

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 1 July 2021

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Neil Reeve, Portfolio Holder for the Economy, Investment and Corporate Strategy

Title: Economic Recovery Plan Delivery Plan

Author: Linda Howells, Economic Development Officer **Key decision:** No
lhowells@uttlesford.gov.uk

Summary

The Economic Recovery Plan was approved by Council on 8/12/2020. It provides a framework for the activities delivered by the Economic Development Team up to 31/3/2022, while also looking to lay foundations for the future.

At the time of writing the original plan the UK economy had experienced lockdown for several months from March 2020, and a one-month lockdown in November 2020. The local economy had also been subject to Government Tier 2 restrictions from mid – October and was subject to them again in in early December.

The local economy continued to be subject to Tier 2 restrictions throughout most of December, with restrictions increasing to Tier 4 after the Christmas period, before again being locked down in early January. Currently easing is in line with the Government’s ‘Roadmap to Recovery’, but there is possible doubt about the timing of the next steps.

The Delivery Plan, attached as Appendix 1, provides a more detailed plan and has been produced to reflect the ever-changing current circumstances.

The focus of the Economic Recovery Plan Delivery Plan continues to be on business support in the immediate and short term rather than longer-term plans and the spend profile has been adjusted accordingly. In addition, the Government has provided discretionary grant funds, the Additional Restrictions Grant, which can be used to fund business support initiatives that meet the eligibility criteria. These funds are only available in the year to 31/3/2022 and will be used to support some activities within the Delivery Plan in this year.

Staff numbers in the Economic Development Team have increased by 1.5FTE with a view to increasing further in the short term. This has enabled the Team to increase service delivery, to support larger numbers of individual businesses, and ensure that Government business support grants are paid to eligible businesses within the Government’s required timelines.

The original Economic Recovery Plan has four priority work areas. The Delivery Plan has five priorities. The following table identifies the spend profile proposed in the December Plan document, and the current Delivery Plan proposals.

	Dec 2020 proposed spend	June 2021 proposed spend
Priority 1 – Business	£170,000	£183,570

Engagement and Support		
Priority 2 – Information, Advice and Guidance	£40,000	£21,450
Priority 3 – Skills and Training	£35,000	£45,750
Priority 4 – Creating Jobs / Inward Investment	£110,000	£85,000
Priority 5 – Creating a “greener” local economy		£8,000
Management of the Delivery Plan		£4,000
TOTAL	£355,000	£347,770

The Delivery Plan, attached as Appendix 1 to this report was discussed and commended at Scrutiny Committee on 17th June 2021.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet approve the Economic Recovery Plan Delivery Plan.

Financial Implications

Spend from the agreed Business Recovery Fund in 2021/22 of £347,770 as outlined in the above table “total” row.

Background Papers

Economic Recovery Plan approved by Council on 8/12/2020.

Impact

1.

Communication/Consultation	Economic Development Team officers are in constant contact with local businesses and aware of the challenges they are currently facing. Officers are working with both business networks and individual businesses and their concerns and feedback are factored in the Delivery Plan actions.
Community Safety	None
Equalities	Delivery Plan activities are intended to support businesses across the district.
Health and Safety	None

Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	Developing a “greener” economy is a key priority for the Economic Recovery Plan. Sustainability underpins all activities.
Ward-specific impacts	Delivery Plan actions provide support to businesses across the whole district
Workforce/Workplace	The Economic Development Team currently has 3.5 FTE staff with recruitment planned to 1 FTE and 1 Apprentice. Pre-pandemic staffing levels were 2 FTE. The expansion has been essential to deliver core business support services.

Risk Analysis

2.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Level 2 – continuation of Government restrictions may require spend profile to be adjusted	A third wave of infections is predicted by modellers. Unknown whether vaccination programme will provide the required protection	Spend profile may need to focus on immediate business support and away from any longer-term initiatives	Promote business resilience building to be able to continue to trade if future restrictions are required.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.