

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 30th July 2020

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Enterprise, Community and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Economic Development

SUBJECT: Liverpool City Region and Halton Borough Economic Reset Plans

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present Halton's draft Economic Reset Plan for consideration. Members are advised that the Plan should be read in conjunction with the Liverpool City Region's Economic Recovery Plan, which is attached for information.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- i) Executive Board approves the general principles of the Halton Economic Reset plan;**
- ii) Executive Board supports proposals to engage wider strategic partners in cross-referencing the document to other organisational reset plans.**
- iii) Notes the contents of the Liverpool City Region's Economic Recovery Plan and acknowledges the contribution Halton has made to the development of the document.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The main purpose of Halton's Economic Reset Plan document is to set out a framework for how the Council and its partners can support the borough's economic recovery in the most effective, efficient and impactful way. It seeks to identify and prioritise the key interventions required to achieve this. Ultimately, the document could also be used as a lobbying plan to outline a wide range of financial 'asks' of government and or the Combined Authority.

The document is predicated upon the fact that, irrespective of COVID-19, there are a number of 'key ingredients' that will always be required to create and sustain a strong economy in Halton. For example, the quality of the place and cultural offer; quality of housing and schools; a highly skilled and adaptable workforce; good

quality sites and premises will always be important factors.

The Halton's Economic Reset Plan recognises that good progress has been made in the past to grow the borough's economy. The governance structures, speed of decision-making and our 'account manager' approach when developing relationships with businesses work. Furthermore, the Council has a robust economic growth plan already in place, i.e. The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan (MRGP) and this provides a solid platform for the delivery of the borough's economic reset plan.

However, existing and previous interventions need to be intensified if we are to proactively promote and support Halton's economy in the future, albeit in the knowledge that there will need to be some changes to how we need to deliver these interventions.

3.2 Halton's Economic Reset Plan document references, in detail, the Liverpool City Region's Economic Recovery Plan. Firstly, this is because it is important to recognise that there will be greater 'macro-economic' drivers at an international, national and even regional scale, which will have a significant impact on Halton's economic recovery.

Secondly, given the limited resources available to the Council, it will be important to maximise the resources provided by the Combined Authority to support this work and ensure that Halton's economic reset activities and those of the Combined Authority are complementary, add value and avoid duplication.

The themes identified in the LCR Recovery Plan are:

'opportunities to build back better' – focusing on accelerating capital developments;

'the business eco-system' – improving the environment and support provided to businesses,

'people focused' for example, providing a 'Bounce Back Employment Scheme' for residents and businesses, a Self-Employment Start Up Scheme, intensive end-to-end employment support through the Ways to Work Delivery Partnership, and a new, dynamic response to redundancy team to support residents affected by redundancy.

'Place' – which emphasises the importance of a quality of environment and place in the future.

'A Green Recovery' – this points to the economic opportunities arising from green technology as well as the efficiencies and benefits that businesses and residents can gain by acting in an environmentally friendly way.

To date the Council's regeneration and business support teams have been very much focused on supporting businesses in the 'here

and now', by for example, handling enquiries from distressed businesses, facilitating applications for grants and or administering funding pots.

3.3 Nevertheless, it is important to stress that Halton's economic reset plan provides a high-level analysis of Halton's local economy, highlighting its key characteristics, and flowing from this, the key issues and challenges and indeed, the opportunities that the borough would need to consider when implementing its future economic reset plan.

3.4 This evidence-based approach has been used to inform the type and quantity of interventions that would be required. However, it is acknowledged that further work will be needed to better understand the long-term impact of COVID-19 on Halton's economy, its businesses and its employees.

Therefore, the Plan does not focus purely on a long-list of capital projects or opportunities, but it also considers other complementary business support and people oriented interventions, set within work streams aimed at increasing and driving the productivity and competitive advantages of our local businesses.

In light of this the document references the International Labour Organisation's Policy Framework pillars when rebuilding a Post-Covid-19 economy.

- Pillar 1 Stimulating the economy
- Pillar 2 Supporting enterprises, jobs and incomes
- Pillar 3 Protecting workers in the workplace
- Pillar 4 Relying on social dialogue for solutions

The document stresses that the most pressing items for the Council's Economic Development functions are awareness raising, lobbying for grants support putting grant support in place, training support and re-drawing of existing business support programmes

Short-term actions are summarised in the table at Annex 1 of the document and the activity of the service is grouped into three:

- 1. Business Improvement and Growth**
- 2. Town Centre Regeneration**
- 3. Employment Skills and Jobs**

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Halton's Economic Reset Plan could be regarded, initially, as an internal document, which is helping the Council to deploy its own limited economic regeneration, employment learning and skills and business support resources in the best way possible. It

complements wider corporate work being undertaken on reset and recovery.

4.2 It will be important to consult on the document more widely.

However, Executive Board Members are advised that there needs to be a balance between developing a document that is practical and 'fit for purpose' but without creating a number of meetings that will need to be coordinated. This may not result in any meaningful outputs being created.

4.3 Consequently, discussions have taken place with the Halton Chamber of Commerce to agree the best way of sharing the draft plan with businesses, providing a mechanism for obtaining feedback and advice from businesses on how we can support them. In the first instance, the plan is being submitted to the Chamber board for consideration, but a workshop has been organised with Chamber members having an opportunity to consider the following questions:

1. How has your sector been affected by Covid-19?
2. What is your vision for the future?
3. How long do you think it will be when the economy returns to normal?
4. How helpful the themes addressed in the attached document with tackling the economic impact of Covid-19?
5. What further practical actions could help your business / sector?
6. If money was no object, what further actions could help your business / sector?

If resources allow, it is also proposed that a workshop with the borough's other strategic partners would be arranged. Discussions with colleagues and members of the Halton Employment Partnership have taken place with a view to facilitating this.

Furthermore, existing forums, for example, the Town Deal board could also be a conduit for informing strategic partners about the work we are doing to support Halton's economic recovery.

In the short-term, the Council's Economy, Enterprise and Property Department has also worked with the City Region's Growth Platform to hold a workshop for all Halton businesses aimed at briefing them on what we have been doing to support businesses in the borough, as well as our plans for future support.

5.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The accompanying action plan contained within the document primarily focuses on the deployment of existing departmental resources and has been presented as an internal document. As the plan is developed, a further discussion will be needed to determine whether additional resources will be required to accelerate the implementation of the plan.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 The draft Halton Economy Reset Plan is relevant to all of the Council priorities, given that a strong economy will be instrumental in supporting the funding of a wide range of Council services.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no immediate risks arising from the report.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
None		