

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	City Growth and Resources Committee
DATE	10 November 2021
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Socio-Economic Rescue Plan Update
REPORT NUMBER	COM/21/279
CHIEF OFFICER	Richard Sweetnam
REPORT AUTHOR	Jim Johnstone
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.1.1 & 3.3

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the delivery of the 2020 Socio-Economic Rescue Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee: -

- 2.1 Notes the current status of the Socio-Economic Rescue Plan;
- 2.2 Notes the ongoing implementation and proposed development of the Aberdeen City Council Business Charter; and
- 2.3 Instructs the Chief Officer - City Growth to present to the February meeting of the committee details in respect of an Aberdeen Community Wealth Building approach to maximising local economic impact and an integrated approach by the Council to supporting businesses and the delivery of investment opportunities.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The 2020/2021 Socio-Economic Rescue Plan ('the Plan') was approved by the Council's Urgent Business Committee (COM/20/098) on 30 June 2020 and by the Community Planning Aberdeen Board on 01 July 2020.
- 3.2 An Implementation Group was formed to oversee the delivery of actions across the Business, People and Place themes in the Plan. The Implementation Group met monthly and was attended by officers and representatives of partner organisations.
- 3.3 A Plan update was provided at City Growth and Resources Committee (COM/21/099) on 11 May 2021 and following the conclusion of the rescue plan, the 75 actions in the plan were categorised as one of the following:

- Complete
- Continuing
- Closed
- Integrated with an existing CPA Improvement Project
- To be considered for a new project as part of the LOIP refresh

Update

3.4 Following the completion of the Plan, 16 projects were integrated with the LOIP for governance under the Community Planning Aberdeen structure.

3.5 Since the start of the 2021/22 financial year, key outputs from Aberdeen City Council's continuing projects have included the following:

- Assisting 45 people (as of October) into a positive destination (employment, education or training) through the council's ABZWorks employability programmes;
- Administration and ongoing delivery of the Kickstart Internship programme, the Council has secured 155 internal Kickstart posts and approvals for 344 posts for organisations accessing the scheme through the Council as a Kickstart gateway organisation (as of October);
- Continued delivery of Positive Destination Planning Sessions to support young people at risk of leaving school without a positive destination;
- Launch of ABZWorks one-stop employability shop website with information on employability support, volunteering, and learning and development opportunities available in Aberdeen;
- Joint employability communications campaign with other Aberdeen training providers to promote employability support and learning and development opportunities available in Aberdeen;
- The Council is the lead accountable body role for the delivery of the £14.3m North East Economic Recovery and Skills Fund.
- Delivery of a number of virtual and face-to-face Partnership Action for Continued Employment (PACE) redundancy support events and jobs fairs;
- Reopening of Aberdeen Art Gallery on 26th April 2021 following the winter lockdown and since welcoming 50,669 visitors (as of 26th October) including an official opening of the refurbished Gallery on 21st September 2021;
- In relation to the Aberdeen City Council Business Charter there has been delivery of Responsible Business and Meet the Buyer events, and support provided to businesses in delivery of their social corporate responsibility aims;
- On-going work with Commercial and Procurement and other services within the council to ensure that community benefits are incorporated into invitations to tender;
- To build on this social value activity, the City Growth Service proposes to develop, with colleagues from other services and input from external partners via Community Planning Aberdeen and the Multi Agency Management Group, an Aberdeen Community Wealth Building approach that will provide a framework to maximise the economic and social impact of the Council and other key local organisations;

- Advice and support to local businesses and those considering starting a business, is supported through the Business Gateway Service;
 - To enhance this activity the City Growth service will, within the framework of the Business Charter, develop the concept of a “virtual team” to coordinate the council’s interaction with key businesses and the development and delivery of investment opportunities. This will be further developed to consider a coordinated approach - working with partners, in particular Scottish Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland and Opportunity North East, to establish virtual support teams that draw on the knowledge, skills, expertise and resources of the partners to maximise the economic impact of businesses and opportunities in Aberdeen.
- 3.6 In addition, to the above the Council has through its City Growth Business Response Hub processed over 14,000 payments, disbursing over £73 million of Covid-19 grant support to Aberdeen businesses and organisations who have seen their income significantly impacted by restrictions.
- 3.7 At this time the Discretionary Fund to Local Authorities is the remaining Covid-19 grant support intervention available to businesses. The Council was allocated £6,003,307 through this scheme which it increase through the addition of the August Local Restrictions underspend which brought the total pot to £6,128,307.
- 3.8 To date £5,460,185 has been disbursed through three rounds of open applications: a discretionary top up grant for Taxi and Private Hire Drivers; A Tourism, Leisure Hospitality top up grant and a new Business Transition Fund. The purpose of the latter fund being to support businesses who are unable, due to immediate financial pressures, to adapt to new ways of working or to make investment towards remaining competitive in a post Covid-19 economy.
- 3.9 A total of £668,122 will be disbursed through the Business Transition Fund, which opened to application at the start of October. The fund has to date seen requests for over £600,000 in financial assistance through applications from businesses which seek to improve their financial sustainability by implementing solutions such as improving digital resilience, property alterations, Net Zero improvements/energy efficiencies or other interventions which will support recovery. This activity is expected to safeguard over 300 jobs. Based on levels of current demand it is anticipated that all remaining funds will be committed and disbursed by the end of the 2021/22 financial year.
- 3.10 Throughout the implementation of the Plan, positive feedback was received from partner organisations on the collaborative working and strengthening of relationships between these organisations. Many of the Implementation Group members have now joined or engaged with Aberdeen Prospers, the Outcome Improvement Group for the Economy section of the LOIP, and it has also allowed us to continue partnership working to secure and deliver additional projects such as the North East Economic Recovery and Skills Fund.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 At the 30 June 2020 meeting, Urgent Business Committee approved a budget of £141,000 that would be available to support the pump priming of any actions in the Plan.
- 4.2 Of the £141,000 budget, £98,655 has been committed in 2020/21 to support rescue plan actions. The outstanding budget is £42,345.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that the remaining budget for the Socio-Economic Rescue Plan will be committed in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	Further local or national lockdown measures need to be re-introduced.	M	Open actions continue to be monitored as part of LOIP. UK and Scottish Government support in progressing strategic actions.
Compliance	None		
Operational	None		
Financial	None		
Reputational	Failure to respond to the crisis and delaying a response	L	This Plan and Governance has allowed the Council to lead a coordinated city-wide response

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	The Socio-Economic Rescue Plan supported the delivery of following Policy Statement objectives – economy; people and place in support of the Regional Economic Strategy and the LOIP. The employability responses in particular aligned to existing priorities around Developing the Young Workforce. The Place actions all contributed to active travel and transport plans.

Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan		
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes		The rescue plan provided support to businesses in the immediate response to Covid-19 and to mitigate where possible against permanent job losses in the city. They are therefore unlikely to have generated increased employment in support of the LOIP target to grow jobs by 10% in priority sectors.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes		The rescue plan aimed to support health and wellbeing outcomes in the Children & Young People and Adult stretch outcomes.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes		The rescue plan supported the poverty and active travel stretch outcomes.
Regional and City Strategies		The Socio-Economic Action Plan's activities supported business and inclusive economic growth in the Regional Economic Strategy and Regional Skills Strategy, and the Local Development Plan 'triple aims' of economic sustainability, public health priorities and the LOIP.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes		The report aligns to the Scottish Government's Covid-19 emergency legislation and the Phased Approach to post-lockdown.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 Council Urgent Business Committee – Socio-Economic Rescue Plan 2020/2021 - COM/20/098, 30 June 2020
- 9.2 City Growth and Resources Committee – Socio-Economic Rescue Plan Final Update – COM/21/099, 11 May 2021

10. APPENDICES

None

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