

CABINET STATEMENT
CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMY – COUNCILLOR DEREK PRETTY

Work to aid the recovery from the Lockdowns continues. Grants of approximately £32m have been awarded, including £5m in discretionary funding to 1030 businesses throughout the Borough. This has helped many remain as viable during the difficult times. The Re-opening High Streets Safely team, now part of the Welcome Back fund, have worked through out the Borough supporting outdoor markets in Hedge End and Hamble, by providing planters in the Town Centre, by painting railings in West End, supporting the Halloween trail in Chandlers Ford and the Christmas Penguin trail in Eastleigh. All small but invaluable means in making our towns more inviting.

Footfall in Eastleigh Town Centre rose by nearly 12% between August and September

Eastleigh Business Improvement District (BID) recently held a Business Award evening which recognized the efforts that businesses in the Town Centre have made to achieve high levels of customer experience when shopping, and essential in encouraging customers back to the Town Centre.

The Council's Employment and Skills team, together with our Welcome Back (High Streets) team, has been developing a training offer to ensure that all our businesses have access to an electronic platform in the event that any future lockdown occurs. We have launched a Social Value Employment and Skills toolkit to commitments on all levels of contract at One Horton Heath (OHH). We are also looking to work more closely with local schools and colleges to provide work experience, advice and apprenticeships.

The Central and West Hampshire Youth Employment Hub is to be launched in early November, and we are the lead authority on the project working with Test Valley, Winchester and New Forest Councils. It will be the only Hub within the country being delivered within a partnership. This demonstrates that there is a need to consider cross boundary investment in skills and support. The Hub is intended to provide information and advice to young people looking for skills and employment opportunities.

We are confident that these initiatives will help our young people make decisions that will determine their future life skills.

The Solent Freeport Consortium continues to work towards approval of their proposal. However there have been several points raised by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) which require clarification prior to submission of a further Outline Business Plan +.

A successful Freeport application could help to release commercial land within the Riverside and Airport sites. This would help address the needs of successful businesses that would like to relocate due to growth that would like to stay within the

Borough but can't be due to lack of commercial space offering the right size and tenure terms.

We need to be aware of the potential of inward / foreign investment that the Freeport could generate.

There is also commercial space within the OHH development which could be promoted to encourage new businesses from priority sectors to locate within the Borough.

The Sorting Office studios should be moving from the Wells Road location to 14 Station Hill in the next month. The refurbishment of Station Hill is almost complete and should be eye-catching with its deep blue façade and pink signwriting. The more prominent location should provide welcome visibility to the artists' work and help promote their businesses.

The Wessex House Business Centre requires some essential re-furbishment which has led to a drop in occupancy. The potential for refurbishment works to maximize occupancy are under consideration based on business case to be funded from the repairs and renewals reserve.