**Cheshire and Warrington - Economic Restart and Recovery Plan**

Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, and Warrington, and the Local Enterprise Partnership have agreed a **two-stage approach** to our ongoing work on the economy. Our immediate focus is to support the **economic restart** of businesses across the region through the economy cell. This will lay the groundwork for a more comprehensive **economic recovery strategy**.

We will take a **practical approach** in line with **Government guidance and in response to local economic and public health conditions**. In implementing this plan, we will continue to work with colleagues in Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region and North Wales to ensure, wherever practicable, consistency within our wider economic geography. Our approach will provide **coordinated solutions** that support businesses in the short-term so that they are Covid19 secure. The Cheshire and Warrington Covid-19 Economic Resilience Cell will continue to provide leadership and coordination, and refocus activities of the LEP, Growth Hub, Marketing Cheshire, local authorities, and other partners

**Economic response to date**

Through the immediate response phase, local authorities across Cheshire and Warrington have distributed Business Rate Grants of **almost £160 million to over 15,000 businesses**.

The LEP Growth and Skills Hub has played a key role in the coordination and delivery of **support and advice** to Cheshire and Warrington businesses. The Growth Hub has seen a more than 5-fold increase in enquiries with over 800 businesses supported in less than 2 months. Some have been able to self-serve via the comprehensive website which is updated daily and ensures information is sorted to be easily digested.

We have also collectively established the **Cheshire Business Forum**, regular business surveys, and a new economic monitoring dashboard. This will allow us to provide regular information to Government of the impact of Covid19 on local businesses and wider economy. This insight can help to shape national policy responses.

**Restart phase**

We have started the Restart phase for Cheshire and Warrington. We intend to:

* + move at **pace** over the coming weeks and months.
  + take a step-by-step approach to **increase confidence** amongst business, workforce, and consumers.
  + be **in line** with Government guidance and in response to local economic and public health conditions.
  + ruthlessly prioritise **practical solutions** that help businesses to be COVID-19 secure; and supports people back into work through skills and retraining.
  + **work in partnership** with the wider local resilience and recovery infrastructure to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of the public and workforce as **safety and security** is essential to a successful economic restart.
  + **work with and alongside the business community.**
  + **monitor and adapt to evidence** on the local economy and public health.

**Our strategic aims are to:**

* Protect **people and jobs** across Cheshire and Warrington.
* Increase **confidence** amongst business, workforce, and consumers.
* Build towards achieving the vision to be the UK's healthiest, most sustainable, inclusive, and growing economy.

**Our priorities are to provide:**

* **trusted information** for all businesses.
* **direct support** for smaller businesses.
* a tailored approach for **specific sectors**.

*…alongside the wider resilience and recovery cell structure we will:*

* Prioritise those at greatest risk from an economic downturn, with a focus on **education and skills.**
* Ensure a **place-based recovery**in cities, towns, and business parks; and adapt our approach on **environment and infrastructure.**
* Collaborate on **strategic communications** and **evidence gathering**.

**Programme of work**

We have developed a **detailed programme of activities** for the next 3 months (see Annex A). These include:

* **Signposting** people to health and safety advice, and risk assessments.
* **Weekly webinars** and **sector forums** to share business intelligence
* **Skills and retraining** with schools, colleges, and Chester University.
* **Policy workshops** on specific areas, such as high street reopening.
* **Communications to businesses** on ongoing business grants available, and the reopening of high streets, business parks, etc.

Cheshire and Warrington LEP, May 2020

**Annex A: Restart Phase – Programme of work**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Framework** | **Action** | **LEP Lead** | **Support** |
|  |  |  |  |
| For all | Weekly updated **economic tracking dashboard** setting out key indicators | Andy Farrall | Growth Hub  Local Authorities |
| For all | Monitoring of key employers to determine potential difficulties and redundancies and determine appropriate response | Andy Farrall | Growth Hub  Local Authorities |
| For all | Set up **webinars to help businesses with restart plans.** | Andy Devaney | Growth Hub  Marketing Cheshire  Private sector providers |
| For all | Week long consultation event to determine impact of COVID on business and education | Trevor Langston | Pledge Team  Growth Hub |
| For all | Provide **templates on health and safety**, reopening checklists, etc, on Growth Hub website. Continue to share and promote **Government guidance**. | Andy Devaney | Growth Hub |
| For all | Establish a new task and finish group to support **sourcing and advice on PPE for businesses**. We recognise that health and social care must be prioritised for supplies. Group to comprise businesses who have sourced PPE and can advise on best practice. Creation of a ‘How to’ guide. | Andy Devaney | Councils  Public health providers  Business Growth Committee |
| Direct | Promotion and marketing of **Accelerate retraining programme** for business. This will target businesses with under 50 employees and those under 35 with digital needs | Andy Devaney | Chester University  Colleges |
| Direct | Promote the roll out of local authority **additional business rate grants** and promotion with eligible businesses. | Kerry Hall | Councils |
| Sectors | Establish sector **restart forums for construction, logistics and manufacturing** industries. TBC. | Andy Hulme | BROs |
| Sectors | Establish sector **restart forums for the hospitality, retail, and visitor economy**. To include work of both Destination Chester and Destination Cheshire. | Nicola Said | BIDs  Retail, visitor economy networks |
| Place-based | Host **town centre manager, council, and BID workshop** to share best practice and develop options for local authorities and businesses. | Fiona Bebbington | Councils  BIDs |
| Education | Provide **computers for schools** for those students who do not currently have IT and internet access. Run a campaign and matching process for business donations. LEP to provide seed funding of approximately £25k. | Pat Jackson | Schools |
| Environment & infrastructure | Assess new models for **transport infrastructure,** e.g., through pop-up cycle lanes, wider pavements, closed roads, etc. Investment of new Government funding for sustainable transport. | Roy Newton | Councils  Transport |
| Communications | Scope Destination Chester and Cheshire **place-marketing campaigns** focused on building confidence amongst local community in line with wider resilience and recovery messages. Develop #OurChester and #OurCheshire social approach. Will launch in line wider local resilience and recovery communications timetable and reopening plans. | Nicola Said | Businesses  Visitor, retail, and hospitality networks |