

FULL COUNCIL

5TH JULY 2022

REPORT OF THE LEADER

1. COUNCIL UPDATE ON THE ECONOMIC STRATEGY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

1.1 Purpose of Report

To inform Council of matters of interest in relation to the economic strategy responsibilities of my portfolio.

1.2 Economic Recovery & Growth

- 1.1.1 Since my last report, the global economic recovery has slowed. The OECD project that global GDP growth will be around 3% this year including a UK growth rate of 3.64% which is less than half the estimated UK growth rate last year of 7.4% (source: ONS).
- 1.1.2 Despite challenging global economic conditions, Solihull's economy and assets have shown strong signs of recovery with 14 inward investments into the Borough recorded during the first three months of the year including significant investments at Birmingham Business Park and Blythe Valley Park, a return to activity at the NEC and Airport, and recovery in footfall levels in Touchwood.
- 1.1.3 During the current quarter, the Borough has recorded a large, as yet unnamed, government transaction of over 37,000 sq.ft. on Birmingham Business Park, restaurant group Boparan took space at Trinity Park for a Midlands training hub, and orthodontic manufacturing specialists, Align Technology expanded on Birmingham Business Park.
- 1.1.4 The number of people claiming unemployment benefit in the Borough has continued to fall – to a rate of 3.6% in May (compared to 5.0% in the West Midlands and 3.9% in England). However, the number of claimants remains +27% above pre-pandemic levels – 6% above in North Solihull where the rate is 8.3%, and 1% above amongst young people aged 18 to 24.
- 1.1.5 We continue to support unemployed residents to move into employment and training. Since the Recruitment and Training Centre reopened last year, we have supported 200 unemployed young people, 90 of whom have moved into employment or training. We have also supported 76, mainly unemployed, residents considering self-employment, seven of whom have since set up in business.
- 1.1.6 We continue to support local businesses, and have developed a programme of 'bite-sized' business support and networking events with the Growth Hub, FSB and College on topics including business planning, "scale-up", skills and apprenticeships, access to finance, procurement and payment terms. We are linking tourism businesses into the "Getting Games Ready" training programme and supporting 'drop in' information sessions on the Games for businesses in Solihull Town Centre, Knowle and Chelmsley Wood town centres. We recently exhibited at the Solihull Chamber 'Expo' event, joining over 50 local businesses in showcasing their services and supporting local B2B (business to business) opportunities.
- 1.1.7 We continue to progress implementation of the Solihull Town Centre masterplan and to work with our partners to support our towns and local centres, including progressing the implementation of the Shirley Economic Plan.

- 1.1.8 Key milestones continue to be achieved to bring forward development opportunity at the UKC Hub. These include the recent appointment of VINCI Construction UK to design and build the multi-storey car parks on the HS2 Interchange site, which will enable land release for major development on the site.
- 1.1.9 Work is underway to develop a new economic strategy for the Borough aligned to our objectives for inclusive, green growth and net zero, including engagement with key stakeholders and our local and regional partners.
- 1.1.10 In summary, the Council continues to work with our partners to support our residents and businesses and to bring forward our plans for inclusive growth that at the same time as reducing the Borough's carbon emissions, including by taking advantage of major investments including HS2 and the Commonwealth Games.