plans for investing in infrastructure and transport, reforming the planning system, tackling obesity, supporting skills development and re-training will all have major impacts on the city. Our plans must be flexible and agile to respond to new opportunities and to create joined up services.

The extent of the challenges we face and the resource that may or may not be available from government is not yet known. This plan will be updated in 2021 when the work streams established here have had time to generate new ideas and when the resource picture is clearer.

2. Prepare an updated, economic recovery plan in 2021.

9. Government Support

Economic recovery should primarily be financially resourced by central Government but directed and prioritised by the council and local partners. This section sets out some examples of how Government could help, by promoting a shorter term ‘softer landing’ for local businesses, together with medium to longer term targeted interventions to support key themes of this plan.



Supporting businesses

“Softer Landing” for businesses in 2021/22

The extended lockdown may have left the city economy weaker than elsewhere, and therefore in need of more support than some other areas of the country. The aim is to give businesses breathing space, together with greater assurance of future financial support, so they are able and motivated to keep trading and to retain staff through to the spring/summer of 2021 when trading conditions may start to improve. Support should be targeted, driven by local priorities and announced at an early stage. Government funded localised support might include for example:

- Business rates relief for small businesses and the retail/hospitality/leisure sector in 2021/22.
- On-going business support grants to keep viable businesses trading, including larger manufacturing businesses which have not received business grants thus far.
- An additional job retention bonus that pays targeted city businesses in the summer of 2022 for retained jobs.
- Retaining the lower rate of VAT for hospitality in the city for a longer period.



A brighter future for Leicester?

Driving Investment

- New funds for ‘shovel ready’ capital projects and key strategic longer term growth schemes, continuing to both kick-start the local economy and secure longer term recovery, growth and jobs.
- Building improvement funding – to make buildings safe for any future viruses (such as internal design and ventilation), enabling the central area in particular to maintain and develop a vibrant office sector longer term. Also addressing climate change priorities.
- A localised rates retention agreement to encourage Tax Increment Financing schemes – as with enterprise zones, but on a wider scale, linking with national changes to business rates arrangements.
- Exploration of a top-slice of the growth on national tax revenues in Leicester, to provide incentives and further funding to support a range of initiatives.
- Although not necessarily just a local ask, a sustainable local government finance model that enables the Council to plan its services and interventions on a longer term and more sustainable footing would be of great value.

Climate Emergency and Green Recovery

- A Green Industrial Growth package, including grant funding to decarbonise urban areas, improve energy efficiency and develop skills.

Supporting Businesses

- Commit to ensuring that businesses in the city receive comparable support to other areas affected by local lockdowns and socialisation restrictions.
- Government funded rate relief and/or business grants for new expansions and start-ups, in priority areas and sectors.
- Funding to support parts of the local textile sector to make the necessary improvements to meet legal and ethical standards, together with funding for coordinated and targeted enforcement activity across Government departments and agencies.
- Measures to enable the textile sector to expand its sales, taking advantage of the emerging trend of more retailers seeking UK suppliers, together with exploiting post-Brexit trade agreements and markets.

Supporting our Communities

- Funding for an enhanced skills and retraining programme, aimed at reducing / minimising unemployment, increasing the supply of skilled people and enabling young people to enter the workforce.
- Extended resource to support Digital Inclusion amongst our deprived and diverse local communities.

This document is based on information that was available and correct at the time of going to print.

