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| Title: | Economic Recovery Plan Progress |
| Purpose: | To provide board members with an update against the actions within the Economic Recovery Plan approved by members at the September board meeting. |
| Recommendation: | That board members note the progress against the recovery plan actions. |
| Impact on Risk Register | The risks for Buckinghamshire organisations and delivery partners remains significant and is reflected in the Risk Register. |

The Economic Recovery Plan for Buckinghamshire was signed off at the last meeting of this board on September 18th and was submitted as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review at the end of September. As highlighted at that meeting it was intended for the plan to be actively monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. A copy of the plan can be found via the attached link [Economic Recovery Plan](#)

The national economic outlook remains highly volatile, we are currently in the midst of a second national lockdown, significant restrictions will remain for business when the national lockdown ends on December 2nd with Buckinghamshire being placed in tier 2 of the national framework. Ahead of the latest lockdown we had anticipated to start transitioning from immediate **Response** to the **Renew** and **Rebound** phases of the plan, in reality the emphasis has swung back to then response phase to help build resilience against future economic shocks and minimising unemployment growth.

On a more positive front significant progress has been made in vaccine development and plans are being developed for mass vaccination and testing programmes throughout 2021. Buckinghamshire Council has received £11.8m to provide emergency support for businesses affected by the second lockdown or whose income has been severely hit over the past 12 months.

The following highlights track some of the progress on the plan delivery over the past 2 months.

Team Liaison – As in lockdown 1, a more regular Executive Team briefing has been initiated on a weekly basis between the senior management within the Buckinghamshire Council and the LEP and Growth Hub. This weekly briefing has enabled the latest economic insight to be shared alongside health data and helped to co-ordinate messaging to community, business groups and for emerging insight or feedback to be shared with the Buckinghamshire MP's.

Buckinghamshire Business Grants – Buckinghamshire Council have been allocated £11.8m to support businesses impacted by Covid 19. At the weekly meeting the outline criteria was shared prior to implementation and the launch of the new schemes have been widely promoted via the Bucks Business First network.

The grants are for businesses who are facing challenges as a result of the latest COVID-19 restrictions and will offer grants of up to £3,000 per business. There are two different types of grants available and they are being managed directly by Buckinghamshire Council.

- **Local Restriction Support Grant (LRSG)** – is available for businesses that have been required to close because of the national restrictions and is linked to rateable value. [Click here.](#)
- **Additional Restriction Grant (ARG)** – is available for businesses which have been adversely impacted by the latest lockdown restrictions with a 30% or more reduction in income in November 2020 when compared to November 2019, but are not eligible for the Local Restriction Support Grant or the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme . [Click here.](#)

The full criteria are available on the [Buckinghamshire Council website](#) . The initial response to the grants funding programme has been strong with 1617 applications made to the Local Restrictions Support Grant and 482 to the Additional Restrictions Grant by Tuesday 24th November. The funds will remain open until December 18th.

Vaccine & Testing Support Measures – the positive news around the success of a number of Covid 19 vaccine tests has shifted the focus of the local resilience programmes to facilitating mass vaccination and testing centres in 2021. Accessible public sites that can accommodate large volumes of vehicles are currently being sought throughout Buckinghamshire with both the LEP and BBF assisting in sourcing potential commercial business premises that may meet requirements. Through our skills programme we are also looking at ways in which the training for staff to deliver the vaccine programmes can be advanced, potentially within existing health, social care and nursing qualifications.

Business Support programmes – Buckinghamshire Business First Growth Hub have so far recruited 87 businesses to participate in the Peer Review. Peer Networks is a national peer-to-peer networking programme for SME leaders that want to grow and develop their organisation for future success, enabling businesses to make connections that go far beyond networking. Initially only available to businesses with in excess of 5 employees, the criteria for participation has been lowered to 2 or more employees following feedback from BBF.

Both LEP and Growth Hub have also been working with Bosch to see how their acclaimed “start-up harbour” could be brought into Buckinghamshire utilising apprenticeship levy funding.

Training & Skills Support – One of the key areas highlighted within the recovery plan was the need for training providers to be responsive to the delivery of flexible training programmes for young people whose original work or career plans may have been knocked off course by the Covid crisis. I am pleased to say that both of our Universities have addressed this challenge, in 2021 Bucks New University are delivering for the first-time foundation courses and condensed year one programmes for their regular degree programmes starting in January. The University of Buckingham, who themselves are no strangers to innovative and responsive training programmes are starting a new Masters Degree in Applied Enterprise and Innovation for January 2021 entrants.

The first events within the DWP funded Screen Skills for Aviation programme have also taken place from Pinewood Studios, providing support for up to 1,000 individuals from the aviation industry with an online introduction to the screen industries and receive support in identifying their transferable skills.

Westcott Business Plan Development – The new LGF Funded Innovation Centre at the Westcott Enterprise Zone was opened on October 19th by Greg Smith MP as part of a virtual opening event, the new centre already has its first occupants with Spanish Rocket Propulsion developers AVS taking space with a view to developing a permanent presence on site in the

coming months. Running in parallel to this we have accelerated development work on the business case preparedness for both the DISC Centre and the full 10 year business plan proposition with Henman Strategy having been engaged to ensure that we have a robust full business case platform for both short and long term plans, to develop an investment prospectus and to assist the placement and promotion of Westcott to secure funding from 2021 fiscal events.

Insight & Lessons Learned - It was originally proposed to undertake future scenario planning at the beginning of 2021, however with the continued economic uncertainty we feel that this is too soon to undertake this type of operation. We will continue to monitor and review national indicators and will re-consider the commissioning of scenario models later in 2021.

Board members are asked to: Note the progress against the recovery plan actions.