



SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 25th JANUARY 2021

MINUTE EXTRACT

Supporting Economic Recovery in Leicestershire

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which set out the proposed economic recovery actions to be taken by the County Council in response to the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on Leicestershire's businesses and workforce. The report also sought the Commission's views on a range of actions proposed to support businesses and individuals over the short, medium and long term, including participating in the national Kickstart scheme, the work+ programme designed to support people seeking work, and Broadband improvements. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 13' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion and questions the following points were raised:

- (i) Members welcomed the good work being undertaken to support businesses and generate employment opportunities for young people that had been disproportionately affected by the economic impacts of Covid-19. In particular, members were pleased that the Kickstart Gateway placements would be for 12 not 6 months. A Member requested a summary of the schemes be circulated to all members so that they too could disseminate this information to their local contacts.
- (ii) The County Council had identified 15 Kickstart placements. The response across the Council had been positive. Arrangements would be made to allocate people to those posts quickly, subject to current Covid-19 restrictions.
- (iii) A member questioned how it could be ensured that through the schemes, workers were not exploited, and, in respect of the Kickstart scheme, this would result in longer term employment opportuneness when the 6 or 12 month placements came to an end. Members were reassured that for the Kickstart programme a robust evaluation of businesses was undertaken both through the DWP process and through a local assessment carried out by the County Council. Work+ would be run by the Adult Learning and Communities teams and so would be subject to the usual checks throughout. Members noted that both schemes would be subject to an evaluation process so that outcomes could be assessed.
- (iv) It had been disappointing that a broadband partner had not been secured during the procurement exercise covering the east of the County undertaken last year. However, members were hopeful that the actions now proposed and conversations with Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK)

would enable progress to be made in this area.

- (v) A member highlighted the need to bring people back into the high street which had been struggling prior to the pandemic but had now been hit further as a result of Covid 19 restrictions. It was suggested that place marketing would play a critical role in helping to encourage people back into the areas towns at the appropriate time. Whilst funding had been allocated to support tourism initiatives, detail of specific activities had not yet been agreed. The funding whilst substantial also needed to be spread across a broad area and consideration would therefore be given to what those towns were already doing and what the Place Marketing Organisation could do to support that.
- (vi) A Member raised concerns that some businesses needed further support to help them diversify as a result of the challenges now posed by Covid. It was noted that the Council's business recovery grant which had operated last year had supported a number of businesses for that purpose. New enquires for support now, however, needed to be referred through the Business Gateway (<https://bizgateway.org.uk/>) which could provide information on funding available from a range of sources.

RESOLVED:

That the comments now made be reported to the Cabinet at its meeting on 5th February 2021.