

Crawley Borough Council

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Commission 22 November 2021

Report to Cabinet 24 November 2021

“One Town” - Crawley Economic Recovery Plan Consultation Findings and Final Version

Report of the Head of Economy and Planning, *PES/391*

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report requests Cabinet approval for the final version of the “One Town” Crawley Economic Recovery Plan (Appendix A), which has been updated to take account of the public consultation period on the Plan which took place from 9 July to 11 October 2021.
- 1.2 The “One Town” Economic Recovery Plan presents a Vision for Crawley’s future socio-economic prosperity in 2050 alongside a strategic framework and a set of flagship scheme interventions for delivery towards the achievement of that Vision.
- 1.3 This reports provides a summary overview of the findings (Appendix B) of the recent public consultation exercise on the “One Town” Economic Recovery Plan for Crawley.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

That the Commission considers the report and decides what comments, if any, it wishes to submit to the Cabinet.

- 2.2 To the Cabinet:

The Cabinet is recommended to approve the final version of the “One Town” Crawley Economic Recovery Plan 2022-2037 (Appendix A) and to adopt it as Council policy.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet approval is sought to enable adoption of the “One Town” Crawley Economic Recovery Plan 2022-2037 as Council policy.

4. Background

- 4.1 The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development requested that a “One Town” Economic Recovery Plan be developed and brought forward to provide an overarching strategic framework for Crawley’s economic recovery and for the following existing economic regeneration programmes and policies:

- The Crawley Growth Programme
- The Crawley Town Investment Plan
- Crawley Town Centre Regeneration Programme
- Crawley Employment and Skills Programme.

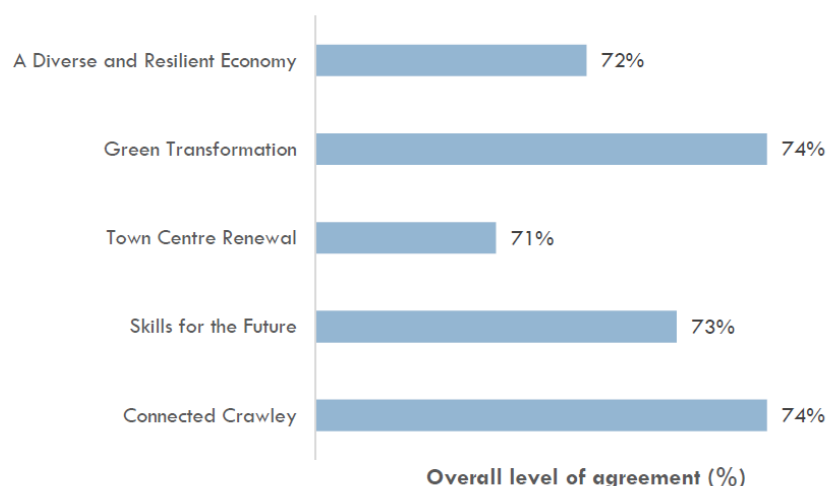
- 4.2 The Economic Recovery Plan presents a vision for Crawley's socio-economic prosperity in 2050, based on the following strategic priorities:
- A diverse and resilient economy
 - Green transformation
 - Town Centre renewal
 - Skills for the future
 - Connected Crawley
- 4.3 The Economic Recovery Plan strategic priorities are proposed for the period 2022-2037 to mirror the period of the submission Local Plan and reinforce the findings of the Economic Growth Assessment linked to the Local Plan, which projects Crawley's related employment land need over that period
- 4.4 The Economic Recovery Plan includes a set of "flagship interventions" - proposals to help drive recovery and address Crawley's longer term structural economic weaknesses - these schemes are to be taken forward over a four year period 2022-2026, which mirrors the Town Investment Plan delivery period for the Towns Fund.
- 4.5 Crawley BC is driving delivery of major infrastructure investment:
- £21.1m Towns Fund (Town Investment Plan)
 - The new Town Hall development
 - A new District Energy Centre
 - The Crawley Growth Programme (together with WSCC and stakeholders).
 - A range of major affordable housing developments particularly in the town centre
 - A large capital investment programme, including town centre regeneration.
 - The £23m City Fibre roll out of full fibre infrastructure investment Borough wide.
- All of these infrastructure interventions can boost Crawley's economic recovery.
- 4.6 We are awaiting the outcome of:
- An Institute of Technology bid submitted by Crawley College to modernise the College campus and overhaul training provision, introducing university level programmes.
 - A full business case - being drawn up to unlock £8.6 million of government investment ring-fenced for a Crawley Innovation Centre. This will drive up innovation output and consolidate / expand Crawley's advanced engineering cluster, creating more high value jobs and helping to diversify the economy.
- 4.7 On 10th March 2021, Cabinet considered the draft Economic Recovery Plan for Crawley and agreed to go out to public consultation in order to seek feedback and input to help develop the Plan and secure broad support for the proposals.
- 4.8 The "One Town" Crawley Economic Recovery Plan was presented to the Crawley Economic Recovery Taskforce / Crawley Town Deal Board and received endorsement from the partner organisations represented.
- 4.9 Public consultation on the draft Economic Recovery Plan took place from 8 July to 11 October 2021 and the summary findings are presented in this report and in full at Appendix B.
- 4.10 These findings have been used to inform development of the final version of the "One Town" Crawley Economic Recovery Plan (Appendix A), for which this report seeks Cabinet approval and adoption as Council policy.

5. Description of Issue to be resolved

- 5.1 Crawley's economy has been very badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Gatwick Airport saw a huge reduction in passenger numbers from an average of almost 4 million passengers per month (2019) to eight hundred and fifty thousand (2020). Airlines have been running a fraction of flight services pre-pandemic and this is beginning to recover but relatively slowly. The retail, hospitality and leisure sectors were forced to close during the periods of lockdown and restrictions and many other businesses have been adversely affected, as elsewhere in the country. The cumulative impact of the above has been major redundancies and the number of "furloughed" Crawley residents peaked at 25,800.
- 5.2 The unemployment claimant count trebled to almost 9% in Crawley putting the area in the worst 10% of areas in the country for unemployment. This is in stark contrast to as recently as 2017 when Crawley had the highest employment rate in the country. Youth unemployment reached 14% due to the impact of the pandemic.
- 5.3 The Council is spearheading efforts to boost Crawley's economy and generate new business investment and jobs by continuing to pro-actively lead and facilitate the development of major programmes of new infrastructure, amenity, residential development and economic regeneration. The combined value of this public and private investment in the Town is set to exceed £400 million, thanks to close working between the Council, local partners, residents and the private sector.
- 5.4 Partners include stakeholders on the Crawley Economic Recovery Taskforce and Town Deal Board, the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership, West Sussex County Council, Crawley College, local businesses and private developers.
- 5.5 The Crawley Economic Recovery Plan provides a clear pathway for the development of further regeneration schemes to help boost recovery. This will help to unlock further private sector investment in Crawley alongside additional public funding so that the Town is even better placed to achieve the sustainable economic recovery needed to bring about the benefits to Crawley's residents envisaged in the Plan's Vision.

6. Economic Recovery Plan - the key findings of the public consultation

- 6.1 The consultation ran from 8th July to 11th October 2021 and received a total of 94 responses; 83 from members of the public and 11 from a business or organisation. The complete findings can be found in **Appendix B**.
- 6.2 The following table shows the net 'agreement' ratings for each of the strategic priorities (i.e. combining the 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses)



- 6.3 In overall terms, respondents expressed broad support for the Plan, the five strategic priorities, objectives and proposals for flagship interventions.
- 6.4 Key themes and points made by respondents during the consultation for each strategic priority, can be summarised as follows, along with resulting proposed updates to the Plan in bold below each one where applicable:

A Diverse and Resilient Economy (Strongly Agree 34%, Agree 38%)

Aim – renew Crawley as an attractive, abundant, diverse economic powerhouse, founded on green growth and digital innovation.

- No mention of how 'green growth' mentioned in the aim will be delivered.
- Need to provide more diverse employment opportunities, reducing reliance on Gatwick
- Full support from Gatwick for the Innovation Centre
- Makes sense to focus on engineering but also on jobs that cover a wider, diverse range of skills
- Objectives are perfectly acceptable but important to balance ambition with reality of what is achievable, building on existing strengths of the area.
- Would be helpful to see more detail on the generic objectives. What is meant by 'Eastern Gateway' and 'Renaissance'?

Updates to Plan Proposed: Add Glossary of Terms to explain definitions.

Green Transformation (Strongly Agree 42%, Agree 32%)

Aim – establish Crawley at the forefront of green growth and as a low carbon economy where green technology businesses thrive.

- Strong support for green innovation and infrastructure, particularly electric vehicles
- Electric vehicle charging points are key – need more of them especially within neighbourhoods (will be a challenge for houses without driveways or parking)
- No mention of Gatwick – what are their plans for reducing emissions?
- Crawley is well placed to lead this due to number of green spaces and parks – how will we protect these as housing shortage becomes more apparent?
- Would be good to unpick what makes Crawley a special case for this investment and where the unique opportunities are
- Need this to be more attractive to new businesses

Updates to Plan Proposed: None

Town Centre Renewal (Strongly Agree 39%, Agree 32%)

Aim – secure a vibrant neighbourhood and sustainable economic future for the town centre via significant qualitative investment

- Keep the town centre clean and educate people to do the same
- Town centre is abysmal – train station is trick to walk to, narrow footpaths next to busy roads, poorly designed cycle lanes, motor vehicles seem to be the priority.
- How do we make Crawley cool? How do we ensure young people don't move away?
- What does sustainable growth mean?
- Definitely in support of Crawley becoming a cultural destination but I'd like to know more about what kinds of cultural attractions are being considered. Don't centralise facilities but instead develop them across neighbourhoods.
- Not sure what you mean by cultural venues
- Tackling homelessness is at the heart of this
- Suggest setting up a games centre somewhere central; a community centre for local entertainment.

Updates to Plan Proposed: As above, add a Glossary of Terms

Skills for the Future (Strongly Agree 40%, Agree 34%)

Aim – Improve significantly overall social mobility amongst Crawley residents, creating powerful and effete skills pathways.

- Explain what is a 'Hub'?
- Important to teach 'soft skills' as well as technical knowledge

- Agree with the need to upskill local residents
- Suggest hospitality training centre for entry level skills to fill local vacancies
- Agree we need to invest in skills and training – across all communities
- Need to work with local recruitment agencies re current needs and opportunities
- Could CBC consider investment in work based development programmes that focus on long term ambitions?
- Great, but how will you reach and engage with people who can take advantage of this?
- Investment in facilities is important but how do you inspire people to want to work for local companies? Raising aspiration among local young people
- Embrace the idea that you can ‘find your future in Crawley’.

Updates to Plan Proposed: As above, add a Glossary of Terms

Connected Crawley (Strongly Agree 42%, Agree 32%)

Aim – enhance a green economic future for Crawley by delivering low carbon transport and hyper digital connectivity

- Cycle infrastructure needs fixing.
- Massive improvements needed around Three Bridges station and between Forge Wood, Manor Royal and the town centre.
- Parking is too cheap – are there any car clubs in Crawley?
- Force private companies into converting parking bays into electric charging points.
- Arterial activities – what does this mean?
- Great potential to be a well-connected town as it is small, compact and flat
- Next generation of Fastway bus service must be ‘green’
- Improved cycle paths and electric buses needed

Updates to Plan Proposed: None

Additional comments about the Plan:

- Need to put a cost plan to all this - Is it affordable?
- The aims are right – it’s how we deliver them that is important.
- Needs more focus on improving the city scape – making Crawley attractive to walk and cycle around.
- Don’t rely on flagship projects that are already being delivered – think about new and exciting projects.
- Please focus more on investing in young adults and provide incentives for them to strive.
- Pleased to see the future growth of Crawley is reflected in the Plan
- Timelines would be useful

Updates to Plan Proposed: Add scheme delivery timelines and explain how schemes are being funded as applicable;

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no additional direct financial implications related to the drawing up and adoption of the Crawley Economic Recovery Plan.
- 7.2 £21.1 million of Towns Fund monies has been granted by the government to Crawley (subject to spending reviews) to be spent on 10 project interventions incorporated within the Crawley Economic Recovery Plan.
- 7.3 Other project interventions are being funded by capital finances from the Crawley Growth Programme, which was approved by the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership in 2017.

8. Equality Implications

- 8.1 The council is required under the Public Sector Equality Duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

8.2 The recommendations are not considered to involve any adverse impacts for any groups with protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010.

9. Legal Implications

9.1 The Economic Recovery Plan has been prepared under the Local Authority's General Power of Competence as provided in the Localism Act 2011, Section 1.

9.2 While there is no statutory duty on local authorities to produce an economic plan, they are free to determine the breadth and depth of assessments of the economic condition of their area, ensuring a reflection of local priorities.

9.3 The legal implications of the specific proposals being recommended will need to be considered at the appropriate time.

Background Papers

None