

## **North Somerset Council Decision**

**Decision Of: Cllr. Mark Canniford, Executive Member for Business, Economy and Employment**



**With Advice From: Director Development and Environment**

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**Decision No: 20/21 DE 134**

**Subject: North Somerset Economic Plan**

**Key Decision: Yes**

**Reason:**

Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the Local Authority.

**Background:**

North Somerset Council has an Economic Plan (2017 – 2036) which provides a framework to guide and influence activity, resources and investment that will generate the greatest returns to the local economy.

It has become apparent that the Coronavirus pandemic is having an unprecedented impact on the economy and a new Economic Plan (“the Plan”) is needed to respond to the challenges and changes being levied on businesses and residents.

The Plan has been developed at pace to make a clear statement to businesses and residents what the council will do to support them during the crisis and beyond. The Plan helps to support corporate objectives:

- An attractive and vibrant place for business investment and sustainable growth
- To be a carbon neutral council and area by 2030
- A transport network which promotes active, accessible and low carbon travel
- A broad range of new homes to meet our growing need, with an emphasis on quality and affordability
- A focus on tackling inequalities and improving outcomes
- Partnerships which enhance skills, learning and employment opportunities

**Decision:**

To endorse the New Economic Plan as the council’s principle statement of economic growth in North Somerset and to supersede the previous Economic Plan prepared in 2017, noting that specific data will be updated prior to publication of the final design.

**Reasons:**

The Coronavirus pandemic has had a profound effect on the economy. Transport, retail, the visitor economy and creative industries have been hit particularly hard. Unemployment has

risen and young people are especially at risk with fewer job opportunities and apprenticeships. The lockdown has also highlighted digital poverty; those without access to broadband or the right equipment and skills are at a big disadvantage. Additional uncertainty is being levied on the economy with the risk of a no-deal exit from the European Union.

In addition, the restrictions placed on people's movements will influence behaviours in a way which will affect businesses in the long term. It has accelerated trends that existed before the crisis such as flexible and distributed working, shopping online and choices consumers make about the way they want to travel. With social distancing likely to be in force well into next year, it is expected that some of these behaviours will become the 'new normal'.

The changes to lifestyle and work as a result of the pandemic means a new approach is needed to our existing economic plan.

### **Options Considered:**

To retain the existing economic plan (2017 – 2036): This option has been rejected due to the significantly changed economic landscape, challenges, stimulus and support packages, and opportunities.

### **Financial Implications:**

This Executive Member Decision and the adoption of the new Plan does not financially commit North Somerset Council to additional expenditure beyond the funding attributed to the programme of immediate support packages covered in Directors Decision (DE93).

### **Costs:**

None

### **Funding:**

N/A

### **Legal Powers and Implications:**

There is no statutory requirement to publish an economic plan. However good quality and up to date strategic plans help the Council to carry out its functions effectively

### **Climate Change and Environmental Implications:**

'Green recovery' is one of the key foundations of identified in the Plan. The Plan commits to a series of priority projects all of which will contribute to delivering the council's climate emergency action plan, for example development of support for start-up businesses to develop environmentally business models, a focus on sustainable and green tourism, green skills and an inward investment strategy which encourages low carbon activities to locate in North Somerset. The Plan has been developed with the council's Climate Emergency Project Manager and measurement of impact has been aligned with the council's annual emissions report.

### **Consultation:**

The Plan has been developed with the Economic Renewal Steering Group, which includes

AGM Holdings  
Alder King  
Alliance Homes

Bristol Airport  
Business West  
Chambers of Commerce

Citizens Advice Bureau  
Curo Housing  
Disabilities Networks  
Federation of Small Businesses  
JCP/ DWP  
Lloyds Bank  
North Somerset Enterprise Agency  
North Somerset LGBTQ+ Network  
Ovation Finance

The Future Economy Group  
The Gold Standard  
The Port  
Theatre Orchard  
Triangle Networks  
Voluntary Action North Somerset  
West of England Rural Network  
Weston College

In addition, contact has been made with NS BAME network, Weston Malayalees, Disability Access Group and North Somerset Bangladeshi Association

Broadly the responses from these stakeholders suggested that the plan should respond to the following evidence:

- 1) Vulnerable sectors are public transport, aviation, retail, visitor economy, cultural/ creative and voluntary and community sector.
- 2) Residents working in these sectors are vulnerable to redundancy & some areas and some geographical areas are impacted than others e.g. Weston and surrounding area and our town centres.
- 3) Young people, over 50s, lower paid/ atypical workers (many of which are BAME) are most likely to face financial hardship.
- 4) Dispersed working has increased and is here to stay in some form – workspace will need to respond
- 5) While financial/ economic values will be part of recovery, new value is being created – community, environment, well-being, certainty in supply, ‘connectedness’
- 6) Consumers will respond to these changes – our economy needs to adapt accordingly

The Plan has also been through a scrutiny session on 22.07.20 The content of the plan aligns with input and feedback from these stakeholders

### **Risk Management:**

The Plan is purposefully ambitious and action focussed. There is a risk that in adopting such a document the council raises expectations about its ability to mitigate significant and structural economic impacts caused by Coronavirus lockdown and social distancing measures.

However, the risk of not agreeing the Plan is that activity continues but is not co-ordinated, targeted or impactful. The risk of not agreeing the Strategy outweighs the risks regarding expectation management. This risk can be mitigated through clear communication about the role NSC is taking in the various strategic recommendations e.g. influencing, delivering or enabling.

### **Equality Implications:**

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? Yes  
No negative impacts have been identified through the EIA process.

### **Corporate Implications:**

The priorities and actions in the Plan are not solely attributable to the Economy Team and will require work across the organisation in departments that work directly with residents, businesses and stakeholders. The following commitments will have cross-council/ corporate implications. Discussions have taken place with the relevant officers to ensure these commitments align with their existing priorities:

- Full fibre and 5G: Ensure next generation digital connectivity and telecommunications technology is supplied into new premises, workplaces and homes.
- Mobility as a service: Develop wider access to on-demand transport, mobility services and carbon efficient local delivery solutions.
- Infrastructure for local working: Provide the digital infrastructure and facilities for local working so that our places can realise the maximum opportunities of distributed employment.
- North Somerset Local Plan: Develop evidence led economic input to the new Local Plan which delivers jobs, enables development and supports quality employment space.
- Retrofitting buildings, community energy, renewable energy and carbon reduction: Maximise benefits of energy efficiency schemes by ensuring local people have the right skills to make the most of the job opportunities.
- Employment and Skills Strategy: Focused activity around opportunities for those who have lost their jobs and are disenfranchised from the labour market.
- J21 enterprise area: Directly invest and seek investment in the creation of jobs.

### **Appendices:**

North Somerset Economic Plan – to note the content in the Plan will not change but the presentation will as the Plan still needs to be taken through our design processes.  
Executive paper on Employment and Skills Strategy

### **Background Papers:**

[North Somerset Economic Plan 2017 - 2036](#)

### **Signatories:**

#### **Decision Maker(s):**

Signed: 

Executive Member for Business, Economy and Employment.

Date: 28 September 2020

### **With Advice From:**

Signed:  Director Development and Environment

Date: 21 September 2020