

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

Wednesday, 24 February 2021

Confidential Working Draft

Meeting Notes

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
<p>1. Welcome Chris Maidment (CM) welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies received from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shelagh Legrave (Chichester College Group) - Catherine Scott (DWP) <p>The minutes of the previous meeting (16th December 2020) were accepted. CM referred to the composition of the draft Town Investment Plan sub-groups and invited members of the Task Force to submit suggestions if they think a topic or priority subject is missing.</p>	
<p>2. Crawley's Economic Crisis – The Board noted the following updates:</p> <p>CM invited Julie Kapsalis (JK) from Chichester College Group to update on their recent bid for an Institute of Technology (IoT), seeking £12m government funding to invest in new vocational skills training facilities in the Coast to Capital area. The IoT will focus on engineering, manufacturing, ICT, construction, planning and the built environment and local businesses will have a key role in developing a curriculum that is fit for their purpose. If successful, the project will deliver a £10m state-of-the-art Hub in Crawley, offering a wide range of qualifications from apprenticeships to Masters. JK reported that this is a highly competitive process, with only one IoT in each LEP area. A response to the bid process is expected around Easter.</p> <p>Headline information (CBC) – Clem Smith (CSm) presented the latest key figures for Crawley including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Universal Credit claimant count in January 2021 has remained at 8.3% (6,020 claimants). Crawley remains the worst affected within the Coast to Capital LEP area and ranks 35th out of 380 local authorities in the UK. • 25,800 = peak level of Crawley residents on furlough in 2020/21. • Over 7,000 jobs lost from the Gatwick campus. • Youth unemployment has fallen slightly at 12.6%; male unemployment remains at 9.3% <p>Looking ahead, significant investment in infrastructure is planned for 2021 including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £23m investment in 'full fibre' infrastructure rollout already underway to provide residents and businesses with access to gigabit speed broadband. • Station Gateway £70m regeneration scheme – reserved matters and full application for Overline House coming to CBC planning committee in April. Arora Group is keen to be on site in 2021. • Crawley's new Town Hall construction well underway, including 78,000 sq ft Grade A commercial space and a new district heat network. • Crawley College new £5m STEM Centre opening March 2021. 	

- £8.6m investment from 'Getting Building Fund' for Crawley Innovation Centre in Manor Royal – business case progressing.

Gatwick Airport Ltd – Alison Addy (AA) reported that the airport remains very quiet however it welcomed the government's recent roadmap proposals and is working hard to ensure passengers have the confidence to resume travelling. GAL is also supporting a coordinated, global effort with regard to passenger testing requirements however this will require a comprehensive financial support package to be in place. The furlough scheme has helped GAL to project jobs and it remains optimistic about the future. AA reported positive conversations taking place with both existing and new airlines, looking to establish themselves at Gatwick.

CM invited **Henry Smith MP** (HS) to provide an update. HS reiterated his support for both the Innovation Centre and the Freeport Bid and expressed his thanks to the LEP for their work on the bid. Whilst there are only ten Freeports to be confirmed and there is stiff competition from other areas, the Gatwick bid is strong.

With regard to the Towns Fund, HS understands that an announcement of around £20m for Crawley is expected to be made as part of the Budget on 4th March. HS also referred to the new Forest Gate Job Centre that is expected to open shortly and will further support local residents looking for employment.

HS reflected that Crawley is the second worst affected community in the UK and a comprehensive support package has been provided by government however there is a long way to go. The latest roadmap proposals and vaccination roll-out are positive (with now 1 in 3 Crawley residents having received the vaccine) but the priority remains to get things opened up again quickly.

Manor Royal BID – Steve Sawyer (SS) reported that Manor Royal remains quiet but things are picking up, with local agents reporting an increase in enquiries and a number of development sites moving towards planning. According to the [Manor Royal Jobs Board](#) (provided by LoveLocalJobs), job postings fell from c30 per month before the pandemic, to around 4 per month in the middle of 2020. The good news is that this has now risen to c28 postings a month and a variety of sectors are looking to recruit (e.g. Virgin, Varian, Elekta).

SS confirmed that year four of the current five-year BID term is about to start and the BID will be looking to survey businesses in preparation for the next Business Plan, ready for the vote in February 2023.

The Towns Fund micro-parks project is making good progress; currently awaiting planning consent to proceed with implementation at the first four sites.

Jeff Alexander commented that Gatwick Diamond Business (GDB) is running a Real Estate Live event on 25 February '[Diamond Discovery](#)'; promoting Crawley/Gatwick and the wider Gatwick Diamond as a location for investment.

Jeremy Taylor is working with Coast to Capital and GDB to understand business views on the EU Transition process. If anyone would like to complete a survey please contact Jeremy.taylor@thecompanyconnector.com.

Town Centre BID - Neil Cooper (NC) confirmed that the newly formed Town Centre BID is working closely with Steve Sawyer; NC thanked SS for his input to date in taking the BID forward at pace. Current Town Centre BID activities include:

- part funding the re-introduction of Street Ambassadors Dec-Jan (to be fully funded into 2021/22)

ALL

- part funding the Creative Crawley '[Right Here](#)' micro-festival 29/30th January – a positive event that led to a 49% increase in footfall after the final event.
- Funding membership of the Crawley & Gatwick Business Watch for all BID levy payers.
- Currently interviewing for a new BID Manager

A recent survey confirmed a 12% vacancy rate across the town centre (10% in County Mall). The town centre remains closed for all non-essential retail however businesses are hopeful they will be able to re-open from 12th April. Debenhams will re-open on the 12th and continue to trade to clear stock before closing permanently. There have also been some new openings including Five Guys and Wagamamas.

NC confirmed that the town centre re-opening will be significant and we are hoping for a bounce-back as Crawley has always performed well as a regional retail centre. The BID is doing all it can to support businesses and stimulate activity, improve safety and security and promote the town centre as a place to visit.

NC referred to the Local Plan review and the need for flexible planning policies to facilitate new uses, over and above retail. Peter Smith confirmed that the Local Planning Authority is evolving its Local Plan to ensure the town centre is not exclusively retail and is happy to work on ideas to assist this process further. Clem Smith referred to recent changes to the planning system, particularly around changes of use, which will greatly assist diversification in the town centre.

Adam Godfrey suggested (via the in-meeting chat) that the DWP may like to produce a flyer summarising the support they can offer businesses in Crawley. Alison Barratt will follow this up with Adam and share with local business networks (MR BID, TC BID, Professional Services Forum, etc)

AG/AB

COVID-19 Business Grants / Discretionary Business Grants update

Lynn Hainge (LH) reported that since April 2020, Crawley BC has paid over £16.8m in support grants to local businesses.

As lockdown restrictions continued into 2021, we received more government funding however take up from local businesses slowed down. Crawley BC launched a campaign in January to promote the various grant schemes and encourage more businesses to apply. This included 'easy-to-use' flyers, e-newsletters, social and local media and targeted communications through local business networks. This has led to a significant increase in applications received and we are continuing to process them as quickly as possible.

Further information about the business grants, including eligibility criteria and how to apply can be found at [Business support grants | Crawley GOV](#)

3. Bid for Freeport Status – Manor Royal / Gatwick Airport

Matthew Wragg (MW) from the Coast to Capital LEP presented a summary of a recent bid to establish a [Freeport site at Gatwick](#).

A link to the full bid submission document, the presentation and FAQs can be found at <https://www.coast2capital.org.uk/bids>

If successful, £17.5m of Freeport capital would fund enabling works to boost inward investment and business productivity within Manor Royal. Proposals will help create new commercial space and jobs, stimulate growth in international trade, increase productivity and prosperity in Manor Royal and drive UK Net Zero ambitions. A response to the bid is expected in the new few weeks.

<p>Adam Godfrey asked what businesses can do to help the bid. MW encouraged businesses to keep talking positively about the bid locally.</p> <p>Ana Christie requested that the discussions include the Chambers as they have the expertise and experience to support the bid and help shift the bid towards freight activities at the airport. MW confirmed that, if successful, the LEP will build wider support and collaboration.</p>	<p>ALL</p> <p>MW</p>
<p>4. The Town Investment Plan – update on latest state of play (CBC) CSm thanked HS for providing a steer on the Towns Fund/Budget and, assuming this is confirmed next week, the Town Deal Board will need to respond quickly. It is therefore suggested that a meeting of the Town Deal Board is convened on 24th March 2021 at 9.30am.</p> <p>The purpose of that meeting will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To agree draft Heads of Terms - To agree timelines for business case development (the government is likely to allow 12 months for business case development but we may wish to fast-track some projects.) - If we do not receive the full £25m allocation, to review the priority projects in line with the budget. <p><u>The Board agreed to a meeting of the Town Deal Board on 24th March to consider the government’s response and draft Town Deal heads of terms.</u></p>	<p>LH</p>
<p>5. Town Investment Plan (TIP) projects – Business Cases CS referred to the draft list of participants in the TIP sub-groups and task & finish groups that had been circulated before the meeting, stating that each sub-group will oversee the development of business cases for each project.</p> <p>CM highlighted the need for more representation on the Manor Royal and Green Transformation sub-groups and the need for a Chair to co-ordinate the Town Centre sub-group.</p> <p>CM and PS encouraged all Board members to consider colleagues or business contacts who could be co-opted into the sub-groups, based on their knowledge and expertise in certain areas.</p> <p><u>The Board agreed to nominate people to join the Sub-Groups, by emailing lynn.haingec@ Crawley.gov.uk.</u></p>	<p>ALL/LH</p>
<p>6. Draft Crawley Economic Recovery Plan CS presented the first draft of Crawley’s ‘One Town’ Economic Recovery Plan which provides an overarching strategic framework for Crawley’s socio-economic prosperity. The full presentation can be viewed here.</p> <p>The Plan is underpinned by Crawley’s existing programmes of economic regeneration including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Town Centre Regeneration Programme - Crawley Growth Programme - Town Investment Plan (subj to agreement with the government) - Crawley Employment & Skills Programme <p>Strategic priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Diverse and Resilient Economy - Green Transformation - Town Centre renewal 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skills for the Future - Connected Crawley <p>The Draft Economic Plan will be presented to Crawley BC's Cabinet on 10th March, followed by a period of public consultation prior to formal adoption in Summer 2021.</p> <p><u>The Board agreed to endorse in principle the vision and strategic priorities for the draft Plan, which is subject to CBC Cabinet approval and to a period of public consultation.</u></p>	CS
<p>7. Any Other Business None</p> <p>8. Date of the next meeting Wednesday 24th March 2021 at 9.30am.</p>	