

THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

Title of meeting:	Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Cabinet Meeting
Subject:	Economic Development Response to the COVID 19 Pandemic March - June 2020 HIGHLIGHTS
Date of meeting:	17 July 2020
Report by:	Economic Growth Manager
Wards affected:	All

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1. Requested by:
The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development
 2. Purpose
 - 2.1 To provide a brief summary of highlights of critical actions and activities carried out by Economic Development in response to the COVID 19 Pandemic, in order to support businesses and residents.
 3. Introduction
 - 3.1 **Information requested on the following**
 - COVID 19 Portsmouth Business Help Line.
 - Solent LEP partnership work.
 - Crowd-funder "Pay It Forward" COVID 19 Scheme.
 - Dispersal of Business Grants.
 - Shaping's Portsmouth's Future Together and our role in it
 - Market Move and developing work on Future High Streets.
 - Supporting Businesses in the Enterprise Centres
 - Skills work update.
 - Commercial Tenants Support Programme

3.2 COVID 19 Portsmouth City Council Business Help Line

On 20th of March the Business Help line was established at the suggestion of the Portfolio Holder and a new unique number was set up by IT with a hunt group/contact centre system in place using (02392) 841641. It was the first such Business Help line to be established in the Solent and has subsequently been copied by the Solent LEP and all other councils. 5 extra staff have been re-deployed to the Help Line from Employment, Learning and Skills and Strategy teams so the team is 10 strong. Performance figures are set out below.

- Help Line operational 7.00AM to 7.00PM every weekday.
- Has operated every week day since March 20th.
- All of the team use a Crib sheet which has been updated 72 times.
- Most weeks there are new announcements from Government which the team supports businesses, residents and community groups with examples include Furloughing, SEISS, BBL, CBILS etc.
- Using a rota every hour is covered.
- No more than 1 or 2 calls go to answer phone every day.
- 1700 businesses and residents helped.
- Countless thank you e-mails received for the help that people have been given.
- 100s of businesses helped to obtain critical financial assistance and hence stay in business.
- Retail sector helped to re-open on the 15th of June across the city.
- Hospitality sector helped to re-open on the 4th of July across the city.

3.3 Solent LEP Partnership and H&IOW Local Resilience Forum Work

Planning and Economic Development are presenting the Council on both Solent COVID 19 Task Force led by Chief Exec of LEP, work with the LEP on the Solent Economic Recovery Plan, and on the H&IOW Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Business and Economy Group. Summary of outcomes to date.

- Participation in the Solent LEP Freeport Task and Finish Group to ensure the best option is put forward as a bid for the Solent when the bidding for 10 such Freeports/Freezones is announced shortly.
- Exchange of best practice as regards all Local Authority business grant funds and benchmarking of performance.
- Sub-group set up on the Discretionary Grant scheme to ensure consistency across the Solent.
- New Loan scheme launched by the LEP to provide extra funds for businesses.
- LEP established similar Crowd Funding Scheme using the Portsmouth scheme as a model.
- MHCLG call for shovel ready capital projects (start in 18 months or less) Portsmouth submitted 10 prioritised schemes and LEP submitted 69 for Solent as a whole.

- Working as part of Solent Regeneration and Economic Development Leads on Solent Economic Recovery Plan with LEP and Lichfields'- a 2 year plan to be approved 17th of July at LEP Board represents first 2 years of the Solent 2050 Strategy.
- Participation in the Business and Economy Group of the LRF and have succeeded in getting a business survey out led by UOP.
- Supported identification of key sectors and engagement with them to gather intelligence and share information

3.4 Portsmouth Crowd Funder "Pay It Forward Scheme"

Portsmouth City Council launched its new Crowdfund Portsmouth in January 2020, in partnership with Shaping Portsmouth to help increase start-ups and business growth. In early March, we adjusted the Crowdfund Portsmouth match funding criteria to offer a new scheme called "Pay It Forward", to ensure that our business community who had been adversely affected by COVID-19 had the help they needed, particularly those who have not been supported with government funding packages. We were one of the first 4 councils in the country to launch such a scheme now many have done so and of course the LEP has copied the scheme for the whole Solent. The scheme aims to help small eligible businesses to access immediate alternative revenue stream, and a community of business support.

In the four months:

- the scheme has attracted interest from 127 local businesses
- the council has pledged a total of £20,500 which raised a further £51,342 from the crowd, to support nine businesses across a range of sectors
- plus additional funding leveraged from external sources of £25,500
- So total financial support to local businesses of £97,342 in just 3 months with the new scheme.
- £20,500 of council funds has levered in £76,842 of other funds.

The City also has benefitted from further pledges from the Solent LEP funding on ten Portsmouth projects total of £30,250 which raised a further £74,911 from the crowd.

- So via the LEP we have brought in an additional £105,161 of financial support for local businesses.
- Therefore in total Crowd Funding has brought £202,503 of finance to local businesses to help them through the COVID 19 Pandemic.

3.5 Dispersal of Business Grants

Central Government announced in March 2020 a total of £12.3B of business grants to support small businesses and retail, leisure and hospitality businesses across the country. Portsmouth received £41M.

Economic Development worked with the Business Rates team, IT, Corporate Communications and finance to get these out to businesses across the city as fast as possible. Key statistics below.

- At 29th June £37M paid out to 2886 businesses in Portsmouth.
- 91% of all grants received now paid out.
- First grants paid out on 15th of April.
- In addition a total value of £46M given to businesses in Portsmouth in the form of rate relief this is for the retail, leisure and hospitality sector and for nurseries and early year's settings.
- 37% of the 7880 businesses in the city have received grant support from the business rate grants.

3.6 Shaping Portsmouth's Future Together - Progress and our role in it

The Economic Development team has worked with Shaping Portsmouth to establish a new action group to co-ordinate and drive recovery in the city. It is very much about re-igniting the city economy. Objectives are:-

- Ignite the Portsmouth business activity and support using current analysis in order to take advantage of the UK economy re-opening
- Ensure that Portsmouth Schools needing support from Businesses get access to those resources
- Support the Portsmouth Charity and Not For Profit Sector with any required and available resources and mentors

Coordinate our Communications so that our citizens & businesses have the best access to knowledge and information.

Membership is:-

- PCC - Econ Dev, Education and Strategy
- The News.
- Local Resilience Forum.
- The Hive.
- Pompey in the Community.
- Hampshire Chamber of Commerce
- Federation of Small Businesses.
- University of Portsmouth.
- Solent NHS.
- City Care Homes

First successful outcomes as follows:-

- Portsmouth Chamber of Solutions providing businesses with essential support to recover from the shut- down.
- Shaping commissioned to work establishing viable clusters of retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in the hot spots for re-opening with Economic Development.
- Co-ordinated business survey of impact and future business leads led by UOP.
- Effective communications led by marketing and promotions officer in Economic Development.

3.7 Markets and the Move and Developing work on Future High Streets

A very early decision was taken to support market traders in the two council run markets in the city; that is on Cosham High Street and Commercial Road. All traders were given a 3 month pitch-fee holiday unless they were still able to trade due to being essential.

The Fruit and vegetable stalls and the butchers continued to trade throughout the lock down and in fact we opened a new fruit and veg stall in Palmerston Road due to local demand.

Cosham Market re-opened on 1/6/20 and the City Centre Commercial Road market opened 4/6/20. Love Southsea is planning to re-open from 4th July and Hampshire Farmers Market re-opened 21st of June in Palmerston Road.

Good progress is still being made with the move of the Commercial Road market from current location to a new location further down Commercial Road. This will include increase in number of stalls and also new gazebos and a re-launch as part of recovery work from COVID 19.

Future High Streets Bids

Economic Development is part of a multi-disciplinary team in Regeneration working up these bids

- This is part of £3.6B Towns Fund from MHCLG of which Future High Streets is £1B.
- Portsmouth one of 100 successful towns and cities in first round bids.
- Fratton Road and Commercial Road both awarded £50K each to work up full business cases.
- Portsmouth 1 of only 4 cities and towns to have 2 high streets included in the successful bids.
- Full business case to be submitted 14th of July 2020.
- Maximum funding available is £25M for each high street but most likely will be £5M to £10M for each.

3.8 Supporting Businesses in the Enterprise Centres

The Council's Enterprise centres have been open throughout the covid period albeit with reduced opening hours providing access and support and to arrange postal deliveries. As of this week normal opening hours have been reintroduced. During this period all businesses have been let informed with regular updates by email, e-business bulletin and information about the various Grant schemes. Additional support has been provided, such as arranging access to loading bays for deliveries out of working hours when needed and increasing the frequency of security patrols at each centre while businesses were not operate from the centre. The team has also helped two businesses downsize units within the centres to help them keep trading with reduced cost while maintaining an income for PCC, met with representatives of tenants at Portsmouth EC who had grouped together to engage with the Council and agreed rent deferrals to support tenants.

Only one business has vacated as a direct result of Covid-19 (Phlex - co-work space), one other bought forward his retirement plans and gifted all his catering equipment to HIVE who in turn contacted several small charities who shared the equipment. We have been able to continue to facilitate viewing and rent out units to new business tenants during the period, with 5 new tenants at Victory BC, 3 more units pre-let. and 2 new businesses at Portsmouth EC. In total we currently support 121 businesses in the 3 centres.

3.9 Skills Work Update

The Employment, Learning and Skills team is now part of the Economic Growth function, albeit within the responsibilities of the Cabinet member for Childrens, Families and Educaiton. Below is an update of work done during March to June.

- Team moved to remote working supporting long term unemployed into work and through COVID swiftly offering a very different service and approach with a seamless participant experience. **26** individuals have secured work since lockdown working with the team despite supporting a large percentage of high risk and shielded individuals
- **30** learners in Portsmouth have been supported to achieve their Maths, English or IT qualifications during lockdown due to the governments new internally assessed model with our community learning service
- 2 new apprentices have started training with Community Learning and joined the council as employees since lockdown (started in Enterprise Centres)
- 4 Apprentices have achieved their full programmes during lockdown - with one achieving a coveted Distinction grade during her remote End Point Assessment exams
- National Careers Service (NCS) has moved to remote delivery supporting adults to update their CV's, job search and move their careers forward

And

- 3 staff have supported the Business Helpline see info above.
- 2 staff have deployed to very different roles Adult Social Care supporting PCC care homes to continue to function

The Skills team are supporting the Solent Apprenticeship Hub (SAP) initiative launched 1 July 2020 "Transfer to Transform ". Following the councils successful levy transfer, targeting unused levy funds within our own budgets to support SME businesses take on apprentices across Portsmouth. The council has committed further funds under this project to support the £400K launch supported by Cooper Vision, B&Q, PCC and SCC.

Large organisations are encouraged to pledge further funds to support local SME across the Solent region, with the council's commitment ring-fenced to support Portsmouth businesses following the previous levy transfer protocols.

Overall achievements during 19/20 year

- **140 Construction skills** cards with supporting courses provided for local people to get them into construction
- The Bridge2Work programme was completed, having helped 99 (target was 76) individuals move into work during 19/20
- Well@Work supported 41 employees experiencing physical disability or mental health conditions which required support to retain them in work and their respective businesses - helping individuals stay in jobs
- Our Health and Wellbeing coordinator funded by Public Health has supported individuals with enquiries 83 diet, 44 weight, 97 smoking, 38 alcohol, 7 substance misuse, 41 high blood pressure +160 Individuals supported to overcome health related barriers to work through weight management, smoking cessation and other addictive behaviour. All work supports them into employment
- **14** individuals referred for emergency health care/immediate Drs after identifying unrecognised health conditions by our health and Wellbeing Coordinator!
- **61 of the 74** individuals who have engaged in the National Careers Service work have secured employment in this year.
- Work and Health supported **110** long term unemployed into sustained employment in 2019 and **46** so far in 2020.

4.0 Portsmouth City Council Commercial Tenant Support Scheme

The Commercial Tenant Support Scheme has been implemented to assist all 530 of the council's commercial tenants. The application of the scheme is in sync with the Governments recently published Code of Practice for commercial property and is our way of recognising the devastating impact of the COVID pandemic and supporting our tenants in a way that works synergistically with the governments other grant, and loan based financial support schemes.

- To-date we have supported 45 tenants with re-scheduling rental payments in value over £850,000 in rent.

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Signed by (Director)