

## **Report to Council 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021**

### **Cllr Neil Reeve, Portfolio Holder for the Economy, Investment and Corporate Strategy**

#### **Subject: Update on the local economy**

The Economic Recovery Plan was approved by Council on 8 December 2020. The Plan provides a framework for activities up to 31/3/2022 and a detailed action plan is in development, reflecting both actions to address local immediate needs and the longer-term ambitions of the Council to address the Climate Change agenda.

Unemployment is still a concern and as we approach the end of the furlough scheme we are expecting the numbers to grow. There are also a growing number of closed or closing down businesses in our town centres. The Economic Development Team has been focused on getting clear messages of support to local businesses, and to those residents who are facing redundancy or are already unemployed.

Direct communications will be included with all Council Tax and Business Rates bills sent out in March this year, and a monthly page of information is being included in local newspapers. We will be asking for your help to share these messages as widely as possible as there are still many businesses unaware that the Council is a source of information, advice and guidance.

The Economic Development Team have been supporting the Business Rates Team, who are administering national business support grants, by dealing with enquiries from individual businesses. In addition, they processed 164 grant applications for the Essex Business Adaptations Fund, paying out £174,000 to 133 businesses to help them make changes to their business delivery models so that they can continue to serve customers. These have included development of online services, Perspex screens, patio heaters, outdoor seating and many other items.

Work continues to support businesses to deliver on-line, with free social media training available to 500 businesses, and the [www.clickitlocal.co.uk](http://www.clickitlocal.co.uk) online platform expanding the number of local businesses offering their products

Recruitment is underway with some additional staff resources starting with the Economic Development Team by early March, which will help to deal with the growing number of enquiries from individual businesses needing help and advice.

Future challenges will include the safe re-opening of the town and village centres, welcoming residents back to the shops, personal care and hospitality businesses that make up these vital centres.

Two proposals have been submitted to Cambridge University Judge Business School as potential projects for their management Studies Tripos Project, specifically regarding economic development:

- New businesses for Uttlesford
- The green economy in Uttlesford

Both projects have passed the first hurdle and we should hear soon whether either will proceed.