



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

14 July 2021

Report Title:	St. Helens Economic Reset and Recovery Plan
Cabinet Portfolio	Reset and Recovery
Cabinet Member	Councillor Sev Gomez-Aspron MBE
Exempt Report	No
Reason for Exemption	N/A
Key Decision	No
Public Notice issued	N/A
Wards Affected	All
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Borough Priorities	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	X
	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	X
	Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all	X
	Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy	X
	Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture	X
	Be a responsible Council	X

1. Summary

- 1.1 At its meeting of 6 January 2021, Cabinet agreed to consult on the draft St. Helens Economic Recovery Plan. This report provides details of responses received during the 6-week consultation period and presents a final version of the St. Helens Economic Reset and Recovery Plan for adoption by Cabinet.
- 1.2 The revised Plan reflects the ongoing economic impact analysis of the Covid-19 pandemic following engagement with the private sectors, the wider business community, the public, community, and voluntary sectors across the borough. It will support the borough's continued engagement with Government, the Liverpool City Region and potential investors in order to tackle the borough-wide economic downturn, maximise the opportunities for economic growth and frame regeneration in the context of Sustainable Inclusive Growth.

2. Recommendations for Decision

Cabinet is asked to:

- i) Note the outcome of the public consultation on the draft St. Helens Economic Recovery Plan, full details of which are provided at Appendix A.
- ii) Adopt the final version of the St. Helens Economic Reset and Recovery Plan and the Implementation Plan presented at Appendix B.
- iii) Endorse monitoring and evaluation of the final version St. Helens Economic Reset and Recovery Plan and its accompanying Implementation Plan ensuring that it continues to reflect the evolving impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the whole borough.

3. Purpose of this Report

- 3.1 This report provides details of responses received during a 6-week consultation on the draft St. Helens Economic Recovery Plan and seeks adoption of the final version (including associated Implementation Plan) that has been informed, as appropriate, by the consultation feedback. It seeks endorsement to continued monitoring and evaluation to ensure the St. Helens Economic Reset and Recovery Plan continues to reflect the evolving impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the borough as a whole.

4. Background / Reasons for the recommendations

- 4.1 The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on every aspect of society, with the response to this bringing a significant challenge to the economic well-being of the borough. The extent of the economic impact became clearer towards the end of 2020 and this enabled the Council to identify key activity required to support recovery over the short-to medium term, through its production of a draft St. Helens Economic Recovery Plan.
- 4.2 For the past 6 months there has been continued focus on the delivery of borough-wide grant support to the business community, and helping retail and hospitality business to reopen during the roadmap to recovery period. The Council has administered a further £19m of business grant support in 5,726 payments to businesses across some of our most hard-pressed sectors. It has continued to provide the retail and hospitality industry as well as our other key sectors with wider support in preparation for the reopening of the economy. These actions have helped our business community to make the roadmap a success, and with the final stage of the roadmap about to be completed the focus is now on resetting the St Helens economy.
- 4.3 The draft Plan was approved for public consultation by Cabinet at its meeting of 6 January 2021. The Cabinet report from 6 January 2021 is referenced as a background paper and it provides details of the unprecedented impact of the pandemic on our economy, together with a summary of actions taken by the Council at that time to support residents and businesses in the short-term.
- 4.4 Consultation on the draft St Helens Borough Economic Recovery Plan ran for 6 weeks from 15th January to 1st March 2021, with 55 stakeholders responding to the online questionnaire. Overall, there was strong support for the themes and activities set out in the draft Plan, with suggestions for improvement in some areas. The Consultation Report at Appendix A sets out the spectrum of responses which have been considered in finalisation of the St. Helens Economic Recovery and Reset Plan.
- 4.5 Where consultation responses suggested changes and amendments these have been incorporated. This includes the following:
- A respondent considered that 'Recovery' implies a return to past practises and habits whereas this should be an opportunity to 'Reset' how St. Helens responds to accelerated changes that are unlikely to be reversed. This was clearly the intent of the proposed Plan and was reflected in the content, but this has been further emphasised by incorporation of 'Reset' within the main title alongside 'Recovery'.
 - Amendments have been made to set out our objectives more clearly around disability inclusion.
 - The language has been made clearer and more accessible e.g. renaming the 'Business Ecosystem' theme 'Supporting Businesses'.
 - The inclusion of more defined support for town centre and high street reopening.

While not all comments could be implemented in the Plan, many will inform the development of our longer-term Inclusive Growth Strategy which will begin in 2021.

- 4.6 The finalised St. Helens Economic Reset and Recovery Plan, which is presented at Appendix B, will help reset and recover our economy through medium-term activity (through to Summer 2022). It also directs longer-term strategy development through production of a St. Helens Inclusive Growth Strategy that will provide a comprehensive framework for the achievement of the Boroughs economic ambitions. Our priority is to support a strong, diverse, and well-connected local economy with an aim to improve economic growth, enhance business density, and increase the number and quality of jobs.
- 4.7 The report is split into three delivery themes: Supporting Businesses; People-Focused Recovery; and Place & Ensuring a Green Recovery. These themes mirror those in the Liverpool City Region's Building Back Better Economic Recovery Plan, which will ensure our actions align with partners across the city region and more easily link into strategic funding opportunities. These three themes are further described below.
- 4.8 **Supporting Businesses.** Activities here focus on delivering vital support to local businesses using a range of targeted business grant funds, enhanced support for inward investment and the visitor economy, and ensuring St Helens gets the most out of wider business support initiatives offered across the Liverpool City Region.
- 4.9 **People-Focused Recovery.** The labour market has already been impacted by the pandemic and the signs are it will continue to be. The Economic Reset and Recovery Implementation Plan sets out a range of initiatives that will support residents into work, limit the impact of major redundancies and begin reskilling people to take advantage of job creation in future growth sectors.
- 4.10 **Place & Ensuring A Green Recovery.** The Implementation Plan sets out a broad range of initiatives that provide support to our economic growth. These include a coordinated response to ensure the success of reopening our high streets, continued facilitation of strategic regeneration schemes that will provide significant growth opportunities for the borough, as well as developing strategies that will support our longer-term economic health.

5. Community Impact Assessment

- 5.1 The St Helens Borough Economic Reset and Recovery Plan will secure a range of positive community impacts, that include:
- Local employment
 - Supply chain opportunities
 - Reducing environmental impact
 - Stimulating green start-ups
 - Stimulating entrepreneurship
 - Maximising accessibility
 - Encouraging sustainable growth

6. Consideration of Alternatives

- 6.1 Consideration was afforded to the alternative production of a longer-term St. Helens Economic Growth Economic Strategy and accompanying Employment & Skills Strategy. However, the

scale of change and market adjustment requires more immediate action during the municipal year of 2021/2022. The longer-term St. Helens Inclusive Growth Strategy will be progressed later in 2021 when a strong evidence base reflecting the longer-term implications of the pandemic is available.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on every aspect of society, with the response to this bringing a significant challenge to the economic well-being of the borough as a whole. There is a clear need for an Economic Reset and Recovery Plan to protect businesses' operations and residents' livelihoods today whilst supporting the longer-term growth ambitions of the Council and Borough. The Plan has now been finalised following consultation with stakeholders and is recommended for Cabinet approval.

8. Implications

8.1 Legal Implications

- 8.1.1 There are no legal implications arising from publication of the St. Helens Economic Reset and Recovery Plan.

8.2 Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Implications

8.2.1 Social Value

- 8.2.1.1 The St. Helens Economic Reset and Recovery Plan will require all subsequent projects and schemes to be informed by a Community Impact Assessment to maximise the opportunities for securing social value outcomes.

8.2.2 Sustainability and Environment

- 8.2.2.1 Through the Place and Green Recovery section of the Plan, the Council will consider the wider environmental opportunities that can be maximised. This includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a world-class digital infrastructure, investment in active transport and green infrastructure, and the development and delivery of a programme that meets climate change commitments.

8.2.3 Health and Wellbeing

- 8.2.3.1 The People Recovery section of the Plan considers health impacts on the economy. It considers overall health outcomes, not just those directly caused by the pandemic, but it will also help to prepare the borough's economic resilience to the impact of the pandemic restrictions and the considerable mental health impacts the pandemic has given rise to.

8.2.4 Equality and Human Rights

- 8.2.4.1 Inclusivity and equality are at the heart of the Plan, which adopts the Build Back Better principles to reflected this. Engagement with protected characteristic groups was ensured through consultation and engagement on the draft Plan to ensure their needs and the disproportionate economic impacts there are likely to be on them are reflected appropriately.

8.3 Customers and Resident

8.3.1 The finalised St. Helens Economic Reset and Recovery Plan will be developed for formal publication in an accessible format that is public facing. The key messaging from the plan will also be disseminated in a variety of ways to reach different audiences across the borough and the Liverpool City Region. The Plan will provide benefit to all customers and residents by promoting economic opportunity.

8.3 Asset and Property

8.4.1 It is the individual resultant projects and programmes that will have an impact on the asset base of the Council rather than the plan itself, and therefore separate reporting on the implications of these individual components will be provided as appropriate.

8.4 Staffing and Human Resource

8.5.1 The plan has been developed by a range of officers across Place, Corporate, Children's & Young People and Integrated Health & Social Care services. The individual programmes will require specific staff resources for which separate reporting will be provided as appropriate; however, monitoring of the plan will be incorporated into the Council's reset and recovery performance monitoring.

8.5 Risks

8.6.1 There are no direct risk implications arising from publication of the St. Helens Economic Recovery and Reset Plan. It will help set the strategic direction for economic growth policy across the borough and continue to support prioritisation of the associated Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Recovery Plan. The proposed monitoring, evaluation and reporting will ensure that the Plan continues to reflect the evolving impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the borough.

8.6 Finance

8.7.1 Whilst there are no direct costs arising from publication of the Plan, it will act as a framework for bidding for external funds and securing private sector investment, and it sets out a narrative to frame our regeneration activity and the need to accelerate the delivery of growth.

8.7.2 The pandemic has increased the likelihood of business failure and higher unemployment poses a significant risk to the Council through a reduction in income streams and increased service demands, together with wider implications for the delivery of the Capital Investment Strategy. The proposed St. Helens Economic Reset and Recovery Plan will help to mitigate these adverse impacts.

8.7 Policy Framework Implications

8.7.1 The recommendations in this report fully accord with the Council's policy framework, having alignment with all priorities of the Borough Strategy.

9 **Background papers**

9.1 <http://moderngov.sthelens.gov.uk/documents/s110507/Report.pdf>
Item 29 (Post Covid Economic Recovery Plan) of agenda and minutes from the meeting of Cabinet on Wednesday, 6th January 2021

10 Appendices

10.1 Appendix A: Consultation Report on the draft St. Helens Economic Recovery Plan

10.2 Appendix B: Proposed finalised St. Helens Economic Reset and Recovery Plan