**SSLEP Covid-19 Recovery & LIS Implementation**

*Overview of Direction of Travel & Identified Priorities over Short, Medium & Long Term*

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| **Theme** | **Areas for Development & Inclusion** |
| **Growing Businesses** |
| *Activity Already in Place* | 1. Central Government Package incl. National Job Retention Scheme; business rate grant & tax deferments; self-employed income support; corp financing facility; business interruption loans; govt backed bank loans; and sector-specific support to hard hit sectors i.e. retail, tourism & leisure
2. Regional Support packages incl. Midlands Engine Investment Funds
3. Local Support packages incl. Growing Places Loan Fund; Growth Hub Grant; local authority second tranche discretionary grant; Growth Hub small business grants scheme (up to 10k for the purchase of machinery equipment. Efforts concentrated on businesses who can make something towards the COVID effort)
4. Growth Hub Investment Readiness Programme – fund to part finance business plans and financial forecasts for growth businesses. Currently diverted to assist in Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme applications
5. Webinars - being used across the sector as subjects such as: Home Working. Post Pandemic Business Survival. E-Commerce. Don't Panic, Plan it (Growth Hub/partners), Information & Advice available through Enterprise Centres
6. SSLEP Make It Team Inward Investment Service
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| *Emergency Response* | 1. Covid Business Support Awareness Campaign, ensuring businesses understand existing national & local support, signposting them to this through the Stoke & Staffordshire Growth Hub.
2. ERDF High Streets Fund for District, Borough & City Councils
3. Support businesses that remain viable to continue to operate through the crisis/to reopen, including with immediate cashflow difficulties e.g. :
* Enterprise Centres Payment Holiday - Direct Debit collections cancelled for 3-months from 1 April to allow Enterprise Centres tenants to defer their rental payments if their work has dried up (SCC)
* Staffordshire Business Start-up Programme (SCC)
* Emergency Grants Scheme – grants of £500 to £1k to support businesses in urgent need of funding (SCC)
1. Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire SME Business Survey to highlight local issues facing the economy
2. Larger Employer & Supply Chain Survey to highlight supply chain issues
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| *Actions that could Support Reopening*  | 1. Support businesses to reopen through:
* dissemination of govt advice through Growth Hub
* activities to improve customer confidence e.g. charter marks working with business representative organisations such as FSB, Chambers, Visit England; sharing of business leader plans for re-opening using social distancing
* Sourcing of appropriate PPE to ensure: safe employee working arrangements; customer & supplier access; and product & service delivery arrangements
1. Support businesses that remain viable to:
* resolve financial planning issues
* diversify their operations to meet changing existing customer needs
* diversify their operations, products & services to meet new markets & new customer demands
* address export & import difficulties that adversely impact upon their operations
1. Support new business enterprises which emerge from labour market restructuring i.e. end of furloughing, redundancy & those at risk of being unemployed
2. Refocusing of ERDF- funded Business Support Programmes ERDF Programme and University based projects-
3. Flexibility to support the food and beverage industry alongside tourism sector to aid safe re-opening, e.g table service only, use of outdoor space
4. New planning guidance to support the High Street
5. Provision of new enterprise and innovation space
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| *Potential Further Support* | To be the location of choice for people to start, grow or relocate their business; to encourage more (quantify) new & scale up businesses, the adoption of sustainable resource & energy efficiencies and support businesses to invest, create higher skilled employment & thrive:1. Provide an effective SME business support service through Stoke & Staffordshire Growth Hub
2. Ensure targeted support packages are available to high value transformational businesses capable of supporting a step change in economic productivity for Stoke & Staffordshire
3. Support more businesses to export good & services
4. Supporting premises upgrade to meet new working arrangements (Enterprise Centre refurbs?)
5. Ensure a strong supply of sites & commercial premises fit for future business needs (*Place* workstream)
6. Support low carbon enterprises and adoption of resource & energy efficient practices
7. Promotion of business investment opportunities across Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire to attract high value occupiers focused on business, services, energy, manufacturing and logistics
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| **Future Workforce** |  |
| *Activity Already in Place* | 1. Local delivery of ESF-funded Employment Support Programmes:
* Employment support programmes for long-term unemployed (ESF – SSfU PeoplePlus; BBO NCLF)
* Preparation for employment for 15-24 year olds (ESF – NEETs Skills Training UK)
* Skills support for the workforce (ESF – Skills Hub Chamber of Commerce; SSfW and SSfR Serco)
1. NCS Careers, learning & training support
2. Recruitment & in work support for apprentices
3. Employment support for people with disabilities and long-term health conditions (DWP WHP Shaw Trust)
4. Personalised, intensive support for people with disabilities and complex barriers to work (DWP IPES Shaw Trust)
5. Employment support for 16-24 year olds with a statement of special needs or EHC Plan (Supported Internships)
6. Employment support for care leavers (Foundations to Employment F2E programme run by Throughcare)
7. Self-Employment support for business start-ups (DWP New Enterprise Allowance programme)
8. Work experience voluntary placements for unemployed (SCC Open Door)
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| *Emergency Response* | 1. Raise our residents’ awareness of and ability to access existing national & local employment & training support services through the crisis
2. Work with Prospects to put in place an NCS Revised Redundancy & Recruitment Triage Service
3. Support Virtual learning environments created to deliver web-based courses (SCC Community Learning; ESFA and ESF funded providers) through the crisis
4. New online learning platform to help boost skills (DWP Skills toolkit)
5. Support rapid retraining schemes in sectors that are growing during the crisis
6. Established a countywide redundancy task group (SCC with partners)
7. Provider post-16 relief scheme to support capacity retention to maintain delivery (ESFA)
8. Promote the national Job Retention Scheme to employers rather than laying staff off (Growth Hub and Skills Hub)
9. National DWP Websites to promote employment opportunities (DWP Find a Job; Job help; employer help)
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| *Actions that could Support Reopening*  | 1. Support local training providers to return to full operation and delivery of training course as quickly as possible
2. Support & deliver employment support schemes to ensure those made redundant can return to work as quickly as possible, ensuring schemes target those sectors that continue to thrive post crisis
3. Support the development of employment support schemes that target most affected socio-economic groups, including Stoke & Staffordshire’s young people
4. Work with government to pursue immediate appropriate freedoms & flexibilities e.g. increased flexibility on use of unspent Apprenticeship Levy
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| *Potential Further Support* | Invest in our residents and communities, increasing skills & fostering ambition:1. Encourage a more people to engage in lifelong learning, supporting their ambitions and fostering a supportive environment for residents to upskill and reskill throughout their working lives.
2. Develop an effective local careers advice service that:
* supports people in making good career choices throughout their lives
* provides good quality information on opportunities that meet existing/ future employer needs
* encourages people to start their own business
* supports individuals/business owners to develop the leadership, management and other skills necessary to ensure businesses enterprises have the best possible opportunities to innovate and grow.
1. Develop vocational education and training provision to support key sectors that require more technical skills, enabling larger employers to take greater ownership of their future skills requirements.
2. Identify and address barriers preventing individuals from entering employment i.e. generational factors, health issues, poor educational attainment, a lack of appropriate and affordable childcare, a lack of affordable housing in areas where there are good employment opportunities, etc
3. Promote a Digital Inclusion Programme for residents and communities, including targeted support for vulnerable learners i.e. grants & priority access to IT equipment & broadband
4. Identify factors which influence retention and attraction of skilled workers, including graduates, including consideration of the ‘good employer’/working environment (working with the *Growing Businesses* workstream) and quality of the area as a place to live (working with the *Place* workstream).
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| **Innovation** |  |
| *Activity Already in Place* | 1. HE & FE Provision
2. ERDF Programme incl. University based projects -*Full List Included in Supplementary Papers*
3. R & D Tax Credits
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| *Emergency Response* | 1. Support businesses & organisations involved in innovation activities and projects affected by the crisis to begin operating at the earliest opportunity given their importance to future local economy
2. Future Fund - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/future-fund> Ability of the applicant securing the required private sector match. This needs to be promoted locally as an opportunity.
3. Covid 19 Innovate UK continuity Grants (now closed) <https://apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition/596/overview>
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| *Actions that could Support Reopening*  | 1. Support HE, FE & other local training providers to continue to operate digitally through the crisis in supporting businesses with digital transformation in addressing operational requirements, product & service marketing and innovation in servicing arrangements
2. Reopening of Innovate UK Continuity Grants
3. Provision of dedicated incubation (true) space with support
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| *Potential Further Support* | Grow our expertise in business innovation and excellence, building on our sectoral strengths, increasing demand & capacity for innovation across our whole business base and helping firms of all sectors to scale and grow through innovation:* Investment in our knowledge transfer programme and diffusion networks, focusing on SMEs and supply chain firms in manufacturing, advanced materials, energy, agri-tech and logistics
* Driving local innovation, connecting our major institutions to the networks of SMEs to provide new solutions, remove risk & cost barriers and support diversify into new innovative markets
* A programme of technology demonstration and hands-on innovation support, focusing on energy, low carbon transition and manufacturing
* Build/grow the right assets to support local innovation
* Identification and support of infrastructure and services to enable our lead in next generation digital connectivity
* A national leader in energy innovation
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| **Place** |  |
| *Activity Already in Place* | 1. Future High Streets Fund & Town Deal Fund Programme Development underway
2. Ongoing delivery of Capital Programmes using Local Growth Fund, DfT, ERDF & local authority funding etc. to support economic growth priorities across SSLEP
3. ERDF High Streets Fund for District, Borough & City Councils
4. Local Cycling & Walking Implementation Plan Delivery by August. Funding 1st round £45m County-wide; £168k City. Second round bidding timetable?
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| *Emergency Response* | 1. Maintain transport systems ensuring essential businesses & workers can move freely around the county
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| *Actions that could Support Reopening*  | 1. Maintain transport systems ensuring essential businesses & workers can move freely around the county
2. Enable residents & workers to travel by sustainable transport methods, particularly walking and cycling
3. Support our public transport operators to access available funding opportunities to continue operations and in returning appropriate levels of service through the recovery
4. Work with our digital infrastructure providers to ensure all organisations & residents can continue to operate digitally where possible
5. Town Centre Management Planning working with retailers, BIDs, Emergency Services
6. Re-purposing existing space to serve recovery, e.g business start up space
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| *Potential Further Support* | Realise the true future potential of our cities, towns and rural areas, providing the highest quality environment for our businesses and those who live, work, study and visit here:1. Improve our quality of place through strong environmental & asset management across our high streets, towns, city and rural environment
2. strengthen multi-modal transport links
3. Continue work to maximise local economic benefits of major transport infrastructure schemes
4. enhance the quality and quantity of our housing supply, supported by strong utilities and social infrastructure
5. secure next-generation digital connectivity improve broadband speed and availability across Staffordshire, ensuring that new housing and employment developments have access to gigabit-capable broadband whilst also considering how we maximise the benefits of improved digital connectivity, including the use of 5G and other emerging technologies
6. ensure that our energy infrastructure will support the growth we need; and to achieve these ambitions with minimal environmental impact
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