

## **B) RECOMMENDATION OF THE CABINET FROM ITS MEETING HELD ON 16<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2020: SBC COVID 19 RECOVERY AND SKILLS**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide an update on the Council's plans for recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic and to highlight the initiatives around skills.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Council's plans be noted for medium term recovery and long term renewal as an organisation, for Slough the place and our communities and in particular the initiatives around skills.

### **3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy 2020-24**

- 3.1 Coronavirus has the potential to impact on the delivery of all of the Wellbeing Board's priorities:
1. Starting Well
  2. Integration
  3. Strong, Healthy and Attractive Neighbourhoods (Building Community Asset Resilience)
  4. Workplace Health

### **4. Five Year Plan 2020-24 Outcomes**

Coronavirus has the potential to impact on the delivery of all of the Five Year Plan's priority outcomes:

Outcome 1 Slough children will grow up to be happy, healthy and successful

Outcome 2 Our people will be healthier and manage their own care needs

Outcome 3 Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and stay

Outcome 4 Our residents will live in good quality homes

Outcome 5 Slough will attract, retain and grow businesses and investment to provide opportunities for our residents

### **5. Other Implications**

#### **(a) Financial –**

There are no financial implications arising from this report. However, the expectation is that the delivery of the skills related projects will require demands for funding that will be made through Growth Bids as required in future financial years.

- (b) **Risk Management** – There are no identified risks to the proposed actions in this report. A Covid 19 risk register is submitted to Cabinet on a regular basis with the update on Covid actions.

- (c) **Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications** - There are no Human Rights Act implications associated with the proposed actions.
- (d) **Equalities Impact Assessment** - There is no requirement to complete an Equalities Impact Assessment in relation to this report.

## **6. Supporting information**

- 6.1 The Council acted swiftly in response to the introduction of the 'lockdown' by the UK government in March which saw non-essential businesses close down and the population (with the exception of Key Workers) instructed to work from home.
- 6.2 We have ensured that the most vulnerable in our community received the help and support they needed particularly those who were isolating as part of the Shielding programme, the homeless and those at risk of harm. We administered at a local level the national business support schemes and undertook research of local employers with employees who were furloughed and those at risk of redundancy when the scheme ends.
- 6.3 At the same time as managing the immediate response to the crisis we have therefore been developing our plans for economic recovery and renewal of the town. Clearly the closure of most businesses combined with the national economic outlook meant that we needed to be in a position where we had robust plans to ensure the resilience of our local economy, the survival of businesses and the creation of new opportunities for employees whose futures were at risk.
- 6.4 Elsewhere our recovery plan focusses on the inevitable health, wellbeing, social and financial aftershocks of the public health crisis.
- 6.5 The attached slides (Appendix A) provide an overview of the priorities and actions for recovery and renewal with a focus on skills.
- 6.6 A summary of the initiatives that are focussed on recovery and skills is set out below:

### **1. The Slough Inclusive Growth Strategy 2020-25**

The Strategy was adopted in June and has the vision that:

"Slough will be an economy which epitomises inclusiveness, diversity and resilience – where small businesses flourish, where large employers invest, and where residents have the opportunity to aspire and prosper. We will harness the value of our international connections and the potential of redevelopment and regeneration to present a confident and dynamic image to the world, where a rounded and sustainable approach to growth is intrinsic to our collective success."

To deliver this vision, six strategic priorities have been developed:

- 1) Creating secure and productive jobs
- 2) A skills system working for all

- 3) Regeneration and infrastructure unlocking growth
- 4) Enterprise and scale up ecosystem
- 5) Inclusive and sustainable neighbourhoods
- 6) Connecting and celebrating Slough

The strategy stresses that Slough Borough Council's strategic focus will be on delivering inclusive growth and seeks to enshrine the following behaviours:

- **Tackling inequality** – bridging the gap between those who benefit most from Slough's economic stature and those who don't.
- **A broader view of growth** – viewing economic success through a broader lens of quality of life.
- **Collective ownership** – civic, business and community leaders sharing in the responsibility of building a prosperous future for Slough.
- **Thinking one step ahead** – being prepared for the trends and technologies that will shape Slough's economy in years to come.
- **Building trust** – leadership founded on transparency, integrity and putting the people of Slough first.
- **Environment first** recognising that economic growth can be achieved in harmony with a more resilient and sustainable Borough.

It will be delivered by the newly established **Regeneration Economy and Skills Board**, (private, community and education partnership) **and our Covid Recovery Plan**.

## **2. Future Skills Hub**

The immediate need to address the vast and rising unemployment level and a significant displacement of the labour market will be addressed by the Future Skills Hub through a coordinated approach to the brokerage of various services. By helping to link communities, education and skills providers and employers the Hub will play a central role in supporting with the recovery from the current Covid 19 related crisis. The Hub will bring alignment, structure and support to help those many who have faced or are at risk of redundancy and unemployment.

By bringing Higher Education provision to the borough for the first time, the Hub will also act as an enabling mechanism for crucial upskilling and reskilling and raise career aspirations, preparing residents for future demands of the world of work. The ultimate aim of the Future Skills Hub is to enable residents to gain the relevant skills to be employable now and in the future by adapting to the changing needs of the labour market.

The Hub will be delivered from Observatory House but services are being planned virtually until the time we can bring people into the facility and open spring/summer time 2021

The services of the Future Skills Hub will include:

- employability training interventions incl. CV and interview techniques
- individual careers mentoring

- community outreach and IAG
- qualifications and skills delivery
- apprenticeship, traineeship and Kickstart placement brokerage
- a greater focus on sector academies – the Hub can be the platform from where the Construction Academy takes off and supports employment and training in this sector and then matches people to the opportunities in the 15 year regeneration programme underway in the town centre.

Slough Borough Council will own and oversee the project and procure a fit out/ design and build supplier. The service of the operational Hub will be delivered collaboratively by partner organisations and centrally coordinated by Slough Borough Council. The foundation partners of the project are:

- Windsor Forest Colleges Group
- Royal Holloway University
- DWP Job Centre Plus Slough

The project partners will organise themselves as a Board to direct, monitor and evaluate the operation of the Hub.

### **3. Slough Innovation Space**

This will provide business start up entrepreneurs in the digital and technology sector with a physical space and 1:1 business guidance on how to grow their business and test out new ideas and products. This will help us grow our business case, create jobs for residents and ensure a vibrant local economy.

The Facility will operate from OH and open spring/summer time 2021

### **4. Construction Academy**

The Future Skills Hub will be used as a platform to set out a Construction Academy. It requires a coordinated approach, bringing Partners together to deliver on a common purpose. There are 4 key components to this approach:

1. Available growing number of jobs in this sector – linked to the number of jobs emerging with regeneration projects in the TC.
2. Aligning careers and information guidance to this sector and working with training providers, colleges to ensure their courses are delivering the skills needs of this sector
3. Raising awareness of opportunities - Working with the Job Centre ensuring unemployed people are matched to these jobs
4. Helping employers recruit from this pool of local and recently trained cohorts

### **5. Health & Social Care Academy**

Our ambition is to introduce a new Berkshire-wide (East & West) Health and Care Academy that will fill an existing skills gap in the community, care and hospital sector. We have been liaising with Frimley Health Integrated Care System and Wexham Park

Hospital regarding the potential to get more people (locally) trained into Nursing and Midwifery and wider health and care jobs.

The new Health and Care Academy would complement the proposed Construction Academy, providing a broader range of opportunities for local people – providing an “easy pathway” into local and sustainable employment. We would also tackle the shortfall of trained BAME staff within the health and social care sector and would explore positive action in training to redress this imbalance – thus simultaneously creating jobs and tackling inequality. We will look at volunteering and apprenticeships as part of the package of opportunities. In addition to the Construction Academy, the proposed Health and Care Academy will have close ties to the Future Skills hub and proposals for a local university in Slough.

## **6. Berkshire Opportunities Portal**

This online portal picks up all the vacancies across Berkshire and brings it onto one site. It also provides information on training and careers support. Employers with vacancies can make sure their vacancies are featured. They can also have a greater presence on the website by getting their logos onto the site.

<https://www.berkshireopportunities.co.uk/>

## **7. Comments of other committees**

- 7.1 Cabinet considered the report at its meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and recommended that an update on the plans for recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic be reported to Council.

## **8. Conclusion**

- 8.1 This report provides an update on our plans for recovery and renewal with a focus on skills.
- 8.2 Future updates will be provided to reflect the way in which the Council is continuing to respond in a proactive way to the challenge of Covid and will focus on updates to specific themes.

## **9. Appendices attached**

A – Recovery and Renewal planning (slides)

## **10. Background papers**

None.