

# **DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

## **D2 JOINT COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC PROSPERITY**

**10 October 2022**

### **Review of Progress Against the COVID Recovery Strategy and Next Steps**

#### **(1) Purpose of Report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the level of progress made against the approved Derbyshire COVID Recovery Strategy (assessment appendix to follow), identify areas of potential further intervention and confirm the economic priorities going forward which will help shape any future economic strategy, particularly having regard to the context of the emerging East Midlands Mayoral Combined County Authority.

#### **(2) Discussion/ Decision Required by the Derby and Derbyshire Joint Economic Prosperity Committee (D2JC)**

##### **2.1 The D2JC is requested to:**

- i) Consider the assessment of progress made by partners against the COVID Recovery Strategy**
- ii) Agree where sufficient progress has been made and which issues remain for potential further targeted activity**
- iii) Identify any additional areas and potential partner priorities needed to support growth and aid levelling up in the future – not least within the context of the emerging East Midlands Mayoral Combined County Authority**
- iv) Confirm what level/ type of progress reporting is required going forward**

#### **(3) Information and Assessment**

3.1 The D2 Joint Committee will recall that the Derbyshire Economic Partnership (DEP) led the development and subsequent delivery of the COVID Economic Recovery Strategy which was signed off in Autumn 2020. A copy of the Executive Summary of the Strategy is contained at Appendix 1 of this report, but to confirm the Strategy was split into two key strands: Economic Development and Employment & Skills.

3.2 The vision for the economic strand at the time was:

*COVID will be the catalyst for Derbyshire's economic renewal and we will balance protective and growth interventions to enable our economy to 'build back better'*

3.3 This was supported by five Priorities and related objective:

- **Place** – to enhance the resilience and diversity of urban centre, market towns and rural areas to put them on the front foot to capture post COVID opportunities
- **Industry** – to protect sectors that have social, economic and place making value and support SMES to diversify, grow and enhance productivity
- **Visitor Economy** – to lever unique assets to protect the visitor economy and build solid foundations for transformational growth
- **Enabling Infrastructure** – to future proof physical and digital infrastructure and lay the foundations for innovation and clean growth
- **Inward Investment** – to enhance inward investment offer for a changing world, highlighting Derbyshire's vibrant economy and unparalleled quality of life by promoting a variety of opportunities

3.4 The vision for the employment and skills strand at the time was:

*Derbyshire's economy of the future will be inclusive and resilient, able to withstand economic shocks and respond rapidly to changes in business and economic needs, ensuring success for both business and residents*

3.5 This was supported by four Priorities and related objective:

- **Young People** – to ensure young people can follow clear progression pathways to skills and employment and maximise their life chances
- **Adults: retraining and routes to employment** – to re-align labour market to meet demand through investment in skills and employability support to support progression to better and more rewarding jobs
- **Entrepreneurship** – to stimulate enterprise and business growth to provide new economic opportunities
- **Responding to future skill needs** – to facilitate a responsive skills system to maximise growth and opportunity

3.6 Derby City Council also approved a complementary Recovery Strategy, the delivery of which has been led by a Task Force, and which was built around the following three key areas:

1. Maintaining short-term confidence amongst local businesses and external investors

2. Diversifying the city centre and Derby's employment base
3. Decarbonising the city

3.7 Over the past two years, this D2 Joint Committee has received a number of update reports on progress against priorities and objectives. All partners have worked hard to implement the agreed interventions set out in both strategies and much joint work has taken place, facilitated by the D2 Recovery Cell and related workstreams to:

- Develop strategic approaches to work programmes and lock them into business as usual – for example, market town renewal which is now a core programme area in the County Council's Regeneration Pipeline
- Develop innovative business cases to attract government funding – for example through the Low Carbon Task Force and the joint ZEBRA bid to support hydrogen infrastructure and buses in the city and county areas (NB original bid was unsuccessful but future funding announcements are pending)
- Maximise opportunities to achieve economies of scale through joined up delivery – for example, the Vision Derbyshire Business Start Up scheme which involves and benefits all ten local authorities
- Maximise available core and external funding – e.g. through Transforming Cities Fund, Shared Prosperity Fund, Levelling Up Fund and Town Deals
- Maximise the efforts and contributions of delivery partners such as the Chamber of Commerce and Marketing Peak District and Derbyshire through Community Renewal Funding and projects such as Shopappy, business support grants and sector support.

3.8 Since late 2020, the economic context has shifted however, with recovery no longer being a driver for activity and the focus now being more around renewal, regeneration and growth. More recently, responding to the economic shocks caused by the war in Ukraine and cost of living crisis has, and is, providing a more pertinent economic context.

3.9 Led by workstream chairs, partners including district colleagues, further and higher education, the Chamber of Commerce, Marketing Peak District and Derbyshire (MPDD), transport providers etc have undertaken a review of the progress made against the original priorities, objectives and interventions of the Derbyshire Recovery Strategy. This assessment is provided at Appendix 2 of this report (to follow) and will be supported by a more detailed presentation at the Joint Committee meeting.

3.10 In summary, good progress has been in developing projects that support physical interventions such as market town renewal ambitions and low carbon infrastructure – not least as a result of Government capital

funding being made available through Town Deals, the round one Levelling Up fund and bespoke transport announcements such as the Capability Fund. More recently, Shared Prosperity Fund announcements and Levelling Up round 2 are providing opportunities to drive more revenue-focused activity such as business support, grant schemes and targeted 'community based' work.

- 3.11 However, planned activity that has relied on revenue funding such as skills and training, business grants or the buoyancy of the wider market (e.g. level of inward investment) has had limited success. Direct intervention from sources such as Derbyshire County Council's £15m COVID Recovery Fund has helped buck this trend to some degree but planned partnership work to interventions such as support graduate recruitment and retention, establishing a landlord commission etc has not fully progressed.
- 3.12 Discussion at the Committee meeting will review in more detail the level of progress that has been made (shown in Appendix 2 to follow) and, having regard to the economic conditions/ state of the nation issues identified in the early part of the agenda, will confirm potential areas for future work/ focus. This will help inform a revised evidence base and any new economic strategy that may emerge for the D2 or D2N2 geography in the future.

#### **4. Recommendations**

- It is recommended the Joint Committee:**
- a) **Considers the assessment of progress made by partners set out in the COVID Recovery Strategy**
  - b) **Agrees where sufficient progress has been made and which issues remain for potential further targeted activity**
  - c) **Identifies any additional areas needed to support growth and aid levelling up in the future**
  - d) **Requests that officers in the City, County and district councils develop a revised evidence base to support economic reporting and priority setting going forward**

#### **5. Appendices**

- Appendix 1: Executive Summary of Derbyshire COVID Recovery Strategy
- Appendix 2: Assessment of Progress (to follow)