

### **Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)**

---

**Time and Date**

2.00 pm on Wednesday, 8th December, 2021

**Place**

Council Chamber, Council House, Coventry CV1 5RR

Please note that in line with current Government and City Council guidelines in relation to Covid, there will be reduced public access to the meeting to manage numbers attending safely. If you wish to attend in person, please contact the Governance Services Officers indicated at the end of the agenda.

---

**Public Business**

1. **Apologies and Substitutions**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 8)
  - (a) To agree the Minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021
  - (b) Matters arising
4. **Tourism Strategy** (Pages 9 - 12)

Briefing Note of the Director of Business, Investment and Culture
5. **Jobs and Business - Impact of Covid** (Pages 13 - 18)

Briefing Note of the Director of Business, Investment and Culture
6. **Work Programme 2021/2022** (Pages 19 - 22)

Report of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator
7. **Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

**Private Business**

Nil

---

Julie Newman, Director of Law and Governance, Council House, Coventry

Tuesday, 30 November 2021

Note: The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Michelle Salmon, Governance Services, Email: [michelle.salmon@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:michelle.salmon@coventry.gov.uk)

Membership:

Councillors G Hayre, M Heaven, T Jandu, R Lancaster, P Male, C Miks (Chair), E Ruane, B Singh and A Tucker

By invitation: Councillor J O'Boyle – Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change

### **Public Access**

Please note that in line with current Government and City Council Covid guidelines, there will be reduced public access to the meeting to manage numbers attending safely.

Any member of the public who would like to attend the meeting in person is required to contact the officer below in advance of the meeting regarding arrangements for public attendance. A guide to attending public meeting can be found here:

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/publicAttendanceMeeting>

Michelle Salmon, Governance Services,  
Email: [michelle.salmon@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:michelle.salmon@coventry.gov.uk)

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)**  
**held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 13 October 2021**

Present:

Members:

- Councillor C Miks (Chair)
- Councillor J Blundell (substitute for Councillor M Heaven)
- Councillor G Hayre
- Councillor T Jandu
- Councillor R Lakha (substitute for Councillor R Lancaster)
- Councillor P Male
- Councillor E Ruane
- Councillor B Singh
- Councillor A Tucker

Other Invited Members:

- Councillor R Brown – Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources
- Councillor J O’Boyle – Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change
- Councillor K Sandhu – Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
- Councillor R Singh – Chair of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1)

Employees (by Service):

Customer and Business Services	A Bellingeri
Education and Skills	K Mawby
ICT and Digital	P Ward
Law and Governance	G Holmes, M Rose

Apologies:

- Councillor P Hetherton
- Councillor R Lancaster
- Councillor G Lloyd

## **Public Business**

### **11. Declarations of Interest**

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

### **12. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th September 2021 were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

### 13. **Digital Inclusion**

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) received a Briefing Note and Presentation of the Head of Customer Services which provided an insight into the early thoughts surrounding Digital Inclusion and the Digital Service & Inclusion Lead remit including an overview of the likely areas of focus for the service as it evolved.

The digital divide existed in a pre-pandemic world, in 2020 The Good Things Foundation Digital National Report highlighted that 9 million people nationally were unable to use the internet without help and that 7 million households had no access to the internet at home. Figures published in Lloyds Consumer Digital Index report of 2021 identified that 3% of West Midlands residents, equating to 11 thousand Coventry People were 'off-line' and 30% of residents, 111 thousand people in Coventry only completed basic tasks on an infrequent basis.

The Lloyds Consumer Index reports that 53% of people would improve their digital skills if access to the internet and devices were cheaper, with 67% of people suggesting that they would improve their digital skills if they could access available support. A growing number of people had, by necessity, used self-service provision since the pandemic with services in all sectors moving their offer to on-line access or provided through other digital solutions. This was advantageous for many however, it has served to increase the divide, further disadvantaging those who were not digitally confident or who did not have access to the required facilities.

The creation of a digital inclusion offer was intended to improve this position, supporting residents to:

- Improve digital skills and confidence
- Access suitable digital devices
- Access digital connectivity

The presentation outlined the role of the new Digital Service and Inclusion Lead and noted that initial recruitment to the temporary role was unsuccessful and the recruitment would now be for a permanent position.

Councillor R Singh had been invited to join the discussion as Chair of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board 1 which had an interest in digital items.

Councillor Brown, Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources highlighted Ofcom statistics which placed Coventry in a fortunate position Nationally and Locally regarding infrastructure. That would enable consideration of what to do with the infrastructure and supporting people at various stages of learning skills.

The Board questioned officers, received responses and discussed the following issues:

- The digital ability of the organisation compared to digital inclusion

- Progress on delivering a Member casework tool and integration with the existing CRM Customer Relationship Manager
- Accessibility of the Digital Services Offer
- The involvement of other stakeholders such as the 3rd sector to establish what their digital offer is and consider supporting access to those services
- Ensuring the Council's digital offer was mobile friendly and the increase in use of apps on mobile phones rather than laptops to access services
- The need for this role before now and the need for a role to continue in future.

The Board requested that further details about case work tools be reported back to Members.

**RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3):**

- 1) Notes the report and request a further report back in 6-12 months' time.**
- 2) Requests that the Cabinet Member give further consideration to the split between the external and internal focus of the new role and the digital capability of the organisation.**

**14. Digital Skills for the Jobs Market**

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) received a Briefing Note and Presentation of the Head of Employment & Skills and the Head of ICT & Digital regarding the position of provisions in place to support residents in gaining digital skills with a specific focus on digital skills for employment.

The report recognised that during the COVID19 pandemic, there had been a significant increase in the need for residents to be able to access and have confidence in using digital tools. It was important that the Council make provision for supporting residents in gaining the relevant digital skills but also to be realistic with regards to the extent of the provision provided solely as a local government organisation.

Through the work of the Digital Coventry strategy and wider city-wide digital activity with key partners, the Council continued to look for ways to support a digital skills ecosystem that not only included the provision provided by the city council (further details were provided), but activities provided by partner and community group organisations. The report explored the digital skills for employment provision provided by a range of providers such as Colleges and Independent Training Providers.

In the West Midlands 3% of the population were still offline (approx. 11,000 residents in Coventry). However, 30% of residents in the region still had very low digital engagement (completing basic tasks only and not regularly) – this would be approximately 111,000 Coventry residents. The Lloyds Consumer Digital Index (2021) found 53% would improve digital skills if devices and internet access were cheaper and 67% would if they knew support was available to help.

Libraries were the main place in which residents could freely access devices. All Coventry libraries were now fully re-open and allowed residents 2 hours a day of

free PC use. In addition, there was free access to Wifi for residents who brought their own device. The number of devices available was currently halved to allow for social distancing. However, in August 2021 there were still 10,275 sessions (PC and Wi-Fi). Whilst library usage was returning steadily, this remained down on pre-pandemic usage; for comparison there were 46,664 session in August 2019.

The libraries cannot currently offer face to face close support to residents in using the devices. However, they could offer support from a distance and via help sheets. There was also access to an online learning package called 'Info based learning cloud' which supported people in various online learning. In addition to using libraries residents could freely access devices at all 9 Family Hubs and at the Coventry Job Shop.

In the West Midlands at least 82% of jobs required digital skills, but 56% of the population did not have essential digital skills for work which equated to approximately 138,000 working age residents in Coventry. Supporting residents with key digital skills could help to improve their job prospects and financial stability.

Coventry Adult Education were the largest provider of basic digital skills in the City and provided basic skills for 725 residents a year, many referred through the Coventry Job Shop. Courses were delivered across the city including the City Centre, Cheylesmore, Stoke, Tile Hill and Willenhall as well as offering online courses. Other providers of basic digital skills included Pet Xi and Go Train.

For residents who wanted to develop their digital skills further; either to develop a digital career or for roles which required a higher level of digital skill, there were clearly defined digital pathways. Residents could access a wide range of courses available through Coventry's FE and Higher Education providers as well as Independent Training Providers, and progress through academic levels. For some they may be eligible for full funding, depending on factors such as their employment status and benefits entitlement. Others could access the student loans system with the Government's new Lifetime Skills Guarantee making it possible to use loans more flexibly for further education as opposed to just higher education. A list of courses was attached to the report.

There was increased jobs growth in programming (especially coding) and software development with approximately 4530 jobs in Coventry and the surrounding areas and also many jobs in cyber security. In addition, there was increased employer need for data science and analytics, cloud systems and services, ethical hacking and digital marketing including social media.

Skills support to meet demand in digital growth sectors: Through their £5 million Digital Retraining Fund WMCA commissioned providers across the region to focus on both newer and emerging digital skills such as coding, ethical hacking and cyber security. Some of these courses had been focused in other areas of the region so had not been easy for Coventry residents to access. However, Coventry Job Shop had been successful in engaging with Code Your Future who provided coding training specifically targeted at refugees. In addition, Netcom who attended Coventry Moves Into Work Event were providing higher level digital skills specifically focused on digital infrastructure.

At the same time FE Colleges including Coventry College and North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College (NWLSC) had improved their digital offer in the city. Coventry College now do courses in cyber security and data management and NWLSC had opened a Digital Skills Academy at Coventry University Technology Park which offered coding, cyber security and cloud systems and services.

Coventry City Council were the lead for the ESF SME Skills for Growth Programme. This supported SME businesses with 50% of their costs in providing training to upskill their workforce. This included digital upskilling which supported both residents and businesses. In the last year 8 SME employers had requested digital skills support and the scheme had helped 18 residents gain skills in areas such as digital marketing, search engine optimisation, Google ads training and Microsoft PowerPoint and Excel.

The Board questioned officers, received responses and discussed the following issues:

- Employers working in collaboration with colleges and training providers on course content
- Bidding for Institute of Technology (IoT) funding as part of the government reforms to qualifications
- The extent of discussions with possible IoT anchor employers
- Disappointment that Coventry University had developed an IoT on their London Campus
- Digital skills in demand now and future planning of a Skills Strategy to attract businesses and give Coventry marketing strength to attract businesses to the city.
- The quality of Digital skills learned in school and the possibility of a Digital Academy
- Support for businesses to enable them to become more digital in their business model
- Flexibility of courses and the ability for people to attend if they are already working

Councillor Sandhu, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills highlighted the positive partnership working and good relationships with Academies in Coventry and welcomed a discussion with Headteachers on Digital Skills acknowledging the current challenges faced by schools. Also, schools had developed relationships with Companies in the City.

Councillor O'Boyle, Cabinet Member for Jobs Regeneration and Climate Change acknowledged that working together was key to understanding opportunities and filling any skills gaps. However, the environment was constantly changing, and businesses were managing lots of uncertainty. He suggested that discussions with the Inward Investment Team could be useful.

Officers recognised that working in partnership and collaboration was really important as everyone in Coventry would be at different parts of their digital skills journey and also the environment was constantly evolving, and funding changed.

**RESOLVED that, Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) recommended that the Cabinet Members for Education and Skills, and Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change:**

- 1) Champion with funders, employers and training providers, the possibility of an Institute of Technology based in Coventry subject to the Fund's availability and to feedback to the Board in 3 months.**
- 2) Continue to support the Council in partnership working with employers in the digital and emerging technology industries and training providers in the City, to ensure that the training offered matches the skills required by employers.**

**15. Work Programme 2021/2022**

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) received a report of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator that detailed issues on the Board's Work Programme for meetings of the Board for 2021/2022.

Members of the Board noted that the item on Apprenticeships, Skills and Training (joint with the Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) and the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)) would be referred to Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, as the issues concerned more than one Scrutiny Board.

**RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) notes the issues on the Board's Work Programme for 2021/2022 with an update to the Programme that the item relating to Apprenticeships, Skills and Training be referred to Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee.**

**16. Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 3.45 pm)



---

**To: Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)**

**Date: 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

**Subject: Tourism Strategy**

---

### **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To update Members of the Board on progress in establishing Destination Coventry as the new Destination Management Organisation (DMO) for the City. To review and update on progress in delivering the Coventry Tourism Strategy 2019-2023 and to provide an update on activity undertaken by the DMO to promote Coventry as a destination for business and leisure tourism.

### **2 Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board is recommended:
- 1) To note the contents of the presentation and report.

### **3 Background and Information**

#### Destination Coventry

- 3.1 In July 2021, a collaboration between Coventry City Council and Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce was approved by the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to deliver a new pilot Destination Management Organisation (DMO).
- 3.2 A DMO is the umbrella term for arrangements in a place to support co-ordination and collaboration across the tourism sector's many stakeholders.
- 3.3 A two-year DMO proof-of-concept model was proposed and approved on the recommendation of an independent DMO Advisory Board comprising local sector stakeholders and industry specialists. The Advisory Board's findings validated that a public / private partnership model can be successful in destinations where the sector is more developed and where sector associations and collaborations are well established, as we are now experiencing in Coventry.
- 3.4 The Board considered that testing a proof-of-concept model through the next two years, with the opportunities afforded by UK City of Culture and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, would provide the best opportunities to establish the feasibility of such a new approach.
- 3.5 Destination Coventry was formally established to deliver this proof of concept model in August 2021, with a brief to test the viability of creating a formal public / private DMO entity for Coventry from 2023.

3.6 The following principles were established for this model:

- The new DMO must lead in the management, development and promotion of both leisure and business (meetings, events, conferences) tourism.
- It should also continue to operate the Coventry & Warwickshire Convention Bureau and assume responsibility for visitor information provision in Coventry.
- It should continue to deliver the 2019-2023 Tourism Strategy effectively and provide opportunities for visitor economy stakeholders to engage in strategic reviews and the development of future strategy iterations.
- The model should not rely solely on Council funding and must enable the private sector to contribute financially to the DMO's destination marketing activities, with the aim of amplifying continued growth of the city's visitor economy.
- Its activities must include the development of income streams to ensure sustained financial viability. These might be through access to Government funding, membership subscription products, Convention Bureau commissions, advertising sales, provision of destination marketing services and so on.

3.7 The management and operations of Destination Coventry are overseen by an Oversight Board, chaired by the Venue Commercial Director of Coventry Building Society Arena. The Board further includes representatives from the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, Coventry BID, Coventry City of Culture Trust, Visit Britain, events industry sector representation and Coventry City Council.

3.8 Destination Coventry's Business Plan 2021-2023 sets out the DMO's intended activities for the first two years of operation; the DMO's governance arrangements; and plans for monitoring and review of the model.

#### Coventry Tourism Strategy 2019-2023

3.9 Continued delivery of Coventry's Tourism Strategy 2019-2023 is a core principle and therefore key priority for the new DMO model.

3.10 Destination Coventry has commenced a detailed review of progress made against the actions outlined in the Coventry Tourism Strategy, across the four key themes of:

1. Partnership
2. Product
3. Place
4. Positioning

3.11 Positive progress (outputs/outcomes) is already noted across all four themes, notably through establishment of the Destination Management Partnership; move to a formal DMO proof-of-concept model; completion of a digital audit and framework; development of multiple packages for key product themes; completion of an accommodation study; review of business events strategy; development of visitor information strategies; improvements at key gateways; and development of campaigns to promote Coventry as a visitor destination.

3.12 The review of progress against Strategy actions will inform the action planning for Destination Coventry across 2022 and 2023.

#### DMO Marketing and Promotional Activity

3.13 Since its recent establishment, Destination Coventry has taken significant steps to build on the Visit Coventry and Conference Coventry brands and promote the City as a visitor destination, through the creation of new marketing collateral and promotional campaigns. These will be outlined in more detail through the presentation, but include:

- **Explore Coventry This Summer campaign** – featuring a website landing page; two ERDF-funded TV AdSmart campaigns; thematic blogs; outdoor media; boosted social media; Google paid search campaigns; and comprehensive events listings.
  - **Business Events Recovery PR campaign** - including 'Killer Stats' promotional film; multiple press releases; trade show attendance; social media campaign; and a series of short spotlight videos.
  - **Winter Wishes Christmas campaign** – including TV Adsmart campaign; radio campaign; digital outdoor media; thematic blogs; boosted social media; 200+ events listings; external website campaigns; and website landing page.
  - **Coventry Official Visitor Guide** – in digital and print format, for the period Autumn 2021 to Spring 2022. Distributed through Coventry's Visitor Information Centre (VIC); hotels and VICs across the region; and various visitor attractions and hotels throughout the City.
  - **Industry-facing website** – presenting and promoting Destination Coventry and its membership proposition to sector businesses and partners.
  - **Membership collateral** – materials promoting and supporting the launch of Destination Coventry as a membership body *supported by local private and public sector partners*.
  - **The Perfect Break couples' bookable product** - complementing the existing 'Stay, Play, Explore' bookable breaks for families, November saw the launch of a new couples bookable product featuring a selection of hotels combined with a wide range of the City's visitor attractions and experiences.
- 3.14 With regards to evidence of market reach and impact from the recent Destination Coventry campaigns, the *Explore Coventry* Sky Adsmart campaign achieved 120k impressions, reached 20k households in the UK, with each household seeing the advert 6.5 times on average.
- 3.15 By utilising a Google paid search campaign, the *Explore Coventry* promotional video has received 1.3 million impressions and over 630k views on Visit Coventry's YouTube channel.
- 3.16 During October 2021, Visit Coventry's Google paid search campaigns achieved 287,363 website impressions and 1,957 links clicked. This activity has increased the DMO's presence around the UK, with London being the top location for link clicks, followed closely by Coventry, Birmingham and Manchester
- 3.17 The Visit Coventry website saw double the number of visits in October 2021 compared with levels in both October 2020 and October 2019 (pre-the COVID-19 pandemic).
- 3.18 Conference Coventry and Warwickshire social engagements have also grown dramatically. On LinkedIn, 71 new followers registered in October and page views were 97% up on the previous month. On Twitter, in the four weeks from 4 October, impressions were up 77.3%, to 10,200 in total. Twitter profile visits were further up by 191% and the Destination Coventry LinkedIn page gained 89 followers, a 140% increase on the previous month.
- 3.19 After just six days after launch, the *Winter Wishes* Christmas promotional video has been viewed over 178k times on Visit Coventry's YouTube channel.

#### DMO Membership Scheme

- 3.20 The change in delivery model through the creation of Destination Coventry is expected to increase resources for tourism promotion and destination management, including through the creation of a DMO membership programme alongside current levels of secured investment.
- 3.21 The Destination Coventry membership proposition will be launched to the sector on 2 December 2021 at the Coventry Building Society Arena, at Destination Coventry's formal Launch Event.

- 3.22 The presentation to Scrutiny Board will provide feedback from the Launch Event, as Destination Coventry builds on momentum secured through the first few months of operation of the new DMO model.

#### **4 Health Inequalities Impact**

- 4.1 The establishment of Destination Coventry as a two-year proof-of-concept model for a new DMO is expected to increase resources for tourism promotion and destination management, thereby creating opportunities to improve service delivery, invest in the City's visitor offer and strengthen the business and leisure tourism economy within the City and its surroundings.
- 4.2 It is anticipated that the success of the new DMO model will contribute to sustaining and increasing employment in the tourism and hospitality sectors, creating positive opportunities for local people. This will further promote Coventry as a visitor destination and focus for investment, promoting opportunities for sustainable and inclusive growth in the City, thereby contributing to positive health outcomes for local residents.

#### **Authors**

Name: David Nuttall

Job Title: Strategic Lead (UK City of Culture and Commonwealth Games) and Acting Head of Service (Sports, Culture and Destination)

Email: [David.Nuttall@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:David.Nuttall@coventry.gov.uk)

Name: Paul Jones

Job Title: Managing Director, Destination Coventry

Email: [Paul.Jones@destinationcoventry.co.uk](mailto:Paul.Jones@destinationcoventry.co.uk)

---

**To: Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)**

**Date: 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

**Subject: Jobs and Businesses – Impact of Covid**

---

### **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 A briefing note highlighting the support that local businesses have received due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. A number of support initiatives have been delivered by the Economic Development Service, whilst we continue to work alongside local business support partners including Coventry & Warwickshire (CW) Chamber of Commerce, CWLEP Growth Hub, Coventry & Warwickshire Reinvestment Trust (CWRT) and Federation of Small Businesses (FSB). Critical to this effort is to enable the adaptation of the support schemes to the changing economic, social and health conditions, as we continue to offer a range of business support initiatives beyond the immediate COVID-19 support.

### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board is recommended to:
  - 1) Consider the content of the briefing note and note progress made delivering Covid support to businesses in Coventry.

### **3 Economic Context**

- 3.1 The nature of support services we have provided to businesses has changed and evolved over the course of the pandemic, due to changing economic circumstances. Coventry & Warwickshire entered 2020 as the fastest growing LEP area economy in England since the 2008/09 recession in terms of economic output. However, the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020 forced some sectors of the economy to close and social distancing restrictions limiting the output of sectors remaining open. The impact has been severe, with UK economic output (measured by GDP) falling by over 21% in the first two quarters of 2020 alone and contracting by 9.9% in 2020 as a whole (the largest contraction of any G7 nation). The West Midlands encountered the highest fall in economic output of any English region during the Spring 2020 lockdown (it was also projected to have the highest economic contracting of all UK regions during 2020), and the UK economy remains 2.1% smaller than pre-pandemic levels.
- 3.2 Due to many businesses needing to close temporarily and/or unable to generate sufficient income, as many as 49,200 posts in Coventry were furloughed in June

2020 (30% - the peak level for any point during the pandemic). The claimant count (numbers on unemployment related benefits) in Coventry had also increased to 16,695 (6.7%) in October 2020, an increase from 7,525 (3.0%) in January 2020. By the time the furlough scheme was ended in September 2021, there were 5,900 (4%) left on the scheme, and the claimant count had fallen to 14,250 (5.6%).

- 3.3 Because many businesses have continued to face cashflow challenges (driven by slow recovery of production capacity, supply chain delays and slow recovery of consumer demand for some sectors) and the need to minimise further job losses, our business support activities have broadened in 2021 to support local businesses to access Government grants and loans to mitigate against the impact of COVID-19 and help ensure their survival, as well as continue delivery of our business support programmes and Inward Investment service.
- 3.4 This paper therefore details the measures we have taken to continue delivery of our business support services during 2021 and the additional support we have provided to support local businesses through the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **4 Health Inequalities Impact**

- 4.1 The Economic Development Service (EDS) has been working with Public Health to help address health inequalities through a 'Call to Action'. The aim of the initiative is to encourage local businesses to commit to one or more of the five recommended 'pillars' or interventions which each address a different cause of health inequalities. 1:1 support will be offered to each business to help them understand the impact of each intervention. The implementation of the selected measures will then be the responsibility of each business. The project is at the pilot stage and is working with a small number of businesses to develop a methodology for approaching businesses on a wider scale.
- 4.2 In Coventry, men in the most deprived areas can expect to live an average of 10.7 years less than those in the most affluent areas and will live more of their life in poor health; for women, the gap in life expectancy is 8.3 years. The pandemic has further exacerbated existing health inequalities. For example, young people have been disproportionately affected when it comes to work: over the past year the largest proportional increase in the claimant count (people receiving unemployment related benefits) has been for young people (16-24), which has seen an increase of 135% in the last year. Although Coventry has experienced a notable increase in youth unemployment (aged 18-24), Coventry's youth unemployment rate of 4.3% is lower than both the national average of 6% and West Midlands average of 7.3%. Whilst the increases in Claimant Counts for the 25-49 and 50+ age groups have not been as sharp, Coventry's claimant count had risen to above the national average for these two age groups as of July 2021 – 6.8% compared to 6.2% nationally for the 25-49 age range and 5.9% for those aged 50+ compared to the national average of 4.3%. These rising Claimant Counts across all age groups present a concern, given the people not working are more likely to have poor health (particularly mental health) than people in work.
- 4.3 The nature of the work within EDS in providing a diverse range of support services to Coventry businesses and securing funds to create the enabling infrastructure for economic growth is to ultimately generate business investment and

employment opportunities, which will address one of the key Marmot principles: 'create fair employment and good work for all'.

## **5 COVID-19 Support to Businesses**

- 5.1 Since March 2020, we have also mobilised staff to deliver further support to businesses in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A major focus of this has been to expediently award grant funds that have been announced by Government, and to signpost businesses to the new loan funds and financial support to cover salaries of furloughed workers and raise awareness of the respective application processes. Throughout this year and the last, we have constantly updated the Council's Business [website](#) and used the Council's Business Newsletter (over 6,800 subscribers) to help maximise awareness of support available, as well as the evolving measures businesses need to take to be "COVID-19 secure".
- 5.2 From April 2020, EDS staff worked successfully with the Business Rates team to ensure over £48m in grants were paid to over 4,000 Coventry Retail, Leisure & Hospitality businesses and small businesses that were affected by the Spring 2020 Lockdown. Staff from the Business, Investment & Culture Division also designed and appraised applications that resulted in the full award of the £2.7m Discretionary Grants fund to over 470 other Coventry businesses whose performance was adversely affected by the Spring 2020 Lockdown.
- 5.3 EDS staff also raised awareness of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and provided advice to businesses on application processes. During June 2020, at the scheme's highest point of demand, the wages of some 49,200 furloughed employees of Coventry firms (31% of eligible jobs) were covered. We also promoted the Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), which 10,100 Coventry-based individuals accessed. We also raised awareness of the COVID-19 loan funds launched by Government, including Bounce Back Loans, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and Future Fund, and as a result, some 7,398 Coventry businesses across a range of sector also secured £304.342m in Covid loans.
- 5.4 Since the announcement of the second and third lockdowns in November 2020 and January 2021, EDS has worked closely with Business Rates to ensure that Retail, Leisure & Hospitality businesses mandated to close have received grant funding through the Local Restrictions Grants announced by Government. Building on the £50.885m in COVID-19 Government grants awarded to 4,509 Coventry businesses during Summer 2020, the Authority has awarded £19.576m to 1,612 Coventry businesses mandated to close since 4/11/20, plus £12.374m in Restart Grants to 1,880 Coventry businesses operating in non-essential retail and leisure to support them to open safely as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.
- 5.5 Since November 2020, the Business, Investment & Culture Division has also designed, managed and administered the Additional Restrictions Grants (ARG) discretionary grants fund for all types of businesses that have been adversely affected by restrictions imposed by Government since November 2020. We have been awarded three sets of funding totalling £12,584,498. To date, 3,874 grants have been provided under the ARG scheme with the level of individual grants determined by factors such as employee numbers, rateable value and sector. We have also developed a strategy to allocate the final £1.8m ARG top-up fund, which

has been earmarked for new applicants that missed out on previous rounds, targeted support through the Covid Strategic Recovery Grant (CSRG) and wider business support activity, notably through the Chamber and FSB that will provide assistance that will benefit businesses in the long-term. In particular, we have highlighted support for the Hospitality, Events, Leisure and Tourism sector.

## 6 On-going Support to Businesses

- 6.1 The Economic Development Service (EDS) makes a very important contribution towards Coventry City Council's ambitious 'Council Plan' which identifies the vision and priorities until 2024. In particular, the Service is helping to deliver the aims of promoting the growth of a sustainable economy and improving the quality of life for local people.
- 6.2 To help achieve these aims, Coventry's businesses play an integral role in creating wealth and employment. There are nearly 10,000 businesses in Coventry, many of which are Small or Medium Enterprises (SMEs), which create significant employment opportunities and contribute to local business rates. We have remained active in ensuring that local businesses (particularly SMEs) are given the best chance of succeeding through the support available through the Council and partner organisations such as the CWLEP Growth Hub, CW Chamber of Commerce and local universities.
- 6.3 Coventry's SMEs continue to need advice, access to finance and infrastructure, and EDS remains proficient at supporting SMEs to fulfil their growth potential in these areas of business support. The support is delivered either directly through EDS' Business Advisors (notably through access to grants to enable business growth or innovation or signposting to loan finance), or through workshops or 1:1 support delivered by key partners, including CW Chamber of Commerce, CWLEP Growth Hub and Coventry University Services. We ensure that the level of support is tailored to the needs of that individual business, and the Council's Service Level Agreement with CWLEP Growth Hub to engage with 300 new businesses per year and deliver a diagnostic and brokerage service is an important enabler in ensuring that local businesses are referred to the most appropriate support.
- 6.4 New businesses also require support to successfully start, and key partners such as CW Chamber of Commerce are delivering support services through 1:1 mentoring and workshops to support individuals on the journey to start new businesses. Throughout the pandemic, demand for start-up support has continued, including as a route out of unemployment. In response, the Council has allocated £249k of its COVID-19 Discretionary Grants funding to expand levels of start-up support and support with business resilience, particularly for sectors vital to servicing UK City of Culture (e.g., hospitality, creative industries, retail).
- 6.5 The four EU-funded SME support programmes managed by EDS continue to be integral to the Council's business support offer. These include the three European Regional Development (ERDF) business Support Programmes, now valued at £20m in ERDF funding – **namely CW Business Support, Innovation and Green Business** Programmes. All three programmes are targeted at addressing barriers to growth and innovation within Coventry & Warwickshire SMEs and provide an offer of bespoke one-to-one support and seminars/networking opportunities to tackle challenges and opportunities, as well as capital and revenue grants



(totalling £10.3m). The other programme is the European Social Fund (ESF) funded **CW Skills 4 Growth**, worth £1.16m of ESF funds, which provides support and revenue grants to SMEs to fund training to help their workforce acquire new skills and qualifications and progress upwards in employment. In April 2020, it was announced that these projects all secured extensions up to June 2023, which will ensure a continued service that will play a vital role in accelerating Coventry & Warwickshire's economic recovery by supporting businesses to adapt to changing market conditions.

- 6.6 Since March 2020, all four programmes have applied flexibilities in delivery methods to ensure services were able to continue throughout the pandemic, notably with webinars replacing workshops and 1:1 support delivered through video conferencing. CCC's Grants Panel has also continued to meet through video conferencing to ensure capital and revenue grants to SMEs can still be awarded and progress can be monitored.
- 6.7 Take-up of the suite of support services has remained high, particularly the non-financial support available through 1:1 support and webinars. In total, our programmes have supported 175 SMEs (40 of which were new businesses) to adapt, modernise and innovate/diversify in Q1 to Q3 2021. Notably, the Start-up Support and Accelerated Growth workshops delivered through *CW Business Support* have been fully booked, and in response to the changing international climate we have continued to make referrals to specialist Department for International Trade support. This is on top of the portion of Additional Restrictions Grant funds allocated to provide at least 60 businesses with intensive 1:1 support with international trade processes by March 2022, including export and import documentation, and procedures/documents for shipping, air freight and trucking.
- 6.8 Webinars hosted through the *CW Green Business Network* (now with 1,715 members), which have included sessions on electrifying fleets and increasing energy efficiency during lockdown, have routinely received over 50 attendees, more than triple the attendance levels at physical workshops pre-pandemic. *CW Innovation Programme* saw increased demand for 1:1 support and Usability Studies from SMEs during 2021. The *CW Skills 4 Growth* programme has also witnessed strong demand, particularly from businesses requiring support from sector-specialist skills providers; the scheme has supported approximately 472 employees (one employee may do more than one training intervention) and 138 companies.
- 6.9 Despite many SMEs delaying investments to create new jobs, all programmes are witnessing growing demand for grants to support capital investments and to aid the development of new products and business process improvements. Across all programmes, £2.4m of grants have been awarded in 2021 to date and £1.7m claimed, which is an increase from 2020. So far in 2021 this has supported the creation of 26 new jobs and a reduction of 578 tonnes of CO2 emissions. Moreover, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, CW Business Support fully defrayed a £500k grant pot which has enabled 217 SMEs in tourism and other sectors to purchase small capital items and external expertise.
- 6.10 We continue to deliver our Inward Investment Service working to promote the City, generating leads and supporting businesses to invest here. The volume of property enquiries in 2021 to date (187) is broadly similar to 2020 (196) and 2019

(193); enquiries are showing signs of escalating in scale and quantity as engagements and business investment plans firm up post pandemic with many enquiries aligning to the significant opportunities locally. Between 2016 and 2021, 219 successful Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects in Coventry & Warwickshire have created 11,436 new jobs.

- 6.11 One area where activity has expanded in 2021 is the continued development and implementation of Coventry's Social Value & Sustainability Policy, particularly through engagement with developers to provide local people with employment and training opportunities. Moreover, we have been successful with the Apprenticeship Levy Transfer; to date, the Levy Transfer Scheme has transferred over £292,000 to support 16 SMEs and 48 apprentices, prioritising Coventry businesses and apprentices from under-represented groups.

**Name of Author: Steve Weir**

**Job Title: Head of Economic Development**

**Organisation: Coventry City Council**

**Contact details: [Stephen.weir@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:Stephen.weir@coventry.gov.uk)**

# Agenda Item 6

Business, Economy and Enterprise (3) Work Programme 2021-22

Last updated 24/11/21

**Please see page 2 onwards for background to items**

<b>14<sup>th</sup> July 2021</b>
Sustainability - Biodiversity
<b>8<sup>th</sup> September 2021</b>
Transport Innovation
<b>13<sup>th</sup> October 2021</b>
Digital Inclusion Digital Skills for the Job Market
<b>8th December 2021</b>
Jobs and Business – impact of Covid Tourism Strategy
<b>19th January 2022</b>
Cycling Strategy Active Travel with Schools
<b>9th March 2022</b>
CWLEP City Centre South
<b>Suggested items for 2021-22</b>
Climate Change Digital Inclusion

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer</b>
<b>14<sup>th</sup> July 2021</b>	Sustainability - Biodiversity	Looking at the issues of Climate Change focusing on one of the five strands	Cllr O'Boyle Bret Willers, City of Culture rep, Tim Wetherhill, Canals and Rivers Trust Rep
<b>8<sup>th</sup> September 2021</b>	Transport Innovation	Meeting to be held at the Transport Museum to coincide with the Innovation display	Colin Knight Cllr O'Boyle
<b>13<sup>th</sup> October 2021</b>	Digital Inclusion	To look at steps to improve digital inclusion for residents and customers	Adrienne Bellingeri Cllr Brown
	Digital Skills for the Job Market	To look in more detail how the Digital Strategy is supporting the development of digital skills across the city.	Cllr Lloyd/Cllr Hetherton/Cllr Sandhu Paul Ward/Kim Mawby
<b>8<sup>th</sup> December 2021</b>	Jobs and Business – impact of Covid	Continued scrutiny on steps to support economic recovery following Covid-19.	Steve Weir Cllr O'Boyle
	Tourism Strategy	To look at the Tourism Strategy in more detail, including actions since the previous report to scrutiny and the DMO partnership with Chamber	David Nuttall Cllr O'Boyle Cllr Hetherton
<b>19<sup>th</sup> January 2022</b>	Cycling Strategy	To consider the plans to introduce cycling routes including the West of the city.	
	Active Travel with Schools	Following consideration of the Local Air Quality Action Plan, the Board requested an item on relating to the work undertaken with schools to gather information about their travel preferences and proposals to encourage modal shift	John Seddon Cllr Hetherton

Business, Economy and Enterprise (3) Work Programme 2021-22

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer</b>
<b>9th March 2022</b>	CWLEP	An update on the work and priorities of Coventry and Warwickshire LEP - as well as future arrangements	Cllr O'Boyle
	City Centre South	Progress on development to be considered alongside the Tourism Strategy. Also update on wide city centre plans including virtual reality programmes	Richard Moon Cllr O'Boyle
<b>Suggested items for 2021-22</b>	Climate Change	Progress on actions identified at their meeting in July 2021	Bret Willers Cllr O'Boyle
	Digital Inclusion	Progress report once an appointment has been made in terms of Digital Inclusion	Adrianne Bellingeri Cllr Brown

This page is intentionally left blank