

Local Economy and Parking Policy Development Advisory Group
24 JUNE 2020

Present: Councillors: Paul Clarke (Chairman), John Blackall, Roy Cornell, Richard Landeryou, Gordon Lindsay, John Milne, Colin Minto, Mike Morgan, Jack Saheid and Belinda Walters

Absent: Councillors: Tony Hogben

Also Present: Councillors: Matthew Allen, Ruth Fletcher, Frances Haigh

1 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the meeting held on 11th March 2020 were received by the group.

2 **SAFER HIGH STREETS FUND**

The Head of Economic Development gave a presentation about the Safer High Streets Fund.

- The Council had been awarded £128,132 EU funding towards the safe re-opening of High Streets throughout Horsham District.
- There were a lot of restrictions in place regarding how the money could be spent. For example the Council were not allowed to employ Town Ambassadors and staff and volunteers were being used instead. Money was also not allowed to be used for business adaptations.
- A District-wide recovery taskforce had been established to decide on projects to move forward.

3 **UPDATE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS SUPPORT ACTIVITIES**

- Businesses were being surveyed every few weeks. 71% had said that temporary closure had affected business, 58% had reported cash flow issues. Businesses were asked what support they needed. 14% wanted health and safety advice and 11% wanted help with advertising.
- 140 businesses were being helped through the J2W programme.
- The Council had brought 15 people back to work since April 2020.
- The benefit claimant rate for Horsham District was the lowest in West Sussex apart from Mid Sussex. The rate was much lower than Crawley Borough which had been affected by the loss of jobs associated with Gatwick Airport. A series of online quizzes and trails had been launched to encourage people to visit the businesses' websites. A Welcome Back Horsham banner had been produced, information packs about reopening had also been produced and there had been signs developed reminding shoppers about social distancing.

- A range of schemes had been put forward for the Safer High Streets fund, including creating new areas of public realm and extending the traffic regulation orders in East Street and Park Place.

It was noted that assistance had been given to smaller businesses back in March 2020 regarding going cashless and introducing click and collect schemes.

There was a question about how many shops had been engaged with. It was explained that all the shops on the main high streets across the District which had been allowed to open on 15th April had been provided with a support pack delivered in person. A support pack for the restaurants and cafes was being prepared and a strategy for distribution was underway.

4 **UPDATE ON CAR PARKS (CHARGING AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME)**

Car parks suffered a major loss of revenue because people were not coming into the towns and villages for shopping. Furthermore, car parks were free between 25th March and 15th June in order to support key workers who needed to have somewhere to park and also because the Parking team had tried to ensure that roads were clear for deliveries and emergency vehicles. This had been their emphasis rather than on enforcement.

It was estimated that the loss of revenue for car parking would amount to £2.4m over this financial year. This was calculated as an entire quarter's loss then a 30% return towards normality for 3 months and then a 50% return followed by a 70% return. It was hard to predict what the long term impact of the COVID 19 crisis would be. Habits may have formed such as shopping online and working from home so people might be using car parks less.

Parking charges would be waived for a quarter for those businesses who had been paying for it during lockdown. At the time of the meeting, car park usage was 40% of normal in ANPR car parks and 48% in pay and display ones. Piries Place car park was worst hit at 20%.

The Car Parking Team had helped to manage some of the COVID-19 response hubs.

Social distancing measures had been put in place for the reintroduction of parking charges including the Ringo contactless payment system. An autopay option in car parks had been heavily advertised. It was also possible to buy a number of days on a permit. Signage had been put up in car parks reminding people about social distancing. ANPR car park machines were cleaned 6 times a day and pay and display machines were cleaned twice a day.

For two weeks from 15th June, warning notices would be given to people who did not pay for parking rather than fines.

During lockdown anti jump fencing had been installed in Swan Walk and Forum car parks.

The new evening car park charges had been suspended to be reviewed in September.

The Pavillions car park in Horsham now had ANPR.

Rural car park capital projects would need reviewing.

The use of CCTV to enforce parking restrictions on the highway was something that needed WSCC approval . This was being discussed with county.

5 **THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE DEMAND FOR OFFICE SPACE / EMPLOYMENT SPACE AND HOW THE REQUIREMENTS MAY CHANGE**

It was felt that as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, people might want to move to office space in Horsham from more expensive areas. Horsham could also offer quality of life.

There had been a lot of homeworking during lockdown and people might not want to resume commuting. It was felt that businesses would still need head office facilities.

It was felt that where businesses wished to get smaller and use less office space, others might want more space in Horsham. It was agreed that co-working spaces needed to be investigated.

Legal and General were not building speculative office space in the North of Horsham, instead they were working directly with businesses regarding their requirements.

6 **FORWARD PLAN EXTRACT FOR THE LOCAL ECONOMY AND PARKING PORTFOLIO**

There were no items on the Forward Plan for this portfolio.

The meeting closed at 7.05 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN