

RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**3 SEPTEMBER 2020****REPORT OF HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND ELECTIONS****A.1 'BACK TO BUSINESS' PLANNING**
(Report prepared by *Keith Simmons*)**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

Through this report the Committee is invited to confirm its submission to the Council's Cabinet on the approach to the 'Back to Business' agenda as restrictions on social and economic activities ease following the lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting on 13 August 2020 the Committee considered the issue of 'Back to Business' agenda and submissions from a variety of sources as to what should be undertaken to support businesses and residents to address the threats arising from the turmoil due to the pandemic and its associated lockdown and to be able to take the positive opportunities that also present themselves.

The discussion at the meeting on 13 August has been captured in the Minutes of that meeting. The opportunity has been taken subsequently to review the outcome of the discussion and to look at what the Cabinet should be recommended to do next to help achieve a coherent and integrated response to the 'Back to Business' agenda locally.

DETAILED INFORMATION

The discussion at the Committee's meeting on 13 August around 'Back to Business' identified many specific measures that Councillors considered important to the delivery of a sustainable and vibrant economy that addressed some of the inequalities that exist in the District. The discussion on this item, as recorded in the Minutes of that meeting are set out at Appendix A to this report.

In addition, and in relation to the Committee's consideration of the Outturn 2020/21 item at its meeting on 13 August, there was a desire to hone further the Council's delivery of projects to ensure that every penny of public funds was effectively used to deliver against the Council's Corporate Plan if the ambitions of that Plan were to be realised to their maximum. In this regard the Committee recommended the following (as referenced in the Minutes):

- (a) *Implement the invitation from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance and Governance to convene a meeting with the Chairman of this Committee, and other interested Councillors, to examine in detail the financial reserves and provisions to look at progressing further and speedier with those schemes or releasing the funds with a view to the outcome of that meeting being reported to the meeting of this*

Committee to be held on 21 September 2020;

- (b) Note this Committee endorses the decision to allocate £862k from the 2019/20 General Fund Outturn variance to 'Back to Business' Initiatives and associated activities; and*
- (c) Consider establishing a corporate dedicated project completion resource, with project management skills, with a direction to progress projects and priorities of corporate significance to the Council, support delivery milestones for those projects and unlock capacity and other issues that could frustrate delivery of those projects and priorities.*

Through the combination for the review of the Council's reserves and provisions and the establishment of a dedicated project completion resource it is envisaged that we can build further confidence that progress with achieving the approved Corporate Plan (approved by full Council) does not falter for any of a range of reasons.

The above decisions concerning the Outturn 2020/21 and the discussion around 'Back to Business' suggest that a clear and deliverable action plan is developed by the Cabinet taking in the range of proposals. These proposals now need to be assessed and the component parts examined to identify the various steps that are necessary to achieve them. The timing and financing of those proposals needs to be thoroughly worked through to avoid wasted energy and public funds. Initially, schemes and services that are already in place or were anyway going to be implemented in this timeframe may be better started or refocussed with minimal delay. This will ensure that the Council does not defer intervention while the range of proposals are worked on.

As 'back to business' steps are developed they may themselves suggest related or associated steps are also taken. Such associated and related steps may help deliver enhanced benefits and maximise the deliverables that can be achieved through the 'back to business' agenda. To help encourage this approach it would assist to theme the proposals. Through an agreed themed plan a more coherent approach can be encouraged. A suggested theme for the 'back to business' plan is set out at Appendix B to this report. This itself identifies that in many areas proposals will fit into more than one theme and thereby achieve advantage across those themes.

The 'back to business' agenda is not intended to replace the Corporate Plan and so there will be activities on-going to achieve that Plan and it is vital that this activity continues. Indeed, some of the more long term proposals arising from the 'Back to Business' discussion will fit well with delivery of the Corporate Plan goals.

In view of the above, the Committee is invited to confirm its decisions of 13 August 2020 in respect of the outputs from its discussion of 'Back to Business' (and the Outturn 2020/21) and to recommend that the Cabinet approves the necessary work to assess the various 'Back to Business' proposals, proceeds to implement those schemes and services that can be speedily focussed on 'Back to Business', develops an Action Plan of assessed and costed proposals (based on short, medium and long-term measures) and sets about the delivery of that Action Plan.

In developing the Action Plan, the themed approach at Appendix B is recommended to the Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:

- (a) confirms its decisions of 13 August 2020 in respect of the outputs from its discussion of 'Back to Business' (and the Outturn 2020/21, as set out in this report);**
- (b) recommends that the Cabinet approves the necessary work to assess the various 'Back to Business' proposals, proceeds to implement those schemes and services that can be speedily focussed on 'Back to Business', develops an Action Plan of assessed and costed proposals (based on short, medium and long-term measures) and sets about the delivery of that Action Plan.**
- (c) Further recommends to Cabinet that the themed approach to 'Back to Business' at Appendix B be adopted.**

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Extract from the Minutes of the Committee's meeting on 13 August in respect of 'Back to Business' setting out the outputs from the discussion at the meeting around 'back to Business'.

Appendix B - the themed approach to 'Back to Business' proposed to be adopted.

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SERVICES COMMITTEE OF 13 AUGUST 2020**74. REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (GOVERNANCE) - A.2 - TENDRING BACK TO BUSINESS PRIORITIES AND PROJECTS 2020/21**

The Committee had before it a report of the Assistant Director of Governance regarding the development of 'Priorities and Projects' that was incorporated as part of the Council's Back to Business and Recovery Plan, and Performance Management framework for the Council for 2020/21 in advance of any decisions by Cabinet/Council on those matters. The report included an Appendix prepared by the Assistant Director of Finance which drew together the numerous proposals and concepts arising from a survey of businesses locally, from individual Councillors and from Officers to help the District to build back better following the economic and social impact locally of the lockdown associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chairman of the Committee expressed his appreciation for the work of the Deputy Leader in launching the initiative to gather ideas to address locally the challenges arising from the lockdown.

The Committee was invited to identify its collective view on the themes and activities that should be key strands of work to focus on helping the district recover and included restarting the local economy, keeping residents and visitors safe and harnessing the power of the voluntary sector to deliver much needed services and improve the quality of life locally.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Cabinet considers the following as it formulates its back to business strategy and the content of that strategy:

- In considering business development and encouragement, there should be an element that recognises the enduring and ongoing need for a range of service trades (such as plumbing, engineering, building and carpentry) – support for those business should not be overlooked and there should be engagement with other agencies to support training opportunities locally in the skills and competencies to work in those service trades.
- Similar to the above, there was an opportunity to look at opportunities to support skills development and business location associated with the off shore wind farm industry and green initiatives to lower energy usage and costs associated with that energy use (around heating, insulation and cooling) and providing services to other businesses to harness the same energy reduction measures.
- The District had tremendous potential for tourism. But this needed to harness the separate and distinct elements across the District. Branding around the opportunities and attractions of the Tendring Peninsula were critical to this to avoid visitors just visiting one town or village and not benefitting from the richness that the wider District has to offer. Part of this would be about developing and maintaining up to date directories of places to go and enjoy, to look early at promoting events to be held in 2021, to harness and reflect national and international interest such as in the years of the Olympic Games to promote related activities locally, but also to look at events and activities to try to appeal to potential visits throughout each month of the year. Increasing access to information about points and walks of interest, including facilitating elements of sampling digitally those walks, would increase interest in the Tendring peninsula going forward. This would also positively contribute to encouraging local people to take more walks and thereby improving the health of the population.

- There was a need to address the needs of our communities and provide, perhaps limited at first, but opportunities for the public that are in Clacton-on-Sea to safely come into the Town Hall so that they can be sign-posted to services that they require. In addition, the Council should review its spending power to ensure that it was as sustainable in energy terms, it supported training opportunities for local people (including apprentices) and that local businesses had every opportunities to secure work from the Council and therefore recirculate public money locally where this represented good value for money.
- The Council was in a powerful position, subject to the review of its own spending referenced earlier, to deliver a consistent message around the benefits to the community of buying locally to boost the local economy, to encourage local businesses to succeed and through success to employ more locally and develop that virtuous circle of spending.
- To provide tangible support for business a dedicated Covid-19 resource would be beneficial to help businesses access the latest advice speedily and to assist those businesses to identify practical measures to deliver services safely. The capacity of local businesses and the opportunity for new start-up businesses could be assisted by providing pop-up style facilities and market stall facilities. And engagement with businesses and providing them with an opportunity to build local supply chains and attract new entrants/apprentices was vital and could be facilitated through existing and new business to business clubs and a jobs fair.
- There was an urgent imperative to support super-fast broadband provision locally and end the blight for communities, individuals and businesses that prevented them from making the most of the digital environment. As part of the dedicated Covid-19 resource referenced above, there should be an element that encourages and enthuses businesses locally to embrace fully the opportunities of expanding their customer base globally through using digital commerce tools effectively.
- There was an opportunity to support a shift to assist individuals to make healthier life choices, to look at expanding the outdoor gym class provision, to implement early the learning from the pilot project around transitioning inactive people to some form of activity and encouraging the slightly and moderately active to increase their activity levels. To look at embracing the opportunities for the District to be a cycling attraction and thereby encourage local individuals to enjoy this leisure activity; perhaps through the London style free bike pick up and drop off scheme along stretches of the coast, by providing outdoor community gym style sites at intervals along the coast and elsewhere and sign posting people to multi-use games areas (MUGAs). These measures would also help to expand the attraction of the area to a wider range of visitors and tourists. Measure to encourage healthier eating habits and opportunities to 'grow your own'.

[Note: The Committee agreed that its proposed response to the Cabinet on this matter would be circulated to the Committee Members for confirmation. In the event that there was a need, the Committee would reconvene to formally endorse that response.]

Back to Business

**Sound Financial
Management
supporting delivery**

Place Shaping

- Building 200 Council homes
- Delivering sustainable Garden communities
- Encouraging quality private sector housing

Economic Growth

- Harnessing 'Tendring4Growth'
- Actively supporting local business
 - Buy local scheme
 - Procure locally
 - Business advice
- Maximise our assets for our economy
- Broadband

Tourism

- Tendring for cycling
- Heritage Appreciation
- Beautiful beaches and coastline
- Celebrating events like Mayflower 400