



## **Growth and Development Scrutiny Group**

**Wednesday, 15 July 2020**

### **The Council's Wider Approach to Assisting Economic Recovery in Rushcliffe**

## **Report of the Executive Manager – Transformation**

### **1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1. This report provides the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group with an update on the impact, so far, of Covid19 on the local economy, and the Council's and partners' plans to mitigate this impact.
- 1.2. The challenge and true impact of Covid19 remains to be seen. Other factors may also influence the speed of any recovery including the possibility of a second peak. This report is, therefore, intended to be a snapshot in time and plans will remain flexible to ensure we are responding to emerging issues.
- 1.3. Updates have been provided to the Local Growth Boards as well as the Town and Parish Conference held on 18 June and the feedback received from some of those discussions is included in this report and the accompanying presentation.

### **2. Recommendation**

It is RECOMMENDED that the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group:

- a) Note the content of the report and work completed so far
- b) Consider additional ideas and guidance on the planned work to support the economic recovery of Rushcliffe.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1. This report is intended to be an update on the current position as it stands, however, this is likely to change over the coming months depending on how the Government's phasing plan progresses.
- 3.2. It creates the opportunity for officers to ensure Councillors are comfortable with the approach being taken and highlight additional opportunities that the team can explore.

3.3. The work highlighted in this report is work being completed alongside colleagues across the Council as well as external partners within existing capacity.

#### 4. Supporting Information

##### Impact

4.1. D2N2 Growth Hub launched a survey in April 2020 for businesses to complete to capture the impact that Covid19 is having on their business. There have been over 650 responses received to date, the survey is still open and so this number is increasing all the time. It is important to note this is not a representative sample but gives some insight into the impact of Covid19 on businesses in the D2N2 area.

4.2. Of those businesses who have responded, 98% said that Covid19 has impacted their business of which approximately 96% said this was in a negative way. Those that reported the largest impact were:

- In accommodation and food services, arts and entertainment or wholesale and retail trade sectors
- Those that operate more business to customer rather than business to business
- Younger/newer businesses – less than three years old
- Smaller businesses – less than 10 employees
- Those who operate more at a local and regional level rather than national or international.

4.3. The table below provide more information from the survey responses:

Top 3 impacts	Top three concerns	What would be most help
Cash flow Decreased Sales/bookings Staff in isolation	Decreasing consumer confidence/spending Financial impact on operations and/or liquidity/capital Global or UK recession	Financial support Business planning

4.4. 72% of respondents said that they had furloughed staff, with the majority furloughing 50% or more staff. Data from HMRC states that approximately 11,600 Rushcliffe employees have been furloughed which is lower than other areas of the County (93,300 across County). The sectors with the highest level of furloughing are:

- Wholesale and retail
  - Accommodation and food services
  - Manufacturing
- 4.5. In addition, 5% have made redundancies, the majority of which are 10% or lower of the total workforce. The evidence suggests that the greatest impact is likely to be on low skilled jobs. It is, therefore, anticipated to have less of an impact in Rushcliffe than other part of D2N2 (62% of residents have qualification level of NVQ 4+, Nottinghamshire average is 32.6%, EM is 33.2% and England is 39%).
- 4.6. An area of particular concern is youth unemployment, those that are currently or will soon be entering the labour market will face high levels of competition from people with more experience who have been made redundant. In addition, there will only be a limited number of jobs available. For those that are currently in work, research conducted by University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University shows that young people are over represented in the shut down sectors.

### **Business support**

- 4.7. In the early stages of the Covid19 pandemic, a dedicated business support webpage was developed which is accessible from the homepage of the Council website. This has all the latest updates, information and guidance on it from Government and other sources. It also now includes signage that high street businesses can download and display in their stores. This includes the 5 steps for businesses to follow to be Covid-secure to provide customers with assurance.
- 4.8. We have worked closely with Rushcliffe Business Partnership (RBP) to change the support provided to make this virtual. This has worked very well with the introduction of fortnightly virtual networking via Zoom, this is facilitated by a steering group member from Rushcliffe Business Partnership. Each call has attracted between 25 and 35 businesses and to date eight sessions have been held.
- 4.9. In addition, we have worked with members of RBP to offer ask the expert webinar sessions which use the expertise of our local businesses to support other businesses in the area. These have covered a number different topics including; managing your cashflow, holding events online, content marketing and PR tips. These sessions have attracted around 65 businesses and continue to be delivered on a fortnightly basis.
- 4.10. D2N2 Growth Hub have also adapted their programme of workshops to move these to be delivered online via webinars rather than face to face. Between the beginning of April and the 10 June they had delivered 65 webinars which had attracted 86 Rushcliffe businesses. The table below shows the breakdown of business attendees across the County. The Council supports delivery with the promotion of the webinars on the website and social media to encourage Rushcliffe businesses to attend.

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Number of delegates</b>
Rushcliffe	86
Ashfield	24
Bassetlaw	30
Broxtowe	54
Gedling	54
Newark & Sherwood	47
Nottingham City	315
Mansfield	43
<b>Total for N2</b>	<b>653</b>

4.11. On the Council's website, access has been provided to businesses to the grant finding portal. It is an online portal that allows small and medium sized businesses across the Borough to quickly and easily search for the funding and grants which apply to their individual circumstances. This is being provided free of charge until October 2020.

### **Town centre support**

4.12. Officers from the Council, including Economic Growth, Environmental Health and Communications, have worked closely with the Market Managers in West Bridgford and Bingham to support the safe reopening of the markets. Both were temporarily suspended at the end of March. Bingham Market restarted on the 30 April for essential retail only and was then able to welcome back all traders from 4 June. West Bridgford Farmers Market restarted on 30 May with six stall holders and further six (12 in total) have been present on the market for the last two market days.

4.13. Both Market Managers have completed detailed risk assessments, supported traders to implement new procedures and have got social distancing signage and measures in place, including queue marking systems. The Council have produced a markets guidance document and this has been shared with the two Market Managers as well as other areas who have a market, or are setting one up, including East Leake and Ruddington.

4.14. To support the reopening of non-essential retail, the Economic Growth Team and Communications worked together to send out emails and a press release to find out businesses plans for reopening and the support that they may need. This received a very limited response, so was followed up by visits to the businesses. During the week commencing 15 June, officers from the Economic Growth and Environmental Health teams carried out visits to all high street businesses that had reopened to check they had all the required measures in place and to find out if they required any further support.

4.15. The Borough Council's website has signage for businesses to print off to display to reassure customers that they have taken the necessary steps to be Covid-secure. Officers regularly join virtual meetings of established traders groups including East Leake Traders Association and Ruddington Village

Partnership to provide updates. Work is ongoing to establish similar groups in Bingham and West Bridgford and could also be explored for other areas.

4.16. Visits to Bingham and West Bridgford have been carried out with colleagues from Nottinghamshire County Highways to consider temporary traffic restrictions and changes to the public realm that could be implemented to support the safe reopening of town centres. This has resulted in the following changes being implemented:

- West Bridgford Town Centre – the existing Monday to Saturday traffic restrictions on Central Avenue to be extended to cover Sunday also
- Bingham Marketplace - the roads to the north and east of Bingham marketplace are to be made one-way and the introduction of an advisory 20mph speed limit in the town centre.

A visit to Ruddington and Radcliffe on Trent has taken place and the proposals for those areas are expected imminently. Visits can also be arranged for other areas as required.

### **Proposals for the future**

4.17. Rushcliffe Borough Council has been allocated £106,208 from the Reopening High Streets Safely Funding. This fund is aimed at supporting councils to implement measures to support their town centre to reopen safely and successfully. The criteria for the funding is quite restrictive and focuses on four key areas of activity:

- Support to develop an action plan for how begin to safely reopen local economies
- Communications and public information activity
- Business-facing awareness raising activities
- Temporary public realm changes to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely.

4.18. Activity which cannot be supported includes:

- Activity that provides no additionality e.g. work that would have been happening anyway
- Capital expenditure – some temporary changes are permitted but would only be allowed to be in place until the end of March 2021
- Grants to businesses.

4.19. Some initial proposals for the funding include:

- NCC public realm/highways work as outlined above to be paid for from this funding.
- Additional social distancing signage in town centres where required
- Appointing a consultant with expertise to provide advice and support for retailers on how they can successfully and safely reopen their shops

- Digital support and advice for businesses to help them with an online presence and setting up/supporting new shopping habits of their customers
  - Support through new or establishing new retail forums in each area so retailers can share best practice
  - Setting up Information Officers to support businesses to reopen safely and address any issues they have
  - Regular and consistent communications for residents and businesses to provide assurance and advice.
- 4.20. In addition, we are arranging 'ask the expert' webinars aimed at high street businesses. This includes a session hosted by KH Hair and supported by Council Environmental Health officers for Hair and Beauty Salons. Also, a session with a restaurant chain for them to share their ideas and expertise with smaller independents.
- 4.21. As well as the work to support our high streets, the wider business support outlined above, including the webinars with RBP and the Growth Hub, will continue. In addition, we are looking at ways that we can try and capture some of the positives from this, particularly the opportunity for a green economic recovery. Work is being done, alongside the other districts and Nottinghamshire County Council, to explore this.
- 4.22. As part of the Nottinghamshire Local Resilience Forum structure, an economy cell has been set up which consists of representatives from Nottinghamshire County Council, all district councils, DWP and D2N2 LEP. The County Council chair the group with Catherine Evans, Transformation Service Manager at Rushcliffe, as vice chair. The initial priorities for the group are:
- To use available data to understand and interpret the current and future challenges our businesses and residents might face and how government policy is, or is not, currently responding to that, e.g. the impact of reduction in/closure of the furlough scheme and those (especially young people) pushed into unemployment in the coming year.
  - To understand the current available business support offered across the area, to identify issues with local productivity (capacity, people, infrastructure), and to shape support programmes to enhance this and enable businesses to rebound.
  - To support our town centres to reopen safely and successfully (linking in with the LRF Public Realms Cell).
  - To support our visitor economy to restart and provide support and confidence, where required, for both businesses and the public.
  - To deliver a green economic recovery, ensuring that businesses do not lose sight of the opportunities that this crisis has presented us with.
  - To ensure consistent and clear communications for our businesses.

## 5. Risks and Uncertainties

- 5.1. There is a high level of uncertainty over what the full impact of Covid19 will be and, therefore, recovery plans will remain flexible to enable them to respond as required.
- 5.2. The local recovery group at a Rushcliffe level will work closely with groups at both at a Nottinghamshire County level and also D2N2 LEP level to ensure we are sharing best practice and working collectively where relevant.

## 6. Implications

### 6.1. Financial Implications

- Rushcliffe has been allocated £106,208 from the reopening high streets funding which help facilitate some of the work (as outlined above). This funding has to be drawn down based on evidence of eligible expenditure. Any money not spent by March 2021 will no longer be available. Other work will be picked up through existing officer resource.

### 6.2. Legal Implications

- There are no legal implications associated with this report.

### 6.3. Equalities Implications

- Any changes in town centres will need to take into account equalities implications and will be considered at the time of any proposed changes.

### 6.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

- There are no crime and disorder implications from this report.

## 7. Link to Corporate Priorities

Quality of Life	The recovery plans being developed are focused on maintaining the quality of life of local residents by supporting local town and village centres to maintain their offer for all. In addition there is a focus on supporting people back into work, this is being developed by the Local Resilience Forum Economy Cell and activity will be delivered in Rushcliffe in line with this.
Efficient Services	Not applicable
Sustainable Growth	The actions outlined in the report will support the economic recovery of the Borough in light of Covid19. This will help businesses to adapt and grow in the future.
The Environment	Opportunities that have presented themselves from the pandemic will be captured to support a green economic

recovery.

## 8. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group:

- a) Note the content of the report and work completed so far
- b) Consider additional ideas and guidance on the planned work to support the economic recovery of Rushcliffe.

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<b>Background papers available for Inspection:</b>	None
<b>List of appendices:</b>	None