

Crawley Economic Recovery Taskforce (CERT) Group and Town Deal Board

Wednesday, 16 September 2020

Meeting Notes

ITEM

ACTION

1. Welcome

Chris Maidment (CM) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies received from:

- Shelagh Legrave (Chichester College Group)
- Dave Savage (CCYS)
- Andrew Clark and Jonathan Rowe (Lloyds Banking Group)
- Adam Joolia and Ian Ross (Audio Active)
- Adam Godfrey (SHW)

CM extended a special welcome to Jo Ward from Nestle.

The minutes of the previous CERT & Town Deal Board ([22 July 2020](#)) were accepted.

CM thanked everyone for submitting feedback and comments on the draft Town Investment Plan (TIP) and confirmed that the final TIP was submitted to Government on 31 July 2020.

CM and PS have considered how best to achieve additional community representation on the Town Deal Board, in the form of specific 'task and finish' groups to lead on individual projects.

Julie Kapsalis (JK) reported back from the introductory meeting of the Skills sub-group where a key focus was on tangible actions. JK referred to the Government's recently announced '[Kickstart Scheme](#)' on which the Sussex Chamber of Commerce and Chichester College Group are working together to support local businesses to access the scheme. The next meeting of the Skills sub-group will look at how they can further support local people and businesses in this area.

The in-meeting chat confirmed a number of partners are also engaged with the Kickstart scheme, including Gatwick Diamond Business, Job Centre Plus and Citizens Advice Bureau.

CM reported that Crawley Borough Council is continuing to work with consultants on a draft, revised Economic Growth Assessment in response to the impact of Covid-19 and a draft Economic Development Strategy to support future planning policy. These will be presented to the next CERT & Town Deal Board meeting, likely to be in November.

CS/LH

2. Crawley's Economic Crisis – latest information / update

Headline information – Clem Smith (CS) presented the latest key figures for Crawley including:

- Local Universal Credit claimant count in August rose sharply to

7.5%, from 2.8% in March, making Crawley the worst affected within the Coast to Capital LEP area and ranking 68th out of 380 local authorities in the UK.

- 20,000 residents on furlough with the scheme due to end in October
- Since the last meeting, Virgin announced 1150 job losses, Gatwick Airport Ltd are to cut 600 jobs and Sainsburys are to close their Queensway store.
- On a more positive note, two new businesses are set to move into the Galleria in the town centre (both moving from outside Crawley) and there are a number of new residential developments coming forward at pace: Town Hall, Bridgefield House and 15-29 Broadway.
- Construction of the new STEM Centre at Crawley College is well underway and due for completion in early 2021
- Crawley Growth Programme schemes led by WSCC are set to begin construction imminently: Eastern Gateway and Manor Royal Highway Improvement Scheme.

Gatwick Airport - Alison Addy (AA) presented a verbal update on the situation at Gatwick.

Last Friday saw the airport's busiest day since March, with 33,000 passengers and 292 flights however they are still only operating at 15-20% capacity.

Current areas of focus include infection rate triggers, regionalization and testing regimes, in order to reduce quarantine requirements and increase consumer confidence. The Airport is awaiting publication of the Government's Aviation Recovery Strategy, expected in the Autumn.

At the end of July, Gatwick Airport Ltd (GAL) published its half year results, including the headline of £321m loss over the previous six months. In March, there were 3,300 GAL employees working at the airport; there are currently 2,400 and this is expected to fall to around 1,800.

The situation remains extremely challenging and GAL is actively seeking further support from the government, including a specific jobs protection package for the aviation sector.

Manor Royal BID – Steve Sawyer (SS) referred to the [Manor Royal BID Recovery Plan](#) which has been published and includes a [progress tracker](#).

The BID has identified a key risk in the 25% reduction to this year's budget as a result of the pandemic, however the BID is healthy and many BID projects are going ahead as planned. SS highlighted the need to support other business sectors, in addition to aviation, and called upon the CERT Group to lobby for additional funding.

SS highlighted a further risk in the persistent, negative press around Crawley and Gatwick and advocated the need to try and change the narrative, given there are examples of positive investment and development in the area including £30m investment in Virgin Atlantic's training centre 'The Base', funding for a new Innovation Centre, Churchill Court sold to developer, new pizza company moving in, Permasense expansion at Alexandra House, Jersey Farm (industrial unit) development and many more.

Town Centre – Neil Cooper (NC) reported that the new Town Centre

Business Improvement District (BID) will commence from 1 October 2020 however there will be a shortfall in the budget for this year, as a result of the pandemic. The budget has been revised and, based on feedback from business, the BID will prioritise its efforts on improving safety and security in the town centre.

NC reported the latest footfall data from County Mall, highlighting the following:

- c400,000 footfall in August – up 5.7% from July however down 33% from the same time last year.
- County Mall is performing better than the national average for shopping centres.
- Car park income is down and customer dwell time is an average of 1.5 hours.
- Major occupiers have restructured their businesses, with some redundancies made.
- Eat Out to Help Out scheme had a positive impact on food and beverage outlets during August – c50% increase in turnover.

Following a recent meeting of commercial agents, NC reported that there are signs of activity within the town centre from small and independent businesses however the big multiples are suffering.

Whilst all business investment in Crawley is positive, Peter Lamb (PL) stated the need to focus on where the greatest % of employment is based in order to ensure that central government receives a clear message that we need more investment in Crawley.

The in-meeting chat included an update from Louise Blackwell that the Creative Crawley team has secured funding to produce an Arts Festival in the town towards the end of January 2021 to celebrate resilience. If anyone wants to know more, please contact louise@louiseb.co.uk.

Patrick Warner also highlighted the Metrobus '4Work Saver' offer that entitles any new employee of a business in the area to free network wide bus travel on all Metrobus and Brighton & Hove Buses services for the first four weeks of their new job. If anyone wants to know more, please contact lewis.jackson@buses.co.uk.

Employment Support Interventions – Catherine Scott (CS) announced that a new Young Adult Employment Hub will launch in early October, delivered in partnership with Crawley BC, Employ Crawley, JCP and DWP. The DWP is also working with Employ Crawley, to deliver targeted support for the +25s, and with GAL to provide a presence at the airport.

DWP is using its resources creatively in order to maximise support for Economic Recovery Plans, working in partnership with the LEP, colleges and the business communities.

DWP is currently looking to recruit 182 work coaches in the area and the Young Adult Employment Hub will present an opportunity to join up with the Kickstart Scheme, supporting young people into employment placements.

A further funding bid is in the pipeline to support the BAME community and more details of this will be shared with the CERT Group in due course.

COVID-19 Business Grants / Discretionary Business Grants update

Lynn Hainge (LH) reported that, since April 2020, Crawley BC has paid £12.69m in support grants to 895 businesses (Small Business Grants and Retail, Hospitality & Leisure Grants), however only 19% of Crawley businesses were eligible for this funding.

In May, Crawley BC received a 'top up' funding allocation of £612,750 towards a Discretionary Business Grant scheme, aimed at small and micro-businesses. This has now been 100% allocated, supporting a further 67 local businesses, however the scheme attracted over 170 applications so there remains a significant number of businesses that require further funding support.

- 3. "Get Britain Building" – Crawley Innovation Centre proposal** - Tony Middleton (TM) confirmed that the Coast to Capital LEP has secured £8.6m for the creation of a new Innovation Centre in Crawley, to be based at Manor Royal.

A project team is currently being formed and consultants engaged to develop a business case for formal sign off by the LEP Investment Committee. TM acknowledged the challenge to deliver the project within 18 months and confirmed that it will provide jobs for local people.

TM referred to the recent launch of Coast to Capital's £2.1m Business Recovery Grants scheme and invited businesses to apply. More information can be found at <https://www.coast2capital.org.uk/business-recovery-grants>

The Town Investment Plan (TIP) – CS presented a review of the Crawley Town Centre Investment Plan and next steps.

A copy of the full presentation [can be found here](#). Key highlights include:

- £1m accelerator funding has been made available to Crawley in 20/21 - £565k to be spent on Manor Royal Heritage Public Realm upgrades (network of micro parks) – led by the Manor Royal BID. Remaining funds ring-fenced for gigabit infrastructure roll out.
- TIP focused around three themes, as required by Government: Urban Regeneration / Skills and Enterprise / Connectivity
- The Town Deal will comprise a 'Heads of Terms' in principle document – to be drawn up once the TIP is agreed.
- Priority projects include:
 - Innovation Centre in Manor Royal
 - Crawley 'Invest in Skills' programme
 - Business Infrastructure Grants to support green initiatives
 - 'Pop-up' programme of cultural, arts and creative schemes
 - Development of a cultural quarter in the town centre
 - Manor Royal – micro park upgrades, walking trails, business environment upgrades
 - Borough-wide programme of 'green' home retrofitting
 - Crawley bus station transformation
 - New cycle routes for Crawley commuters
 - 'Full Fibre to the Premises' in Manor Royal
 - Crawley Virtual Village

Next steps – A Government response to the TIP is expected by the end of September, followed by a period of moderation and negotiation.

Crawley BC is leading the recruitment of a Towns Fund Programme Manager and Officer to support the development of business cases and scheme implementation.

There is a priority action to identify project leads and 'task and finish' groups for business case development and high level project planning.

CM invited all members of the CERT to email CERT.TownDeal@ Crawley.gov.uk if they are interested in becoming a project lead or supporting a specific project group, from the following provisional list:

- Invest in Skills for Crawley
- Cultural Quarter for Crawley
- Manor Royal Business Environment
- Gigabit Business Park
- Green Business Infrastructure
- Transport

4. Any Other Business

None

- 5. Date of the next meeting** – the next meeting of the CERT & Town Deal Board will likely take place in November, to consider the draft Heads of Terms for the Town Deal. A date will be confirmed once we have received a response from government

ALL

LH