



Report to Policy Committee

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Report of: *Kate Martin – Executive Director of City Futures*

Report to: *Economic Development and Skills Policy Committee*

Date of Decision: *30th November 2022*

Subject: Business Recovery Plan Update: Cost-of-Living Crisis and Support for Business

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? 1270				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-				

Purpose of Report:

This report provides the Economic Development and Skills Policy Committee with an overview of activity undertaken as part of the Business Recovery Plan: both in terms of what has been achieved so far and future proposed activity.

The new activity proposed in this report reflect the ambitions contained within the original Business Recovery Plan as well as the city's response to the new challenges facing Sheffield businesses due to the cost of living crisis. This report identifies initial steps required to enable Sheffield City Council to support businesses through this period.

Recommendations:

That the Economic Development and Skills Policy Committee:

- Notes the progress made in delivering the Business Recovery Plan so far;
- Notes the effects of the cost-of-living-crisis on the business base and the Council's response; and
- Endorses the Council's priorities for the SPF business support programme.

Background Papers:

- [The Business Recovery Plan](#) which was [endorsed by Cabinet](#) on the 21st October 2020.

Lead Officer to complete:-	
1	<p>I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.</p> <p>Finance: Kerry Darlow</p> <p>Legal: Marcia McFarlane</p> <p>Equalities & Consultation: Bashir Khan</p> <p>Climate: Jessica Rick</p>
	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>
2	<p>EMT member who approved submission:</p> <p><i>Kate Martin, Executive Director of City Futures</i></p>
3	<p>Committee Chair consulted:</p> <p><i>Cllr Martin Smith</i></p>
4	<p>I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the EMT member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.</p>

Lead Officer Name: <i>Diana Buckley</i>	Job Title: <i>Director of Economy, Skills and Culture, City Futures</i>
Date: 21 st November 2022	

1. PROPOSAL

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 During the height of COVID pandemic, Sheffield City Council worked swiftly to deliver immediate help and support for businesses. From March through to October 2020, the Council allocated £200million in grant funding to businesses and organisations during this time and Business Sheffield responded to over 10,000 calls and provided over 6,000 1-2-1 business advisor sessions.
- 1.1.2 As businesses started to reopen, the Council developed the 'Make Yourself At Home' campaign to boost consumer confidence, and the Temporary Coronavirus Pavement Café Scheme allowed businesses to apply for short-term licenses as quickly as possible.
- 1.1.3 To augment this immediate response to the pandemic, the Business Recovery Plan was developed between Sheffield City Council and the Business Response Group as a framework for action to help address the economic impacts of COVID in the short, medium and long-term. In Oct 2020 Cabinet endorsed the plan.
- 1.1.4 The plan highlighted the need to support businesses through reopening and recovery to help retain businesses, safeguard jobs and maintain incomes. It concluded that immediate action at city and district level was required to: promote consumer confidence; help businesses to adapt and survive; and ensure that the foundations for economic renewal were not eroded during the pandemic.
- 1.1.5 On the 9th June 2021, Co-operative Executive endorsed and approved [Phase 1 of the Recovery Delivery Programme](#), a programme of activity that delivered against the Business Recovery Plan over the medium term.
- 1.1.5 There have been significant achievements in the delivery of the Business Recovery Plan since its development and launch in 2020. Appendix 1 includes a summary of activity against each of the six priorities.

We recognise that the context around the delivery plan has changed, and the economy now faces multiple other economic pressures. We

need to adapt our delivery of the Business Recovery plan, to align to these challenges, as well as shaping a longer term plan.

1.2 New Challenges for Sheffield's Economy

- 1.2.1 The global economy has recently faced a series of unprecedented shocks. These include the UK exiting the European Union, the impact of COVID, the challenges associated with the constrained labour supply across different sectors, the global implications of the war in Ukraine, and the scale of the worsening cost-of-living crisis. Many of the consequences of these shocks are interrelated and, while they are playing out at a national and global level, there have already been clearly observable impacts on Sheffield's residents and businesses.
- 1.2.2 The sharp rise in energy prices, food prices, imports and labour shortages as a result of these shocks not only increases overheads for businesses but also reduces demand. For those businesses that are consumer facing, they are affected by consumers cutting back on spending as they prioritise essentials. The recent [Office for National Statistics' Opinions and Lifestyle Survey](#) found that the most popular course of action for people who have experienced a rising cost of living is to spend less on non-essentials.
- 1.2.3 Impacts are being felt across sectors, but for some sectors such as hospitality and retail, the care sector and voluntary and community/charity sector organisations, the cumulative impact of COVID followed by the cost-of-living crisis is being felt more keenly.
- 1.2.4 High street businesses are feeling the impact acutely. Business Sheffield is Sheffield City Council's business support programme situated in the Economy, Skills and Culture directorate within City Futures. It offers a number of business support interventions including high street support, early-stage businesses support and advice and grant support for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) from all different sectors. Business Sheffield's Business Information Officer team are dealing with business closures and businesses on the brink of closure on an increasing scale. More businesses are being faced with bills that they are struggling to pay including business rates and rental agreements on top of increases in energy prices and inflation and supply of goods, especially food supplies, which in turn is affecting local food producers whose orders have in some instances reduced.
- 1.2.5 There are also wider risks as businesses try to manage costs. Business Sheffield is aware of rogue energy brokers preying on local high street businesses to sign up to new deals as soon as the Government announced that the uplift in energy prices would be covered by direct payment to energy companies.

- 1.2.6 Voluntary and community sector organisations, charities and social enterprises are also struggling especially where they feel unable to pass on increases in overheads to their customer base who themselves are affected by the cost-of-living increases. Care homes significantly affected during Covid are now facing pressures as energy prices increase, especially where heating systems need updating in older buildings, in some cases with poor insulation.
- 1.2.7 In the short-term, central government has responded in part to the challenge, most notably through the [Energy Bill Relief Scheme](#). However, businesses still face many uncertainties this winter. In the case of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, the CBI has expressed concerns about what will happen after the 6-month period, with businesses now seeking further clarity to assist with their long-term planning decisions. Many businesses are also affected by rising inflation and the increased costs associated with the weaker pound.
- 1.2.8 In normal times Sheffield has a resilient business base: business survival rates for Sheffield are among the highest of all the Core Cities and above average for England. It remains to be seen whether these unprecedented challenges to businesses change this dynamic.
- 1.2.9 Taking a longer-term view, there is a risk that weakening economic and business confidence, impacts on investment decisions, by firms and potential funders, which would create a longer term drag on productivity. Business Sheffield's Tech Scale Up Advisors report that whilst the tech sector appears to be less vulnerable, they are hearing 'angel investors' appetite to make higher risk investments is changing, which could affect the tech start-up and scale-up landscape in the more medium to longer term, with less tech sector businesses being able to access early-stage investment.
- 1.2.10 Growing businesses are also facing recruitment issues due to low levels of unemployment and its impact on the employment market. Businesses are struggling to employ to their expanding teams: a unique position economically not seen for some time.

1.3 **Response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis**

- 1.3.1 The council's Business Recovery Plan was a response to an unprecedented set of circumstances facing Sheffield's businesses during COVID. The cost-of-living crisis presents a new set of challenges for Sheffield businesses. Some of the initiatives that were already in place as a result of the Council's COVID response have become an important part of the Council's support for businesses, particularly support that can be offered around improving cashflow, reducing energy usage and increasing demand.
- 1.3.2 However, the nature of the challenge the city faces now is different to COVID and so we need to ensure we have the right support in place. With the pandemic, a significant part of the Council's role was to

support businesses to apply for grants that effectively helped them through the period. There are no government grants for businesses during this economic crisis and the tools that the Council has available to support businesses will not be enough to prevent some businesses closing, without further Government intervention. For some business owners, business closure will be the right decision from both a financial and personal perspective: the challenges of the last few years means there is an element of fatigue with some business owners, an increase anecdotally in mental health issues and also personal debt. Therefore, helping some businesses to survive alongside helping others to close safely is where the Council can support businesses the most.

- 1.3.3 Business Sheffield can be a source of support to help businesses as much as possible with critical issues relating to the economic crisis including helping them to understand energy bills, avoid rogue energy brokers, understand cashflow issues, help with accessing finance, extending bounce back loan periods, helping businesses access other council services quickly. Key actions that are taking place within Business Sheffield to support businesses now are:

Business Information Officers

- Business Information Officers work across the 40 local high streets and 15 shopping precincts. Their more recent support has focussed on providing real hands-on support to high street businesses who are now more than ever affected by the Cost of Living Crisis. They have been helping businesses to understand their energy prices, bills and contracts and finding ways to save money and increase profits, resolving issues with cashflow and working closely with officers in Food Safety to help businesses meet food regulatory requirements.
- They have also helped support groups of businesses come together for Economic Recovery Fund project submissions.
- In total they have supported 1317 individual businesses with multiple 1-2-1 engagements since the pandemic.

Growth/Specialist Advisors

- 4 Recovery Action Plan Advisors, funded through the SYMCA's Recovery Action Plan fund, 2 Tech Scale Up Advisors and 2 Growth Advisors have all worked with businesses throughout the pandemic and into recovery, providing 1-2-1 advice to businesses, helping them to get back to pre-covid turnover and profit levels, look at new markets, and refer them to employability and recruitment support.
- These Advisors have used specific tools to help businesses to tackle the issues slowing their progress and concentrating on increasing productivity and digital innovation:

Productivity Grant ERDF

- The Council (through Business Sheffield) is a delivery partner for the programme, where businesses can access 50% grant funding towards small items/equipment that increase productivity in the business, total project costs are up to £24,999.
- Business Sheffield through a strong communications campaign and a team of active Growth Advisors have funded 103 Sheffield businesses with productivity grants. In all instances businesses look to make productivity efficiencies on processes so they can utilise their team on more skilled areas of production and in many cases create jobs.
- In addition to the outputs listed below, the project has helped many businesses hit during covid to bring forward growth plans that they would otherwise have put on hold and in many instances, it has opened-up businesses to new markets and efficiencies.
- Outputs: 103 Sheffield businesses out of 307 total South Yorkshire applications.

Digital grants project

- Growth Advisors have supported Sheffield's businesses to apply for digital adoption grants which offer grants of up to £5,000 for total project costs of £10,000 that help businesses adopt new technologies.
- Many sector businesses are still utilising old technology and paper based administrative, stock management and order processing and at a time when cash readiness within businesses has been limited because of COVID the project has been well received.
- Outputs – 99 Sheffield businesses out of 196 total South Yorkshire applications

Low Carbon ERDF Project

- The South Yorkshire wide programme has been inundated since its inception in December 2021. It is designed to get businesses on a carbon reduction journey, the project has coincided with an increase in energy prices resulting in substantial interest in the programme which provides free audits of carbon usage for business and access to a grant towards specific carbon reduction measures highlighted in the audit.
 - Total number of audits – 160 total - 65 of which for Sheffield businesses
 - Total number of grants – 81 total - 33 of which for Sheffield businesses)
 - Total annual carbon reduction – 802 Tonnes.

1.3.4 The Council has a Cost-of-Living Action Plan – of which business is a core part, with Business Sheffield feeding in information on a regular basis. Working with other services in the Council whose main customers are businesses, the role of the group is to share knowledge

and navigate our services on behalf of the customer more seamlessly, and work together on pertinent communications and resources for businesses in a very challenging time. High street businesses, as one of the key sectors affected the most by the crisis presently, are the current focus of activities and communication. The workstream involves officers from City Centre Team, Licensing, Environmental Health, Business Rates and Planning.

1.3.5 Energy price inflation is one the biggest issues facing businesses. The Council are planning to work with the Chamber of Commerce to actively engage with businesses on energy price inflation and raise awareness of the issues and their options, for example through a 'myth-busting' event with question and answer sessions.

1.3.6 For issues that go beyond the Council's control, such as regulation of the energy market, it can also play a role in working with other organisations and networks to highlight at a national level the issues facing businesses.

1.4 Priorities for Future Funding: Shared Prosperity Fund and Cost of Living Funds

1.4.1 In addition to the activity already highlighted, future funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and potentially SYMCA's Cost of Living Funds provide further opportunities to support businesses through the current economic crisis.

1.4.2 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) is the Government's major economic development fund, replacing EU Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and aims to contribute to the 'Levelling Up' agenda by providing financial assistance (largely revenue) to boost productivity, tackle geographical inequalities and improve life chances, especially in deprived areas. In total £38m has been allocated to South Yorkshire with a notional allocation of £15.5m for activity in Sheffield. SYMCA has been appointed the Lead Body for SPF by Government and has been working closely with all four Local Authorities to develop an Investment Plan and potential activity.

1.4.3 SYMCA submitted the SY Investment Plan to Government on 1st August which identified seven core themes against the three Investment Priorities for SPF:

Communities and Place (C&P)

1. Supporting communities to address cost of living and pandemic recovery
2. Promoting the cultural and visitor economy

Local Businesses Support (LBS)

3. Providing a broad and inclusive 'total business support' offer
4. Stimulating enterprise and growth
5. Accelerating R&D and innovation

People and Skills (P&S)

6. Building pathways to participation and accessing the benefits of being economically active
7. Promoting a skills-driven green economy

1.4.4 The funding is expected to be made available in three Phases:

Phase 1: Communities & Place and Local Business Support (Sheffield only)

- Working with the Voluntary and Communities sector the Council's Communities Team have developed a £2.7m revenue programme over three years that will initially focus on helping community organisations get through the immediate Cost of Living crisis. Years 2 and 3 will continue to support the sustainability of such organisations and enable them to be the 'front door' for community engagement.
- A three year capital programme of £2.1m is being developed to improve the energy efficiency of some of the city's community and cultural buildings. This will have a dual benefit of reducing running costs and reducing carbon emissions.
- A three year programme of £900k to support the culture and visitor economy focussing initially on events in the city to drive footfall with years 2 and 3 still to be developed with partners in the sector.
- The first year of a Business Support programme that will initially focus on support within Sheffield. SPF will fund 'Information Officers' to support high street businesses across the city this year and enable ERF to continue the activity into 2023/24, at a critical time for local high streets and in line with the second phase of ERF.

1.4.5 **Cost of Living: Year 1 Business Support**

In addition to the first Phase of SPF the MCA has also indicated additional Business Support funding may be available to help mitigate the Cost of Living impact on SMEs. Activity could include:

- Productivity grants to the end of the financial year to meet the demand for Sheffield businesses to access the grants programme as the current contracts are at capacity and before the SPF Business Support Phase 1 begins.

- Low Carbon Support Project – allow the reserve list of Sheffield businesses for audits and grants to be actively engaged and receive funding up to the end of 2022/23 and before the SPF Business Support Phase 2 begins.

1.4.6 **Phase 2: Years 2 and 3 Local Business Support**

The activity is being progressed at a regional level and developed with partner organisations including the other South Yorkshire local authorities, SYMCA and both universities. As such it is expected that the activity will look to maximise efficiencies across South Yorkshire partners and encourage collaborative working and the submission of programmes of activity rather than seeking multiple projects which risks duplication.

We have proposed a series of priorities for this second phase of funding which coincides with the ending of current ERDF contracts highlighted in section 1.3 above. Work continues with this business support working group and for the first time brings operational leads across all local authorities, both universities and SYMCA together to develop programmes. Priorities agreed with regional partners include.

- **Start-up activity** – using South Yorkshire’s Launchpad programme with local nuances. In Sheffield we will actively engage with Sheffield Hallam who have their own start up programme to avoid duplication in future activity.
- **Specialist advisors** based on the success of the Recovery Action Plan Advisors – advisors will be based locally and meet the needs of the local area. In Sheffield we anticipate this will work in the same way as present, working across all sectors and actively engaging businesses in activity that will increase their productivity, access to wider markets, digital innovation, an overall uplift in turnover and profit alongside specialist advice on carbon reduction across sectors.
- A Toolkit for specialist advisors to access including **low carbon audit and grants, productivity grants and digital adoption grants** linked with the specialist advisor support listed above.
- **Innovation programmes and access to graduate retention, recruitment** – linking businesses to the research and development expertise of both universities. Innovation priorities will be developed with SPF funding in mind as well as other funds such as Innovate UK and Gainshare. Proposals will be based on the Council’s involvement in the Sheffield Innovation Programme and RISE and the sustainability innovation assets at both universities.

1.4.7 **Phase 3: Years 2 and 3 People and Skills**

The People and Skills programme is still in development but will be expected to replace a number of existing programmes currently funded with ESF and is expected to place considerable emphasis on the provision of 'green' skills.

- 1.4.8 The Finance Sub-Committee have approved that the Council acts as Accountable Body for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Operationally we continue to develop these priorities with our local authority partners, the universities and SYMCA.

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?

- 2.1 The One Year Plan in 2021 committed the Council to working with businesses to deliver the Business Recovery Plan. Undertaking new activity aligned to the Business Recovery Plan is an extension of this commitment. The activity outlined in this report also support the Council's strategic goal for 'clean economic growth' set out in its recent Delivery Plan.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

- 3.1 Consultation with other regional local authority partners, the two universities and SYMCA have allowed for an agreed set of priorities for future business support.

The Business Information Officers provide ongoing local high street support and consult with local businesses on a daily basis. This allows Business Sheffield to have a very good barometer of small business sentiment and immediate weekly feedback of the impact of the cost of living crisis on our small business base and how we can better support those businesses.

In addition, the work undertaken on the [Synergy Report](#) for South Yorkshire, which outlines the current start up ecosystem as uncollaborative and duplicative and confusing for the market, is at the core of the development of future business support priorities.

We have also held a bespoke Business Response Group session with key representatives from the local economy to test the contents of this report, and hear first-hand the critical issues facing different sectors of the economy.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

- 4.1 Equality Implications

4.1.1 Decisions need to take into account the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This is the duty to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following groups as a protected characteristic: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and highlights that positive impacts across several characteristics as the activity is aimed at supporting businesses that are experiencing challenges associated with the cost-of-living crisis.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

4.2.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Proposals for funding activity set out in this report will be part of separate decisions taken by the Finance Sub-Committee.

4.3 Legal Implications

4.3.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from recommendations in this report. Implementation of priorities for SPF business support programme will require further decisions at a later stage.

4.3.2 Those decisions may need to consider the application of Subsidy Control principles for grants, publicly procurement principles for contracts and equality implications in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

4.4 Climate Implications

4.4.1 Due to the nature of this report a full Climate Impact Assessment using the CIA tool is not considered appropriate, however it is recognised that the Council's activity in this space can support the reduction of emissions from the commercial and industrial sectors.

[A report by ARUP](#) commissioned by Sheffield City Council, shows that in 2017, the direct emissions and those as a direct result of electricity consumption from the commercial and industrial sector contributed 801ktCO₂, equivalent to 35% of Sheffield's emissions. The analysis considered buildings and transport within Sheffield and found that energy used by businesses within commercial buildings accounted for 54% of these emissions, whilst that in industrial buildings accounted for 46%. Within emissions from transport, light and heavy goods vehicles contribute approximately 184ktCO₂ (28% of all transport emissions). Therefore reducing business emissions further is crucial if the target of reaching net zero by the beginning of the next decade is to be achieved.

Businesses face multiple barriers to reducing their direct emissions and energy consumption. These include: costs, feasibility, lack of information for the individual businesses and more generally a lack of supply chain capacity for delivery and lack of investment in skills, Rising energy prices has provided a new impetus for businesses to consider their climate impacts and it is important that the Council offers support to these businesses whilst also cognisant of the continuing barriers.

The Low Carbon Support Project has demonstrated there is a high demand for this type of support and the proposals within this report would see that project being extended. However the proposals in this report will not by themselves adequately address the scale of the issue faced in terms of business and industry impact on climate. Longer term strategic approaches, such as the future City Goals and Decarbonisation Routemaps will be required to set out how Sheffield will transition to a low-carbon economy. More detailed Climate Impact Assessments will be conducted as specific projects come forward.

There are significant opportunities that come with the adapting to a low-carbon economy: [Sheffield is forecast to host 8,000 green economy jobs by 2030 and over 13,100 by 2050](#). Start-up and scale up support for businesses, like that set out in this report, will help businesses in Sheffield make the most of these opportunities.

4.4 Other Implications

4.4.1 **Public Health Impacts**

Since the pandemic, Business Sheffield has worked increasingly closely with the Council's Health Protection Team to deliver joined up advice to businesses on matter of food safety. This work is continuing through the support being offered through the cost-of-living crisis, and in identifying the risks of a reduction in food safety.

More generally, as set out in the Cabinet report accompanying the Business Recovery Plan in October 2020, good work is recognised as one of the wider determinants of health, and a strong local economy

which provides good, secure, work for people is key to health and well-being in Sheffield.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 The Council has the option to do nothing beyond business-as-usual in supporting businesses, but this has several disadvantages:
- It will lead to business closures that could have been prevented with support tailored to businesses needs during this crisis
 - A lack of bespoke advice could lead to vulnerable businesses and organisations being exploited, for example by unscrupulous energy brokers
 - By not setting out a coherent and joined-up set of interventions and services ahead of time, there may be unrealistic expectations of what the Council is able to do for businesses in the coming months
- 5.2 The Council also has the option to deliver these services through centrally delivered business support, rather than utilising the Business Information Officers in the district centres. This has the following disadvantages:
- It is less proactive on the Council's part and relies on businesses making the effort to contact the Council. The risk is that this leads to businesses in distress delaying their access to support and increasing the chance of unnecessary business closures.
 - This model also is more likely to miss out smaller businesses who do not have the networks or capacity to engage with business support and as a consequence may miss out on opportunities for growth.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The Business Recovery Plan created a framework to support the city's long-term recovery from the COVID pandemic. The city now faces a new economic crisis. Many of the interventions and initiatives set out in the Business Recovery Plan are still relevant to supporting businesses but new activity is also required. This report sets out how the Council is already responding to the crisis and puts forward proposals for new activity that will help to protect jobs and businesses and support new growth.

Appendix 1.

Stimulating Demand in the Local Economy

- The Economic Recovery Fund (ERF) is a grant fund open to collaborations led by the private sector, third sector, partners or from within the council itself. In the first year of activity, £2 million was allocated with 15 district centre projects successfully launched. Following this first year of activity Full Council committed to continuing the ERF in the financial year 2022-23, with £2m for this work ringfenced to district centres. An evaluation of the first round of funding found that business and project lead feedback has been very positive and ERF has had a significant positive effect upon local business retail infrastructure with the planned creation of up to six new business forums. Local feedback has also been positive with many welcoming tangible improvements to their district high streets. More details of the evaluation and how the second round of ERF will operate are in the report that went to the Economic Development and Skills Committee Extraordinary Meeting, which took place on the 19th October 2022.
- A 'Summer in the Outdoor City' visitor campaign, funded through the Economic Recovery Fund included a range of events in the city centre over the summer months of 2021 designed to stimulate footfall. Events supported included Pollen Market, Sheffield Music Trails, Division Street Markets and the Castlegate Festival. According to data collected by Centre for Cities, Sheffield city centre saw a huge increase in footfall in September 2021, with the level reaching 89% of the pre-pandemic average.
- The Low Carbon Business Support project, delivered by Business Sheffield, provides SMEs in South Yorkshire help to identify and implement measures that reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions. The support available consists of 1-2-1 business advisor support, a free energy audit and a grant of up to £12,499 towards project costs. The scheme has supported investments in Solar PV, LED lighting, insulation and glazing upgrades. One of the key objectives of the project is to start businesses on their carbon reduction journey. Due to the changes in the economic climate and in particular energy prices, the project has been inundated with interest and the pipeline is now closed to new enquiries. Of the 135 businesses currently receiving support, 78 are Sheffield businesses.
- A new, more dynamic Welcome to Sheffield website has been launched. This is used as a landing page destination for many aspects of the city including both the universities. Since the launch in April 2022 the website has had between 20% and 60% uplift in traffic and sessions but most importantly it has raised the bar and profile of the city in terms of how Sheffield should be perceived and recognised.

Opening our City Centre and District Centres safely and securely

- The city's local high street independent businesses were supported through the continuation of Business Sheffield's Business Information Officers. Their role during recovery was helping businesses to open safely, understanding government guidance and working closely with Environmental Health Food Safety Teams, as well as helping businesses access the Pavement Café Licence at a time when businesses were not able to fully operate in a pre-covid capacity inside due to restrictions.
- The Council continues to promote active travel and has introduced a series of schemes since 2020 to help support a transition to more sustainable journeys within the city. The implementation of the Sheaf Valley Cycle Route, two trial active neighbourhoods in Crookes and Walkley, and Nether Edge are a couple of examples of how the Council is promoting infrastructure change to support walking and cycling. The wider programme of works through the Connecting Sheffield continues, with future schemes within the design stage, including cycling and walking routes from the City Centre to Nether Edge, Kelham Island and Attercliffe (continuing to Meadowhall, Tinsley and Rotherham).
- The City Centre Vision sets out plans to create a thriving, liveable and sustainable city centre. Consultation on the City Centre Strategic Vision took place between January and February 2022. The Vision has now been approved by the Council.
- Sheffield City Council successfully bid for £15.8m of Future High Streets funding in 2021 and it is being used to deliver three projects: transforming part of Fargate into a community culture hub named Event Central; improvements to the street on Fargate and High Street; and a 'Front Door Scheme' to open upper floor access and improving frontages on Fargate, High Street and connecting routes.
- In terms of progress with the Sheffield Plan, public consultation on the Issues and Options document took place in 2020 and further work is now taking place on an Emerging Draft Sheffield Plan.
- Sheffield City Council's published its 10 Point Plan for Climate Action in 2021 and adopted in March 2022 identified the need to work with and support businesses and build the skills and economy we need for the future.
- The last two years has also seen delivery of city centre projects such as Grey to Green, Heart of the City 2, and West Bar as well as new plans for Castlegate.

Developing our skills base as a city to help communities get back to work

- The Council reacted to the launch of the national Kickstart Scheme – which offered funded six-month work placements for 18 to 24-year-olds on Universal Credit – by forming the Sheffield Partnership for Jobs and Skills alongside JCP, Sheffield Chamber of Commerce and Sheffield Hallam University, among other stakeholders. The partnership established a streamlined gateway for local employers to identify and recruit eligible candidates, with SCC's employer engagement staff delivering practical recruitment support to hiring managers (e.g. formulating job descriptions). The gateway successfully delivered 135 Kickstart work placements across 127 Sheffield employers, with many of these roles developing into permanent jobs for young people.
- In the last year, with demand for staff at an all-time high and skills shortages jeopardising the wider economic recovery, the Council has sharpened its focus on engaging economically inactive people (those who do not claim out-of-work benefits and therefore cannot access Job Centre Plus provision) to return to work or enter the labour market for the first time. This acknowledged a significant rise in people unable to work due to poor health or care responsibilities. SCC commissioned targeted keyworker and community-based pre-engagement activity for those with barriers to entry (e.g. poor mental health, homelessness and English language support needs), while employer engagement staff worked to create viable progression routes.

Helping to stimulate the conditions to encourage more start-ups in the city

- The South Yorkshire programme Launchpad has continued to deliver start up and early stage support for individuals and businesses in the city
- Business Sheffield has been an active partner in the Sheffield Incubation and Acceleration Network in the city which has now stretched to a regional group of like-minded incubation spaces and acceleration programmes to share best practise and build a better joined up ecosystem.
- The European Funded Team South Yorkshire Programme has delivered new accelerator programmes for indigenous businesses and businesses outside of South Yorkshire.
- The recently contracted Tech Welcome programme, funded through South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority's (SYMCA) Recovery Action Plan funding will entice new tech businesses into South

Yorkshire with grants towards the first 12 months rental costs in incubator spaces.

- A more detailed report on start-up progress and delivery will be scheduled in a future Committee agenda.

Stimulating investment in culture to help rebuild confidence and visitor numbers

- Freelancers in the culture sector were particularly badly hit with many sources of support not available to them. The Sheffield Culture Consortium set up a Freelancer Fund with Sheffield City Council Economic Development and Culture funding, plus cultural partner contributions. The success of the Fund led to a second, larger round funded through the Council's allocated Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) and the South Yorkshire Mayor's Fund, channelling £297,000 into a part of the sector which needed support, and using ARG in an innovative way.
- Sheffield Showcase showcased small festivals with umbrella promotion through the first weekend of September 2021 and 2022
- SCC match funding for Create Sheffield (Sheffield's Cultural Education Partnership) to strengthen the cultural education offer for children and young people, focusing on activity designed with, by and for young people living in areas of socio-economic deprivation
- Harmony Works, S1 Artspace and Castlegate have been awarded central government Levelling Up Funding
- SCC has adopted the Culture Collective Strategy as an interim strategy

Working with business leaders on a longer-term economic strategy for Sheffield

- As set out in a report to the Economic Development and Skills Policy Committee in June 2022 on the Local Economic Assessment, Sheffield City Partnership are leading the development of a new City Strategy (now referred to as City Goals) which will incorporate an inclusive economic framework for the city. Work so far has involved business leaders and networks and will continue to do so.
- The original Business Recovery Plan highlighted the need for a new partnership with the private sector, building on the previous City Growth Board and the Business Response Group's approach. In a separate report to the Economic Development and Skills Policy Committee on the 30th November, the committee is asked to endorse the development of a new Sheffield Business Board which is representative of the city's

diverse business base. The board will be developed with other business facing services of the Council and in collaboration with the Sheffield Chamber.

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