Report of the Chief Executive

ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN- DATA GATHERING

1.   Purpose of report

To update members of the Committee on the Councils' proposed Data gathering exercise to feed into the wider Economic Recovery Plan for businesses post Covid-19.

2.   Background

Any response to this situation needs to be carefully considered, well thought out and sensibly planned to ensure the greatest benefit to all our businesses. Whilst we all may have an idea, or think we know what the main issues are with regard to the businesses within the Borough, in reality we need to go obtain this information directly from the businesses themselves. The only way to do this is to go out and ask every business within Broxtowe what are the main issues affecting them, record the data, asses and trends, and then react appropriately with any support we may be able to offer. This process, if carried out thoroughly, will not be quick, will be resource intensive, and in order to achieve this several stages need to be undertaken.

3.   Financial implications

Following discussions with other Council staff it is estimated that 20-25 phone calls can be made a day, by one member of staff, and the results inputted into databases. Considering there are approximately 2500 companies this would take a considerable amount of time. The Economic Development section do not have the resources to carry out this work, and consequently extra staff will be required. Essentially the more resources we have, then the quicker this task can be completed. For example, 3 staff at 20 calls a day would get data from approximately 1200 companies in a month, so this work is completed in about 2 months. Therefore, if this task is due to be completed within a month then 6 FTS or equivalent would be required.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to APPROVE the approach to data gathering and allocate resources accordingly.

Background papers
Nil

Suggested approach for how this may work

Stage 1: Contact all the Businesses.

All the businesses in the Borough shall be contacted, which is some 2500 registered businesses, excluding those that do not pay rates or are working from home. All of the businesses need to be asked the same generic questions, in order to properly draw comparisons and assess any trends across the Borough. The Council shall attempt to contact every business, with the intention of getting responses from 80% or higher. Various methods will be used to obtain this data, and it shall be widely published on social media, but the majority of the evidence gathering may have to be carried out by phone calls directly to the businesses.

Below is a proposed list of questions intended to gather suitable information to enable the Council to assess what support to give, and to whom.

(Please see summary of responses received thus far, sent out prior to this meeting).

Proposed Questions:
Are you currently operational as a business?
If yes - [If yes or Partially] have you made any changes to your operations pre-covid and what are they?
[If no] What is preventing you from being operational?
Do you have staff? [If yes] How many? Have all of them returned?
How does your business plan to get back on track with your business plan and do you think this can be done in 6-9 months? If not, how long? If no - is this immediately an issue?
How do you think this pandemic will affect your business longer term?
Are you aware of the relevant guidance available to you and how much has it cost to put this into operation?
Do you think these changes will affect the long term viability of the company?
Taking ALL financial support aside, what support do you think you would benefit from if it were available.?
Are overheads / bills the main financial issue?

5 business elements we need to attempt to cover are

Operations and warehousing
Staff
Finance longer term
Supply
Demand (Customers)

Stage 2: Collate data & assess trends.
All of the data from stage 1 will have to be put into databases and spreadsheets and then any correlations or trends outlined therefrom. These trends and correlations can then be reported back to the J and E committee for further discussion.

Stage 3: Decide next steps.
Following analysis of the data the Council can decide what areas to address. A plan or strategy can then be drawn up to assess what support is given to which companies and how this process will be managed. The results may inform specific and thematic actions.

Stage 4: Monitor outputs and react.

It is important once funding/support is given out that the outputs are carefully measured and their impact (positive or negative) is assessed. Then any strategy, funding, support or mechanisms that are still in place are amended if relevant to do so.

Stage 5: Conclusion
A final assessment of the overall programme is carried out.

It is proposed to use internal resources to undertake this work, if necessary using redeployed or volunteer labour.

The Economic Development Team can coordinate this work, but will need the additional resources in staff time to actually implement it.