

Archived Recommendations

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November 2021

Short Term

5.1.a

In response to the 'Perfect Storm' landscape detailed in August's Smart Region report, there is an immediate need for clarity and understanding around schemes, such as the Export Strategy, being rolled out to support the sectors and areas most affected by these issues, e.g., hospitality, caring, and logistics.

5.1.b

Local business support programmes must continue to raise awareness of the merits of international market opportunities to businesses and ensure they are signposting effectively to specialist support services, including those such as the Internationalisation Fund, delivered by DIT, which offers match-funded grants of between £1,000 and £9,000.

5.1.c

Coventry and Warwickshire require urgent clarity around UKSPF funding as there is a clear need for sufficient funding to build upon already successful business support programmes that have been rolled out across the sub-region.

Medium Term

5.2.a

Increase in available funding to accelerate businesses' ability to:

- access premium products within the business support landscape, such as Made Smarter West Midlands
- increase export capability to adapt to changing economic environments.
- receive non-financial support, prior to the application stage for financial support, as well as access to new financial products.

5.2.b

Strong and effective PR campaigns during the autumn and winter around public health safety should be considered as a means of increasing both consumer and business confidence, to avoid unnecessary slowing of the economic recovery.

5.2.c

To support industry to adapt, develop, and grow over the coming decades, we must ensure that skills provisions across the region are integrated into the wider support landscape, especially around the innovation support system. There is also the need to continue gathering intelligence around skills, to inform our actions and identify any further support that is required.

Long Term

5.3.a

Conduct dynamic market research, through a combination of surveys and the first hand experiences of account managers and business advisors, to explore the best ways to further address the issues businesses are facing. This would better shape the business support landscape in the region and ensure that any funding from the UKSPF can react quickly to any future issues that may arise.

5.3.b

With an increasing focus towards a Net Zero future, there is a need to invest in building stronger sustainable local supply chains. Not only would this contribute to achieving Net Zero targets, it would also mitigate some of the supply chain delays highlighted in the 'Perfect Storm' analysis of August's report. Clarity around the long-term funding in this area is required, as there was insufficient detail in the spending review.

5.3.c

Additional funds for developing tools, such as FinditinCW, are required for the Coventry & Warwickshire business support ecosystem to continue to offer such services to the business community, in turn encouraging strengthened local supply chains, as set out in 5.3.b.

October 2021

Short Term

5.1.a

There remains an ongoing and urgent need to address the issues raised in our 'Perfect Storm' scenario, set out in detail in August's Smart Region report. These should, importantly, seek to help overcome staff shortages, both short-term and longer term, that sectors such as hospitality, caring, and logistics, are currently facing.

5.1.b

Government is urged to provide additional funds for investment in new green technologies and the skills required to deliver them locally, to accelerate and sustain the local and regional economic recovery for the longer term. In particular, capital investment for our further education colleges to purchase, maintain and upgrade key technology assets as new green technologies are introduced.

5.1.c

Clarity is required around the future of funding for green business support in the Coventry & Warwickshire area, such as the CW Green Business Programme.

5.1.d

In the meantime, CW Green Business Programme will continue to support businesses to:

- improve levels of energy efficiency (Energy Efficiency Audits)
- increase take-up of renewable energy and advance the development of new innovative low carbon products (low carbon innovation workshops, capital and revenue grants)
- share best practice and new market opportunities through Green Business Network.

5.1.e

Local business support programmes must continue to raise awareness of the merits of international market opportunities to businesses and ensure they are signposting effectively to specialist support services available through DIT, CW Growth Hub and CW Chamber etc.

5.1.f

Continued support for community-based programmes run by stakeholders in the region, should be encouraged. For example, Warwickshire County Council's [Green Shoots](#) programme, which, although not for businesses, helps to fund climate change mitigation projects in the county, and is an excellent example of how to boost the economy and help improve and regenerate local neighbourhoods through community focussed projects.

5.1.g

The Spending Review needs to provide a platform to enable Coventry & Warwickshire and the wider West Midlands to deliver a sustained economic recovery. Facilitating green innovation should be a major priority, including through investment in the Coventry Airport Gigafactory and further supporting the growth of key supply chains in the region such as electric vehicles and battery technologies. The Spending Review should also provide the platform for sustaining and further enhancing the region's business, innovation and skills support ecosystem.

5.1.h

It is vital more than ever that we have the right skills supply to support industry to adapt, develop and grow over the coming decades. With this in mind we are bringing together industry and FE and HE partners to review the skills, challenges and opportunities ahead in Coventry & Warwickshire.

The Skills Summit will bring together key speakers from academia, industry, local government, political leaders and local support agencies to review skills needs and showcase the local training and education assets within the region around decarbonisation of transport, including vehicle electrification and battery technology.

Medium Term

5.2.a

BEIS and British Business Bank work closely with responsible finance providers and business support bodies such as CWLEP Growth Hub to identify in detail the nature of market opportunities and market failures in green innovation and measures businesses across a range of sectors must take to tackle climate change to inform development of new financial products and support.

5.2.b

Increase in available funding to accelerate business's ability to:

- develop and implement green innovations (products and processes) at higher value than current CW Green Business and CW Innovation programme grants
- develop new financial products, aligned with non-financial support (through BEIS/British Business Bank)

5.2.c

Further to 5.1.d, in relation to the West Midlands Gigafactory, there must be provision for the sufficient supply of employment land for supply chain and clustering opportunities to deliver future green sustainable growth of the local economy.

This should be supported by appropriate infrastructure in place to provide energy to power future economic growth in our area – with newer, clean, renewable energy sources becoming essential, alongside sustainable travel and work patterns for workers.

5.2.d

Local businesses and support organisations, including universities, who are all working within the same green/sustainable sectors, should be encouraged to further network and deepen collaboration to build CW's success in delivering a green sustainable future economy for the sub-region.

5.2.e

Strong and carefully considered PR campaigns during the autumn and winter that protect public health safety should be considered as a means of increasing both consumer and business confidence.

5.2.f

A campaign around the benefits and long-term savings for businesses who are looking to 'go green' should be created and shared in a timely manner, coinciding with COP26 to capitalise on the current global profile.

Long Term

5.3.a

Conduct market research to explore the best ways to further address the issues businesses are facing following the Covid-19 pandemic and the EU Exit period, to better shape the business support landscape in the region.

5.3.b

With the increasing focus towards a Net Zero future, there is a need to invest in green skills to equip the workforce appropriately. With stronger local supply chains, not only would this contribute to achieving Net Zero targets, it would also mitigate some of the supply chain delays referenced in the 'Perfect Storm' analysis of August's report.

5.3.c

As a continued recommendation, the focus on the green agenda underlines the need for approval for investment in the Gigafactory in Coventry & Warwickshire to help the shift towards innovation in future mobility and electrification.

5.3.d

A new Government strategy involving taxing carbon-intensive goods and subsidising zero-carbon goods would change consumer behaviour to benefit more sustainability-focused businesses and shift the market in a greener, more sustainable direction.

5.3.e

A focus on creating a 'Circular Economy' locally will serve to benefit local SMEs, whilst also helping businesses on their journey to Net Zero. An example of such behaviour can be seen with Birmingham-based company, International Synergies' ['BASIS Resource Efficiency Project'](#).

Coventry City Council also recently launched a [try-before-you-buy scheme](#), with electric cars and vans, to encourage interested businesses who were thinking of investing to see the benefits themselves. Similar schemes should be encouraged.

5.3.f

Reverse real terms funding cuts seen in 16-18 funding and provide longer term settlements for 16-18 and adult education to allow colleges and other providers to effectively plan curriculum and invest in technology to support the acquisition of skills required by the emerging green technologies and support the re-skilling of the existing workforce.

5.3.g

Through levers such as R&D tax credits and public procurement, require employers to work with their local skills providers to:

- Ensure that education and skills practitioners are brought up to date with the technology as it develops so they can keep the curriculum relevant to the changing landscape
- Provide CPD or masterclass sessions to students training in these sectors.

September 2021

Short Term

5.1.a

There is an ongoing and urgent need to address the issues raised in our 'Perfect Storm' scenario, set out in detail in last month's Smart Region report. These should importantly seek to help overcome staff shortages, both short-term and longer term, that sectors such as hospitality, caring, and logistics, are currently facing.

5.1.b

Local business support programmes must raise awareness of the merits of international market opportunities to businesses and ensure they are signposting effectively to specialist support services available through DIT, CW Growth Hub and CW Chamber etc.

5.1.c

A strategy for attracting and retaining new employees is required for many of these businesses currently struggling to recruit sufficient staff levels to fully operate. In addition, many of these positions were previously held by EU nationals who will have recently left the UK following EU Exit - support is needed for those sectors disproportionately affected by this.

5.1.d

A focus on training and reskilling, for younger workers in particular, will be needed short-term, to help with immediate problems such as emergent customer-facing situations, but also to build skills in these sectors currently facing difficult times finding suitably trained candidates to fill their vacancies. Investment in digital skills should undoubtedly be encouraged, given the number of businesses still without an active internet presence, during a time in which businesses will need to continue operating virtually in some capacity for the foreseeable future. There is also a need for investment in training and upskilling for those who are ineligible for Kickstart support.

5.1.e

Further to 5.1.d, as well as a need for more investment in upskilling – particularly those not qualifying for Kickstart or Restart, the sectors most affected by labour shortages need to work with training providers and employment support bodies and consider how they advertise vacancies and make working conditions and progression routes more attractive to encourage more people to pursue a career in those sectors.

5.1.f

Local partners and business support programmes must proactively promote the new Chamber Customs Declaration Service and appropriately raise awareness.

5.1.g

The forthcoming Spending Review needs to provide a platform to enable Coventry & Warwickshire and the wider West Midlands to deliver a sustained economic recovery. Facilitating green innovation should be a major priority, including through investment in the Coventry Airport Gigafactory and further supporting the growth of key supply chains in the region such as electric vehicles and battery technologies. The Spending Review should also provide the platform for sustaining and further enhancing the region's business, innovation and skills support ecosystem.

Medium Term

5.2.a

Given the likelihood of some form of continued homeworking for many businesses in the sub-region, an increased focus on cyber-security should be encouraged.

5.2.b

Also, with continued homeworking, employers should look to use the results of research into the working set-up/equipment/environment of their employees working from home, in an attempt to minimise any longer-term negative impacts on employees' health and wellbeing. Looking ahead, the provision of the equipment necessary to work from home will become an added expense for employers to consider. Inconsistencies in the rollout of broadband remain across Coventry & Warwickshire also need to be addressed.

5.2.c

Some sectors, such as HGV/LGV driving, have a very skewed gender balance. For example, in the UK, approximately 1% of registered truck drivers are female. A concerted effort should be made over the coming months and years to encourage greater workforce diversity, and to improve general working conditions in the sector, to encourage a wider range of applicants. This could include exploring new ways of working within the industry. As technology develops, it is likely that changes to 'last mile' delivery processes will feature more prominently and will be a key part of the re-shaping of the sector.

5.2.d

As the 'Perfect Storm' scenario of last month's Smart Region report demonstrates, the speed of the recovery is not in line with the pace at which business support measures, such as furlough, are currently being phased out. We endorse the calls of business support organisations in the sub-region, such as the FSB, regarding measures to help businesses with cash-flow and rising costs, addressing the late-payments crisis, and recognise the need to continue to raise the profile of the real-time issues our businesses are facing, as we run-up to the next Budget statement. The area's business support programmes will also maximise flexibilities where possible to help businesses tackle new challenges and opportunities that they are facing.

5.2.e

There is still a need to extend the Brexit Support Fund, both in terms of timescales but also value of support businesses can obtain, given the ongoing challenges small businesses are facing with importing and exporting (and associated cost and resource burdens).

5.2.f

The government should still consider targeted support to those sectors still facing a slow trajectory of recovery from the pandemic – these could include extensions to existing loans, top up loans, business rates relief and also bespoke business and innovation support to accelerate their recovery.

5.2.g

Strong and carefully considered PR campaigns during the autumn and winter that protect public health safety should be considered as a means of increasing both consumer and business confidence.

Long Term

5.3.a

Conduct market research to explore the best ways to further address the issues businesses are facing following the Covid-19 pandemic and the EU Exit period, in order to better shape the business support landscape in the region.

5.3.b

With COP26 approaching and an ever-increasing focus on Net Zero, there is a need to invest in green skills to equip the workforce appropriately. With stronger local supply chains, not only would this contribute to achieving Net Zero targets, it would also mitigate some of the supply chain delays referenced in the 'Perfect Storm' analysis of last month's report.

5.3.c

As a continued recommendation, the focus on the green agenda underlines the need for approval for investment in the Gigafactory in Coventry & Warwickshire. Finally, there is also a need for better charging infrastructure for electric vehicles, which should be addressed as part of longer-term strategic planning processes and will reduce the reliance on internal combustion engines.

August 2021

Short Term

5.1.a

There is an urgent need to address the issues raised in 'Perfect Storm' scenario. These should importantly seek to help overcome immediate staff shortages, both short term and longer term, that some certain sectors such as hospitality, caring, and logistics, are currently facing.

5.1.b

The recent issues with staff having to self-isolate is also proving problematic for many sectors, again including hospitality, caring, and logistics, as they already experiencing staff shortages due to the ongoing issue of difficulty recruiting new members of staff. Some previous staff members will also have moved into new occupations during the pandemic lockdown(s). A strategy for attracting and retaining new employees is required for many of these businesses currently struggling to recruit sufficient staff levels to fully operate. In addition, many of these positions were previously held by EU nationals who will have recently left the UK following EU Exit - support is needed for those sectors disproportionately affected by this.

5.1.c

An immediate effort must be made to modernise the ways these vacancies are advertised. Record numbers of vacancies are being advertised, but there are clearly difficulties recruiting into them. Jobs in sectors such as hospitality or logistics should be marketed in such a way to appeal to the most suitable candidates – and in ways that will attract new entrants into those sectors. The Logistics sector is a good example of this, traditionally roles may have focussed on warehouse work but in a rapidly changing sector many emerging logistics roles will centre more around problem-solving, programming, communications or IT.

5.1.d

Clarity and support are required for businesses around requesting proof of vaccination or a negative Covid-19 tests. This is particularly pertinent for those businesses who have just reopened in the hospitality sector, as the footfall is desperately needed, but must be balanced with the need to remain safe and as Covid-19 secure as possible. Businesses need to know what exactly constitutes a space becoming 'crowded' and the level of ventilation that is required to be safe for those indoors, as some examples, as well as suitable staff training to handle new customer situations.

5.1.e

A focus on training and reskilling for younger workers in particular will be needed short-term, to help with immediate problems such as emergent customer-facing situations, but also to build skills in these sectors currently facing difficult times finding suitably trained candidates to fill their vacancies. Investment in digital skills should

undoubtedly be encouraged, given the number of businesses still without an active internet presence, during a time in which businesses will need to continue operating virtually in some capacity for the foreseeable future.

There is also a need for investment in training and upskilling for those who are ineligible for Kickstart support.

Medium Term

5.2.a

Continue vaccine rollout and enhancing facilities for increased workplace and community-based testing, to sustain safe working environments for businesses in the region who are currently attempting to recoup their losses after the last 18 months.

5.2.b

Given the likelihood of some form of continued homeworking for many businesses in the sub-region, an increased focus on cyber-security should be encouraged. Also, with continued homeworking, employers should look to use the results of research into the working set-up/equipment/environment of their employees working from home, in an attempt to minimise any longer-term negative impacts on employees' health and wellbeing. Looking ahead, the provision of the equipment necessary to work from home will become an added expense for employers to consider. Inconsistencies in the rollout of broadband remain across Coventry & Warwickshire also need to be addressed.

5.2.c

Some sectors, such as HGV/LGV driving, have a very skewed gender balance. For example, in the UK, approximately 1% of registered truck drivers are female. A concerted effort should be made over the coming months and years to encourage greater workforce diversity, and to encourage a wider range of applicants. This could include exploring new ways of working within the industry. As technology develops, it is likely that changes to 'last mile' delivery processes will feature more prominently and will be a key part of the re-shaping of the sector.

5.2.d

As the 'Perfect Storm' scenario demonstrates, the speed of the recovery is not in line with the pace at which business support measures, such as furlough, are currently being phased out. We endorse the calls of business support organisations in the sub-region, such as the FSB, regarding measures to help businesses with cash-flow and rising costs, addressing the late-payments crisis, and recognise the need to continue to raise the profile of the real-time issues our businesses are facing, as we run-up to the next Budget statement.

Long Term

5.3.a

Conduct market research to explore the best ways to further address the issues businesses are facing following the Covid-19 pandemic and the EU Exit period, in order to better shape the business support landscape in the region.

5.3.b

As mentioned in the FSB's recent report 'Menu for Recovery', the government should consider creating Hospitality Enterprise Zones (HEZs) in England. HEZs are locally defined areas in which small businesses can receive incentives to take over vacant spaces.

5.3.c

With COP26 approaching and an ever-increasing focus on Net Zero, there is a need to invest in green skills to equip the workforce appropriately. With stronger local supply chains, not only would this contribute to achieving Net Zero targets, it would also mitigate some of the supply chain delays referenced earlier in the 'Perfect Storm' analysis.

5.3.d

The focus on the green agenda underlines the need for approval for investment in the Gigafactory in Coventry & Warwickshire. Finally, there is also a need for better charging infrastructure for electric vehicles, which should be addressed as part of longer-term strategic planning processes.

July 2021

Short Term

5.1.a

In response to issues raised in the 'Perfect Storm' analysis (Section 3), local leaders should identify any further additional actions that could be quickly implemented to further assist and support local businesses in the current economic climate.

5.1.b

Following the Government's recent announcement around the new Hospitality Strategy, more clarity is required on the tangible outcomes of the strategy Taskforce. Business support organisations will require a clearer idea of what the Government wants the future of hospitality and tourism to look like and the type of wraparound support that should be available in the short (as well as medium and long) terms.

5.1.c

There is an urgent need to address the staff shortages, both short-term and longer term, that the hospitality sector is currently facing. In the shorter term, the current issues with staff having to self-isolate is particularly problematic for the hospitality sector, as they already experiencing staff shortages due to the ongoing issue of difficulty recruiting new members of staff. Many previous staff members had moved on to different sectors during the pandemic lockdown(s) and the prospect of a job in the hospitality sector might now be seen to be less stable than one in another sector, or less fitting with personal circumstances. A strategy for attracting and retaining new employees is required for many hospitality businesses currently struggling to recruit sufficient staff levels to fully operate. This recent news story from Coombe Abbey, highlights these concerns.

5.1.d

Clarity and support are required for businesses around requesting proof of vaccination or a negative covid-19 test before permitting the public to enter certain venues. This is particularly pertinent for those businesses who have just reopened in the hospitality sector, as the footfall is desperately needed, but must be balanced with the need to remain safe and as Covid-secure as possible. Businesses need to know what exactly constitutes a space becoming 'crowded' and the level of ventilation that is required to be safe for those indoors, as some examples, as well as suitable staff training to handle new customer situations.

5.1.e

Given the lockdown continued further into 2021 than envisaged, there remains the potential for increasing unemployment in the summer and later this year - with further rounds of redundancies possible as the employment support schemes finally end, and there is a tail-off for hospitality businesses after the peak season, even if this is extended into the autumn. Partners in the region can support enhanced promotion of the Employment Solutions portal, supported by CWLEP and other local

partners, to promote current and future job opportunities to both local jobseekers and employers. Visit cwemploymentsolutions.co.uk/

5.1.f

A focus on training and reskilling for younger workers in particular will be needed short-term, to help reduce unemployment levels over the summer and later this year. Investment in digital skills should be encouraged, given the large number of businesses still without an active internet presence, during a time in which businesses will need to continue operating virtually in some capacity for the foreseeable future. A specific focus should also be placed on those in need of training who are ineligible for Kickstart.

5.1.g

We have a clear opportunity throughout the rest of the summer and autumn 2021 to restart the visitor economy, especially with the commencement of the City of Culture programme since mid-May. A clear strategy on how to navigate the potential barriers, such as the current international travel restrictions, will ensure that the move towards our local economic recovery is not unnecessarily stifled. A locally focused consumer confidence campaign could help to boost tourism in the CW economy, as we move out of this phase of the pandemic.

5.1.h

Support FSB's call for customers to respect the "House Rules" which many businesses have had to implement to allow for a safe reopening, especially those in the hospitality sector. 5.1.i Consider a recognised extension to the more usual tourism season in order to give tourism and hospitality businesses as much opportunity as possible to recover some of their losses from earlier in the pandemic.

Medium Term

5.2.a

Further to 5.1.f, a new strategy is required to encourage visitors to stay in tourist spots for longer periods of time. There is a difference between the spend generated by international visitors, as opposed to domestic visitors who should be encouraged to stay longer and spend more, to help to start to make up this shortfall.

5.2.b

Consider maintaining the 5% VAT level for tourism/hospitality businesses until at least April 2022, to give these businesses the best chance of survival/success possible, as called for by the FSB and other business support organisations.

5.2.c

Continue vaccine rollout and enhancing facilities for increased regular workplace and community-based testing, to sustain safe working environments for businesses in the region.

5.2.d

Better promotion of local, regional, national, and international initiatives and opportunities to expand trading relationships within the UK and helping to better utilise UK suppliers, in addition to highlighting the benefits of expanding markets globally. Services such as Coventry & Warwickshire's FinditinCW can help businesses to find new suppliers locally and build relationships.

5.2.e

Work alongside banks/lenders and other financial and business support institutions to explore ways to relieve the volume of debt in all sectors. This will ensure diversification, investment, and growth are not held back for longer than necessary.

5.2.f

Given the likelihood of some form of continued homeworking for many businesses in the sub-region, an increased focus on cyber-security should be encouraged. Also, as a result of continued homeworking, employers should look to conduct research into the working set-up/equipment/environment of their employees working from home, in an attempt to minimise any longer-term negative impacts on their employees' health and wellbeing. Looking ahead, the provision of the equipment necessary to work from home will become an added expense for employers to consider. Inconsistencies in the rollout of broadband remain across Coventry & Warwickshire, which also needs to be addressed.

5.2.g

As mentioned in the FSB's recent report 'Menu for Recovery', the government may wish to create Hospitality Enterprise Zones (HEZs) in England. HEZs are locally defined areas in which small businesses can receive incentives to take over vacant spaces. They would be centrally funded through the Shared Prosperity Fund and locally delivered by LEPs.

Long Term

5.3.a

Conduct market research to explore the best ways to further address the issues businesses are facing following Covid-19 and post EU Transition period.

5.3.b

Drive and support initiatives to upskill the workforce, to promote diversification and boost the labour market in many sectors as the reset of the local economy occurs, including the promotion of 'good work' opportunities and sustainable growth which reduces economic inequalities. A focus on training and reskilling for all age groups will be needed long-term, to help reduce unemployment levels post-pandemic.

5.3.c

Create and implement a clear and compelling presence for 'Coventry & Warwickshire' to showcase the offer from our local area, to be used to attract future inward investment to the sub-region and deliver against our Strategic Reset Strategy.

Building a strong and consistent branding and messaging style will help to strengthen the presence for Coventry & Warwickshire.

5.3.d

To further help businesses survive and grow, further investment in innovation is required. It is apparent from the last 12-18 months the positive effect that diversification can have on a business that might otherwise have struggled, therefore, this should be encouraged where possible.

June 2021

Short Term

4.1.a

Clarification is needed for businesses due to open at the final stage of the Government's Roadmap (now no earlier than 19th July). It should be noted that for seasonal businesses, such as events and weddings, these delays may have a bigger impact than expected, due to the peak-summer timing. Further detail on the steps these businesses need to take in the lead up to 19th July and thereafter is necessary. In addition, there is a need to continue developing contingencies should the final step in the roadmap be further delayed due to insufficient progress with reducing Covid-19 cases and hospitalisations, and the roll-out of vaccinations. There is also a need for a contingency plan should there be another wave of infections, postlockdown lifting, as we head through the rest of the summer towards the autumn.

4.1.b

Further support is necessary for businesses in relation to EU trading arrangements. Based on feedback from Coventry & Warwickshire businesses through surveys and account management, it is clear they continue to need specific support and clarity around future trading with the EU. Businesses should be encouraged to engage with local organisations, such as Growth Hubs, Chamber of Commerce, and DIT to access support around EU trading.

4.1.c

Local and national campaigns to spread more prompt messaging around the costs and practicalities associated with trading with the EU. This should include up-to-date waiting times at ports/crossings, as well as the required taxes/tariffs that have been levied to businesses and customers. The following topics need immediate attention:

- IP
- Data regulations
- Upskilling the workforce in customs declarations/processes.
- Supply chains/raw materials

4.1.d

With the current lockdown restrictions continuing further into 2021 there remains the potential for increasing unemployment later in the summer - with further rounds of redundancies possible as the employment support schemes finally ends. Partners in the region can support enhanced promotion of the Employment Solutions portal, supported by CWLEP and other local partners, to promote current and future job opportunities to both local jobseekers and employers. Visit cwemploymentsolutions.co.uk/ The uncertainty around furlough ending, and further potential job losses, adds to the anxiety being felt by some groups of employees across the labour market. Appropriate resources should be made available to minimise the impact on employees' mental health.

4.1.e

A focus on training and reskilling for younger workers in particular will be needed short-term, to help reduce unemployment levels post-pandemic. Gig workers of all ages may also need support reskilling in the short term, as for some it is unlikely the demand for their services will consistently reach pre-pandemic levels once restrictions are lifted. Particular investment around digital skills should be encouraged, given the large number of businesses still without an active internet presence, during a time in which businesses will need to continue operating virtually in some capacity for the foreseeable future.

4.1.f

We have a clear opportunity during the late spring and throughout the summer 2021 to restart the visitor economy, especially with the commencement of the City of Culture programme from mid-May. A clear strategy on how to navigate the potential barriers, such as the current international travel restrictions, will ensure that the move towards our local economic recovery is not unnecessarily stifled. A locally focused consumer confidence campaign could help to boost tourism in the CW economy, as we move out of this phase of the pandemic.

4.1.g

With details now appearing around the new Levelling-Up Fund and the Community Renewal Fund, local stakeholders in Coventry & Warwickshire should establish a compelling and exciting range of projects for submission to Government so we get the best we can for Coventry & Warwickshire.

4.1.h

There is an urgent need to tackle the gap in funding for those ineligible for government financial support, such as those recently self-employed.

4.1.i

Regardless of whether employees continue working from home or return to a workplace environment, there is a likelihood we will see heightened levels of both anxiety or isolation across the workforce - employers, business leaders and stakeholders should be aware of this changing situation as the economy re-opens further. Attention should be drawn to existing resources to help workers with their mental health. For example, the FSB have a Wellbeing Hub, Mind have set up resources to help employers, and the CIPD's article on Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace and the Midlands Health and Productivity Pilot add to the accessible resources.

4.1.j

HR professionals are encouraged to take part in research underway by the Midlands Engine Mental Health and Productivity Pilot to share their thoughts on how Covid-19 has affected long-term sick leave in workplaces, and to help inform future policy.

Medium Term

4.2.a

Rollout of broadband - inconsistencies remain across Coventry & Warwickshire and investment in skills to improve computing and digital skills within the CW labour market will be critical to help employees and consumers, as well as businesses, adapt to modern technologies to expand new and existing trading relationships.

4.2.b

Continue vaccine rollout and enhancing facilities for increased regular workplace and community-based testing, to sustain safe working environments for businesses in the region.

4.2.c

Better promotion of local, regional, national, and international initiatives and opportunities to expand trading relationships within the UK and helping to better utilise UK suppliers, in addition to highlighting the benefits of expanding markets globally. Services such as Coventry & Warwickshire's FinditinCW can help businesses to find new suppliers locally and build relationships.

4.2.d

Work alongside banks/lenders and other financial and business support institutions to explore ways to relieve the volume of debt in all sectors. This will ensure diversification, investment, and growth are not held back for longer than necessary.

4.2.e

Greater clarity is needed on the future funding for business support infrastructure following the end of the transition period with the EU. In addition, firmer commitment to business support funding, not only for Growth Hubs but the wider local support landscape, would also allow for more effective planning for the long-term business support infrastructure in the region.

4.2.f

Effectively monitor and evaluate the amount of existing and future employment land, to ensure that there is a range of stock available for all sizes and sectors, to help with the economic recovery from Covid-19.

4.2.g

Clarity is needed on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and its potential impact on Coventry & Warwickshire. Local partners and stakeholders should ensure that Coventry & Warwickshire benefits from the fund to the best it can, as the details become known.

4.2.h

Develop innovative ways of utilising empty retail and larger commercial property space particularly in town centres, as there is a shift in the availability of premises due to the restrictions and challenges that the sector has faced.

4.2.i

Given the likelihood of some form of continued homeworking for many businesses in the sub-region, an increased focus on cyber-security should be encouraged.

4.2.j

As a result of continued homeworking, employers must look to conduct research into the working set-up/equipment/environment of their employees working from home, in an attempt to minimise long-term implications on their employees' health and wellbeing. Looking ahead, the provision of the equipment necessary to work from home will become an added expense for employers to consider.

Long Term

4.3.a

Conduct market research to explore the best ways to further address the issues businesses are facing following Covid-19 and post EU Transition period.

4.3.b

Drive and support initiatives to upskill the workforce, to promote diversification and boost the labour market in many sectors as the reset of the local economy occurs, including the promotion of 'good work' opportunities and sustainable growth which reduces economic inequalities. A focus on training and reskilling for all age groups will be needed long-term, to help reduce unemployment levels post-pandemic.

4.3.c

Create and implement a clear and compelling presence for 'Coventry & Warwickshire' to showcase the offer from our local area, to be used to attract future inward investment to the sub-region and deliver against our Strategic Reset Strategy. Building a strong and consistent branding and messaging style will help to strengthen the presence for Coventry & Warwickshire.

4.3.d

Recognise and plan for a range of opportunities which will help to address market need for employment space, ensuring that there is a good supply of space available, for all sectors and all sizes in the economy throughout Coventry & Warwickshire. This will help the recovery from Covid-19 and allow business start-up, expansions, and inward investment.

4.3.e

The New Economics Foundation (NEF) recommends improving the provision of tailored necessary advice services for self-employed workers, taking some of the burden off existing general advice services over the medium to long term.

4.3.f

To further help businesses survive and grow, further investment in innovation is required. It is apparent from the last 12-18 months the positive effect that diversification can have on a business that might otherwise have struggled, therefore, this should be encouraged where possible.

May 2021

Short Term

5.1.a

Clarification is needed for businesses due to open at the final stage of the Government's Roadmap (no earlier than the 21st of June). Some ambiguities highlighted with the re-opening measures to date. In addition, there is a need to continue developing contingencies should any of the next steps in the roadmap be delayed due to insufficient progress with reducing Covid-19 cases and hospitalisations, the roll-out of vaccinations, and controlling the emergence of new variants.

5.1.b

Further support is necessary for businesses in relation to EU trading arrangements. Based on feedback from Coventry & Warwickshire businesses through surveys and account management, it is clear they continue to need specific support and clarity around future trading with the EU. Businesses should be encouraged to engage with local organisations, such as CW Growth Hub, CW Chamber of Commerce, and DIT to access support around EU trading, including a range of upcoming clinics focusing on import, movement of people and VAT (See local events at: cwgrowthhub.co.uk/events).

5.1.c

Following the lockdown restrictions, 2021 is likely to see increasing unemployment later in the summer - with further rounds of redundancies expected as the employment support schemes ends. Partners in the region can support enhanced promotion of the Employment Solutions portal, supported by CWLEP and other local partners, to promote current and future job opportunities to both local jobseekers and employers. Visit cwemploymentsolutions.co.uk/

5.1.d

A focus on training and reskilling for younger workers in particular will be needed short-term, to help reduce unemployment levels post-pandemic. Reskilling workers in low carbon and digital sectors is a key recommendation, given the shift towards increasing numbers of green jobs in a more sustainable economy.

5.1.e

We have a clear opportunity during the late spring and throughout the summer 2021 to restart the visitor economy, especially with the recent commencement of the City of Culture programme. A clear strategy on how to navigate the potential barriers, such as the current international travel restrictions, will ensure that the move towards our local economic recovery is not unnecessarily stifled. A locally focused consumer confidence campaign could help to boost tourism in the CW economy, during the next phase of the pandemic.

5.1.f

There is an urgent need to tackle the gap in funding for those ineligible for government financial support, such as those recently self-employed.

5.1.g

As highlighted in the CWLEP's Strategic Reset Framework Implementation Plan (Pillar 3), there is a need to support the Electrification Taskforce to drive forward the region's lead on the country's electrification revolution and ensure future energy supply and distribution needs. Additional charging points infrastructure for electric vehicles are a priority for Coventry & Warwickshire, to encourage potential consumers to make the switch. In addition to personal electric vehicles, we should also encourage continuation of the introduction of all electric fleets of public transport in the area.

5.1.h

Further investment in cycling and pedestrian routes in our towns and cities is recommended, including the use of segregated cycle lanes. Post-lockdown, this could increase footfall in our town and city centres, including as office workers return. This would become an important step not only for the low-carbon initiative, but also for the recovery of the local economy.

5.1.i

Businesses should be encouraged to take advantage of the existing business support in place, such as the Coventry & Warwickshire Green Business Network when looking to improve the sustainability of their business, to take inspiration and influence from peers who have undertaken similar transformations. Businesses can utilise experience of others in the reduction of businesses' water and energy consumption, plus making supply chains greener. The national Peer Networks initiative is also operating in Coventry & Warwickshire, with one cohort specifically targeted at those businesses in the Environmental and Sustainability sector. Learning and developing with peers is highly likely to increase the rate of change within the business community, increasing good practice, and encouraging innovation and the sharing of ideas.

Medium Term

5.2.a

Following the declaration of a Climate Emergency from all local councils in Coventry & Warwickshire in 2019, a clear strategy to tackle this is required, with targets and milestones set.

5.2.b

Rollout of broadband - inconsistencies are still present across Coventry & Warwickshire. Investment in skills to improve computing and digital skills within the CW labour market will be critical to help employees and consumers, as well as businesses, adapt to modern technologies to expand trading relationships and establish new ones. The rollout of 5G would also help reduce emissions and unnecessary travel, combining the need for investment in both the digital and green agendas.

5.2.c

Continue to level-up on vaccine rollout and facilities for increased regular workplace and community-based testing, to sustain safe working environments for businesses in the region. Also, continue to make available Mobile Testing Units (MTUs), when local outbreaks occur. This will particularly help reduce potential disruption to local businesses.

5.2.d

Work alongside banks/lenders and other financial and business support institutions to explore ways to relieve the volume of debt in all sectors. This will ensure diversification, investment, and growth are not held back for longer than necessary.

5.2.e

Greater clarity is needed on the future funding for business support infrastructure following the end of the transition period with the EU. In addition, firmer commitment to business support funding, not only for Growth Hubs but the wider local support landscape, would also allow for more effective planning for the long-term business support infrastructure in the region.

5.2.f

Clarity is needed on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and its potential impact on Coventry & Warwickshire. Local partners and stakeholders should ensure that Coventry & Warwickshire benefits from the fund to the best it can, as the details become known.

5.2.g

Develop innovative ways of utilising empty retail and larger commercial property space particularly in town centres, as there is a shift in the availability of premises due to the restrictions and challenges that the sector has faced. For the future, it should also be encouraged that renewable energy and digital infrastructure are at the forefront of planning policy and decisions.

5.2.h

A focus on 'Good Jobs and Levelling-Up Opportunities', as detailed in CWLEP's Strategic Reset Framework Pillars, will help promote job quality and security along with improved employment rights, in turn strengthening our local economy.

5.2.i

Significant investment in the Very Light Rail and tram networks in the West Midlands on a wider scale will add to the region's ability to compete with other major cities and regions across the country and globally.

Long Term

5.3.a

Conduct market research to explore the best ways to further address the issues businesses are facing following Covid-19 and post EU Transition period.

5.3.b

Drive and support initiatives to upskill the workforce, to promote diversification and boost the labour market in many sectors as the reset of the local economy occurs, including the promotion of 'good work' opportunities and sustainable growth to reduce economic inequalities. A focus on training and reskilling for all age groups will be needed long-term, to help reduce unemployment levels post-pandemic.

5.3.c

Create and implement a clear and compelling presence for 'Coventry & Warwickshire' to showcase the offer from our local area, to be used to attract future inward investment to the sub-region and deliver against our Strategic Reset Strategy. Building a strong and consistent branding and messaging style will help to strengthen the investment proposition for Coventry & Warwickshire.

5.3.d

Recognise and plan for a range of opportunities which will help to address market need for employment space, ensuring that there is a good supply of space available throughout Coventry & Warwickshire. This will help the recovery from Covid-19 and allow business start-up, expansions, and inward investment.

5.3.e

Helping businesses to manage waste in an environmentally conscious manner is a key long-term recommendation; for example, considering how to reuse construction waste would help to create a strong sustainable construction sector locally.

5.3.f

Greater investment into VLR and other forms of sustainable transport, as well as green supply chains, is a long-term recommendation to achieve a real step-change in Coventry & Warwickshire's transport infrastructure and use.