

Epsom and Ewell's Post Pandemic Recovery Plan

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BUILD BACK BETTER

OUR FOCUS ON BRIGHTER FUTURE AS WE COME OUT OF THE PANDEMIC

Our 6 principles for recovery established by Members early in the pandemic

As a Borough and a council, we will recover from the Covid-19 pandemic to be stronger and better than before. We will use these six principles, to establish a “new normal”

Principle 1: Green and Vibrant (our places)

Supporting the shift to more sustainable transport (incl walking, cycling and public transport) and reducing the Council’s footprint through more modern working practices

Principle 2: Opportunity and Prosperity (our businesses)

Taking a central role in the recovery of our local economy, supporting the recovery of our high streets, Epsom Market and attracting inward investment and jobs.

Principle 3: Safe and well (our people)

Managing the continued emergency response, ensuring that the most vulnerable in the community are supported, while enabling services to recovery safely for staff and service users, and promoting the borough as a safe and welcoming place

Our 6 principles continued..

Principle 4: Cultural and Creative (our outlook)

To learn from the experience of the pandemic, taking a fresh perspective to the challenges we faced. Supporting the re-introduction of safe cultural activities and events in the borough whilst improving the efficiency of our venues (including in the Market Place, Bourne Hall, Playhouse, Cinema, Racing Industry, Film Festival)

Principle 5: Smart and Connected (our approach)

Strengthen partnership working across local businesses, voluntary organisations, local statutory agencies and with neighbouring boroughs and districts. Strengthen the Council's digital infrastructure to support more on-line delivery and more modern working practices. Using lessons learned from remote meetings, new ways of working to improve internal processes and digital connectivity.

Principle 6: Well led (your council)

Putting the Council in a more financially sustainable footing, with a greater focus on the top priorities, utilising technology to streamline the way we work **explore collaborative working** actively support the wellbeing and success of all our staff

Build Back Better

Re-building our community

Re-establishing vital community connections, keeping people safe and well, tackling social isolation, getting people back into employment and bringing back the boroughs' cultural heart

Delivering our Vision & Four Year Plan



Re-building our economy

Supporting the re-opening our businesses, attracting people back to our high streets, and securing more investment and jobs.

Organisational Review

Ensuring that we are organised and aligned to deliver what is needed and ready to respond to the challenges ahead

Greater Collaboration

Building stronger services, working with our neighbours to provide greater resilience and more of the specialist skills we need

Taking forward the KPMG study

Taking forward the recommendations for enhanced working within the current two-tier government structure in Surrey.

Supporting the recovery of our **Communities**

Community Recovery



(1)

Working to
support vital
voluntary and
community
organisations

Why does this matter?

The voluntary and community sector is at the heart of the local community, providing a lifeline and essential services to some of our most vulnerable residents in the borough. As a result of the pandemic, many more people have found themselves vulnerable including falling into poverty or social isolation.

The voluntary sector are also a catalyst for mobilising community action and attracting, training and deploying volunteers.

For most, fundraising and income generating activities have been curtailed during the pandemic while fixed costs and some operational costs have continued.

Many local voluntary organisations have had to rely on dwindling reserves to stay afloat while there has been no significant Government support for the sector.

(1)

Working to
support vital
voluntary sector
organisations

Actions to consider

- **Increase engagement with local voluntary and community organisations through a regular targeted newsletter and regular contact with community leaders and use this to promote any new funding opportunities and scope for collaboration and more joined up working**
- **Increase networking opportunities for local voluntary groups to share experience, encourage collaboration, including physical meetings and events when this is possible again**
- **Consider introducing a community lottery to generate additional funds for local voluntary organisations supporting households who have fallen into poverty as a result of the pandemic including the Food Bank and the CAB and organisations that provide housing and debt advice.**
- **Lobby the Government, MP and the County Council for more financial support for local voluntary sector organisations delivering essential services.**

(2)

Practical help for
households falling
into poverty

Why does this matter?

The unprecedented impact on the economy and jobs will continue to be felt long after the pandemic is over. Unfortunately once furloughing and business grants come to an end, not all businesses will survive or continue at current staffing levels. Significant numbers of people are likely to find themselves out of work for the first time in their working lives and are at risk of falling into debt and with that, the prospect of losing their home.

Having a meaningful job is the single most important factor in determining a working-age person's life chances, including their mental and physical wellbeing, their ability to make a wider contribution to their community rather than becoming a significant financial draw on the public purse or increase the risk of being drawn into crime and anti social behaviour.

(2)

Practical help for
households falling
into poverty

Actions to consider

Support that the foodbanks and other key relevant voluntary sector organisations have the resources they need to respond to the increasing demands

Put in place a homelessness service response plan to ensure that the Council is able to respond effectively to increasing demand for homelessness advice and support, particularly when protection from eviction is removed in the new financial year.

Work with Job Centre Plus to Support that residents who have lost their jobs have access to timely support to help them access the limited number of new employment opportunities available. (Explore potential extension of the Skills Hub)

Secure targeted support for young people leaving local schools and colleges and entering the job market for the first time but as yet have no practical experience of the workplace. (potential Youth Hub)

Promote re-training opportunities through NESOT and apprenticeship and work experience placements with local employers.

Continue to explore the data to identify changes in deprivation, poverty and inequality, including any marginalised groups that need additional help.

(3)

Residents feeling
safe and secure in
rebuilding their
lives

Why does this matter?

As residents begin to emerge from their homes and start to engage in their previous activities and interests, and businesses start to re-open it will be more important than ever that they feel safe, secure and confident, knowing that the rules are being followed and enforced.

Firstly this must relate to achieving a high level of COVID-secure practice in local businesses, including shops, restaurants and other hospitality venues to give confidence to those choosing to shop locally as we begin to come out of the lock down.

Secondly this needs to tackle anti social behaviour and crime in our retail, commercial and open spaces. For example, there have been significant increases in anti social behaviour in parks, drug related crime and greater cycle thefts. This is in addition to the significant increase in unauthorised encampments and large scale fly-typing that may arise from the loss of the injunction for unauthorised encampments.

(3)

Residents feeling
safe and secure in
rebuilding their
lives

Actions to consider

Hold a Crime Summit with the police and partner agencies such as Housing Associations, Fire Service etc. to get more people involved in keeping the borough a safe place

Promote and make full use of the significant additional police resources being put into neighbourhood policing

Continue to support local businesses with their compliance with Government regulations for Covid-secure practice and take enforcement action when necessary.

Strengthen the Council's approach to education and enforcement, particularly in the parks and open spaces.

Progress the Purple Flag status with the BID to support and promote the safe re-opening and on-going operation of the evening and late night economy in the Town Centre

Utilise the new mobile CCTV Cameras

Explore and promote the provision of diversionary activities for Youth

(4)

Access to jobs and
retraining
opportunities

Why does this matter?

Given the impact on the economy of the pandemic, and the seismic shift to on-line purchasing, and once business grants and furloughing arrangements end in the Spring, there is a risk of an unprecedented level of job losses with limited opportunities for re-employment.

As well as the significant personal and social cost of unemployment, it also has a huge impact on the lives of other dependents in the household, on local public services and the public purse including, including benefits, homelessness etc.

High unemployment levels including high youth unemployment is also associated with increases in anti social behaviour and all types of crime, including drugs and other serious organised crime.

(4)

Access to jobs and
retraining
opportunities

Actions to consider

Continue the Council's partnership with DWP/Job Centre Plus and Surrey Life Long Learning to explore the continuation of the Skills Hub

Explore with DWP/Job Centre Plus and Surrey Life Long Learning and NESOT the creation of a Youth Hub to support young people with access to employment and training opportunities.

Promote work experience, job placement and apprenticeship opportunities in the Council and with other major employers in the borough.

Promote volunteering opportunities as valuable work experience and a stepping stone to paid employment opportunities.

Help promote employment in growth industries such as the health and care sector which continue to experience significant vacancies.

(5)

Re-opening local
Council facilities
and services used
by the community

Why does this matter?

The Council's Community and Wellbeing Centre, Bourne Hall, the Playhouse Theatre, The Rainbow Leisure Centre, Ewell Court House and Nonsuch House are important facilities used by a wide spectrum of the community across Epsom and Ewell. They are facilities used particularly by our older population and families whose lives have been most disrupted by the pandemic but now also need to include more for working age communities temporarily displaced from their jobs.

These buildings are an important access point for local services, a place to meet others in the community for community activities and events and important family occasions. These buildings have an important role in reconnecting people with their community. They draw people into the borough and into our high streets and parks.

Key standalone services also have an important part to play in community recovery such as the community alarms service, meals at home service, the transport services, social prescribing and the promoting guided walks etc.

(5)

Re-opening local
Council facilities
and services used
by the community

Actions to consider

Develop a re-opening plan for the Community and Wellbeing Centre, Bourne Hall, the Playhouse Theatre, Ewell Court House and review the efficiency of the operation.

Promote greater take up of wellbeing services such as the community transport service, social prescribing, meals at home etc.

Work with GLL to support the re-opening of the Rainbow Leisure Centre and Bovingdons regarding the reopening of Nonsuch House.

Re-start the procurement for finding an operator for Ewell Court House

Support the re-opening of group exercise classes and activities in Council parks and consider further extension of park gyms through CIL 15%.

Identify services for the younger residents and support the Surrey Youth Games.

(6)

Reconnecting
communities,
tackling social
isolation and
promoting good
mental health

Why does this matter?

During the pandemic residents of all ages have had to withdraw from much of their usual lives in their community, socially distanced and socially isolated, contained in their household bubble.

This lack of engagement has had a profound impact on mental health and personal resilience, and the ability for many to begin the process of rebuilding the important connections in their community and routines of day to day life that support their wellbeing.

The Council has a role in accelerating this process by creating and promoting opportunities for residents to re-engage in the life of their community, from visiting the local shops and restaurants, social clubs, attending events, interest groups and exercise classes, to visiting the Theatre, Bourne Hall and the Community and Wellbeing Centre.

(6)

Reconnecting communities, tackling social isolation and promoting good mental health

Actions to consider

Refocus the Council's Health and Wellbeing work on tackling social isolation, helping people to reconnect with their community and promoting good mental health

Work more closely with community, voluntary sector and statutory partners to support a more joined up approach to community.

Promote and support partners to reduce digital isolation.

Develop a new programme of community and civic events and activities that brings people together, promotes community cohesion, and utilises the new Market Place to promote the best of what the community has to offer including its diverse cultures and foods. This includes the Derby, Film Festival, food markets, community festivals, and events through the cultural and arts sector.

Promote the borough's growing cultural offer including Horton Chapel when it opens later this year and the new boutique arts cinema in Epsom Square.

Maximise the opportunities through social prescribing.

**Supporting the recovery
of our local Economy**

Economic Recovery



Promotion &
distribution
of business
grants and
loans

Why does this matter?

With an interruption in sales and income during the lockdown, many businesses could go out of business simply due to a lack of short-term cash flow.

It is vital that local businesses are able to access as much Government funding as possible to keep them afloat over this difficult period and to safeguard the employment of their staff.

The Government continue to make announcements about new funding opportunities for business, administered by the Borough Council, with very little time for promotion and implementation. The Council needs to be ready and have the capacity to respond effectively to these opportunities.

**Promotion &
distribution
of business
grants and
loans**

Actions to consider

- **To strongly promote all new business grants and loans coming out of Government.**
- **Work with local business networks including the BID and local business leaders to increase the communications channels to promote the financial help that is available to local businesses.**
- **Engage in a two way conversation to understand the difficulties now faced by local businesses.**



Practical
advice and
support for
local business

Why does this matter?

Independent businesses who are not part of a regional or national chain or franchise do not always have up to date information about how best to operate in a COVID-Secure way.

With business operations severely disrupted as a result of the lock down and with and other restrictions in place, it is even harder to reach businesses with the information they need about the support available.

Some business owners will be facing the overwhelming pressures of increasing debt and the potential loss of their business and business premises. It is important that these businesses have access to good quality advice to help them deal as best the can with these particularly difficult circumstances.



Practical
advice and
support for
local business

Actions to consider

Work with the High Streets Task Force, the Epsom BID, the Local Enterprise Partnership and Surrey Chambers of Commerce to Support that messages are aligned and information is presented in the most effective way for local businesses.

Support that information on COVID-Secure business operations are widely disseminated, including use of social media and video.

Make use of any extension in the deadline for use of the ERDF funding to fund information and advice for local businesses to help with their reopening.

Consider how to make available to local businesses practical advice for those facing significant debt and the potential loss of their business

An
enterprising
environment
for new and
growing
businesses

Why does this matter?

In the wake of closures in larger and established businesses, there will be a greater reliance on new and emerging businesses providing much needed employment and income generation.

The Council's community buildings, market place, and parks and recreation spaces provide a fantastic enterprising environment for new business to take off and grow.

Promoting business and customer confidence is going to be vital during the recovery period. However, this will be undermined if visually there are a number empty and poorly maintained shop fronts on the high street creating blight for the remaining and new potential businesses.

As business continue to pull out of central London in the search of smaller, more flexible/affordable office accommodation and meeting spaces, it is important that the borough is able to put forward an attractive offer.

An
enterprising
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for new and
growing
businesses

Actions to consider

- **Promote the Council's market place, community buildings, recreation areas, and open spaces as great opportunities for developing new and emerging businesses**
- **Explore how to turn empty shop fronts in key locations into colourful promotional material about the town's fantastic retail, leisure, restaurant and cultural offer.**
- **Explore in partnership with others repurposing empty retail property into affordable and flexible office, business and meeting spaces, and other potential "pop-up" uses such as a skills hub or pop-up museum.**
- **Support that the borough is being promoted as a great place to relocate a business out of London and a great place to attract the best employee talent.**
- **Closely assess the vibrancy and resilience of our high streets by monitoring foot-fall and vacancy rates to identify areas most at risk and need of intervention**

A green hexagonal graphic with white text inside, positioned in the top left corner of the slide.

Promoting
local
businesses
and “shop
local”

Why does this matter?

During the pandemic the shift towards on-line shopping has accelerated, and given the length of the three lock-downs, residents have become accustomed to shopping in this way. People have also found other ways to spend their leisure and social time.

It will be therefore be difficult to attract customers back to the high street for their shopping, eating and leisure experiences.

What will be key is providing the highest levels of customer service, extraordinary visitor experience, a greater focus on the independent retailers offering something not easily found on-line or in other Towns, convenience, and a good range of opportunities on offer.

The Market Place is an example of something that people will come out for, because it provides an experience and a social activity (on Sundays) not easily replicated by shopping on-line.

Important to maintain the focus.

Promoting
local
businesses
and “shop
local”

Actions to consider

- **Communications campaign with the BID promoting “shop local”, and “love your town and high street”**
- **Promote the climate change benefits of shopping on your local high street**
- **Work with local businesses and the BID to encourage a programme of events to attract people back to the Town and High Streets including events in the Market Place.**
- **A programme of expanded market activities, other activities and events in the Market Place to attract people into the Town Centre.**
- **Work with local businesses to help maintain or improve the use of local retailers in Ewell, Stoneleigh etc.**

A teal hexagonal graphic with a white border, containing the text 'Encouraging visitors and increasing retail footfall' in white, bold, sans-serif font.

**Encouraging
visitors and
increasing
retail footfall**

Why does this matter?

To help promote local business confidence, it is important that there is a visible demonstration of investment and focus on the future through a series of high profile initiatives.

The borough's long-term vision highlights the importance of promoting Epsom and Ewell as a creative and vibrant place with a strong cultural offer. This is more important than ever in attracting back footfall and creating an environment where people want to work and invest in.

There was a risk before the pandemic that the reputation of the borough as a safe place to visit for people of all ages was being undermined by the anti social behaviour that sometimes occurred, including as part of the late night economy in commercial the Town Centre.

**Encouraging
visitors and
increasing
retail footfall**

Actions to consider

- **Take forward work with the BID towards Purple Flag status for the Town Centre to support the evening and late night economies and to protect the borough's reputation as a safe place to visit**
- **Work with the BID to implement the Town Wifi scheme to support increased customer dwell time and make the town easier to navigate and enjoy.**
- **Complete the installation of the Emily Davison Statue and the Derby Hall of Fame in the Market Place to help attract more visitors as part of the borough's cultural offer.**
- **Complete the work to the Northern High Street as the final phase of the Plan E works (the manufacture and supply of the bus shelters and street furniture including wayfinding signs which were delayed due to Covid).**
- **Promote the borough's unique cultural assets/ heritage incl. Market Place, Playhouse, Leisure Centre, the Derby, Film Festival, Horton Chapel, and new Picturehouse cinema**
- **Promote the borough's growing restaurant and hospitality economy (which is less impacted by on-line shopping) and attract more high quality independents.**



Securing
infrastructure
and investment
that will
support the
local economy

Why does this matter?

Investment in the borough is a sign of confidence in a better future.

The Government, the Local Enterprise Partnership and Surrey County Council will be looking to invest. It's important that Epsom and Ewell receive it's fair share of this investment including further highways, cycle schemes, public realm improvements.

There are some important housing developments coming forward for the Town Centre which could provide the opportunity for significant and much needed additional foot fall in support of the retail, leisure and restaurant economies.

The future of other sites, including the location of the Town Hall could also be a significant investment opportunity or the borough and contribute positively to the supply of housing.

**Securing
infrastructure
and investment
that will
support the
local economy**

Actions to consider

- **Work with Surrey County Council to help shape their transport investment priorities including investment in cycle infrastructure**
- **Develop a pipeline of future projects that could be implemented within a reasonable timeframe, and would have the potential to attract external funding including progressing the CIL 15% projects and shop front grants**
- **Identify opportunities for major development schemes close to the Town Centre and other strategic high streets that would have a positive impact on footfall and spend in those locations.**
- **Undertake master planning of the two industrial estates to identify the scale of the opportunity for concentration of business uses as well as residential.**

Securing
infrastructure
and investment
that will
support the
local economy

Actions to consider

- **Work with the BID and others to develop a future Vision for the Town Centre**
- **Undertake new master planning of the Town Centre to inform a potential Plan E -2, redefining a smaller but more concentrated retail offer, increased residential development, and further improvements to the quality of the cultural offer.**