

Milton Keynes Council

Covid19 Economic Recovery Action Plan

The combination of a pandemic and a recession will pose great difficulties for the economy and people of Milton Keynes. In July 2020 we published our Covid19 Strategic Recovery Framework in [which we outlined](#) the actions the council and its partners would take to support a successful recovery¹. We allocated an overall recovery budget to the Framework of £3.41 million and ring-fenced £2.25 million of this specifically for economic recovery. We are clear in the Framework that that we will strive for a recovery that contributes to the key council priorities of A Green Economy, Tackling Child Poverty, and Addressing Inequality.

The burden of recession often falls disproportionately on the poorest and most vulnerable in society. It is reasonable to assume that the impact of the coming recession will not be any different. The current situation in Milton Keynes shows a challenging picture. The latest statistics (30 June 2020) showed 40,800 (28%) employees were furloughed. In July 2020, the number of people unemployed was 10,750 - a rate of 6.3% and an increase of 7,250 individuals on July 2019. The number of young claimants aged 18-24 rose from 545 to 1,945 over the same 12-month period. Covid-19 is also having a disproportionate impact on women, particularly those in lower income brackets, as jobs in sectors where women are overrepresented (e.g. retail and accommodation) are more likely to disappear. Unfortunately, we know that as the Furlough scheme ends and as the recession proceeds this picture is likely to worsen.

About this action plan

The council's refocused Economy team has worked with the business community and other partners to create a set of focused projects that are to be funded through the £2.25 million economic recovery budget. These include urgent activity to support businesses and help people into work, including dedicated action to support young people and women. The Action Plan also includes longer-term activity to build confidence and secure investment in the city and drive green economic growth and the innovation economy. It is organised into three areas of focus:

- Supporting MK's People
- Supporting MK's Businesses
- Supporting our City

We have reserved some of the economic recovery budget for a further business support funding round that will take place within the next six months. This will give time to develop promising projects further and provide the flexibility and capacity to respond to future needs as they emerge. Within the same timescale we will also launch a 'Green Business Recovery Fund', which will allocate a total of £500,000 to schemes which support MK Businesses and encourage and develop green practices.

¹ <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/your-council-and-elections/covid-19-in-milton-keynes/covid-19-recovery-framework>

SUPPORTING MK'S PEOPLE

Restart - the immediate actions we're taking:

Supporting those most at risk of being out of work, such as women and young people

P1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Implement a city-wide network of one-to-one support for young people not in education, employment or training, working with MK College who will coordinate partners across the city.
P2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Provide information and advice to help young people into work and help them understand their career pathways, apprenticeships and traineeships. This will include boosting the work of the council's Information, Advice and Guidance Team, funding practical interventions to support young people to overcome barriers into work and supporting Worktree to deliver their employer encounters within MK schools through virtual means.
P3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: As part of our partnering with local voluntary organisations in the employment and training sector, support Works for Us to develop their services to deliver additional, targeted support to women who are unemployed, and to increase digital access.
P4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Support those without digital access through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Citizens:MK project to reduce digital poverty among vulnerable groups - Works for Us project with those digitally excluded

Urgently review the Council's Neighbourhood Employment Programme to transform its ability to support people back into work

P5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Strengthen the ability of the Neighbourhood Employment Programme to deal with increased demand from people experiencing worklessness, working closely with local employers. Complete a review of the programme by end September 2020 and, working with other partners, develop a programme of practical support to help people back into work.
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Restore - medium term restoration activity:

Assisting people with training and reskilling, with a focus on groups that find themselves at most disadvantage including women

P6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Fund MK College to establish a city-wide 'Restart network' to offer a range of individualised and practical support to help those most in need back into the workplace. Continue to work with SEMLEP and Businesses to develop a complementary practical skills programme to retrain and reskill unemployed and under employed people within MK.
P7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Work with Cranfield University to deliver the MK:U Education Accelerator in Central Milton Keynes three years ahead of the opening of the main campus. From April 2021, this will enable MK:U to pilot test four of its courses to 500 students.
P8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Working with Cultural Sector partners (including AHA-MK, MK Gallery, Milton Keynes Arts Centre, The Stables/IF and Bletchley Park) create an inclusive programme of six Cultural Sector Traineeships and two Cultural Sector Apprenticeships to provide pathways into the cultural sector for young people.

Renew - long-term renewal and structural change:

Assisting people with training and reskilling, with a focus on groups that find themselves at most disadvantage including women

P9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Work with partners to help deliver major long-term projects to create the skills pipeline to support the future MK economy; the new university MK:U, (MK College) Institute of Technology & the Learning 2050 programme.
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P10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Working with partners and with the Carers Partnership Board, remove the barriers some carers face in accessing paid employment.
P11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Work with childcare providers, schools and other organisations to ensure safe, affordable childcare places and raise awareness of the current funded two, three and four-year old childcare provision with parents.
P12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Through the Council's economic development work, encourage employers to offer flexible and child friendly working, highlighting the benefits and best practice.
Whilst building council housing, promote local skills through apprenticeships and create local jobs by using local supply chains	
P13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Use our ambitious council housing programme to support apprenticeships for local people and, as far as possible, use local supply chains. Ensure our investment not only supports local people through the provision of homes, but also supports the local economy.

SUPPORTING MK'S BUSINESSES

Restart- the immediate actions we're taking:

Helping businesses to prepare and adapt under the new requirements of social distancing, increasing resilience for future changes, new ways of working, and supporting green transformation

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| B1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action – Continue to provide clear and concise advice to business about changes to government regulations and guidance, ensuring businesses can focus on what they do best. |
| B2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Continue to provide a fast-tracked licencing process for local cafes, restaurants, pubs and bars to trade outside, waiving fees for licenses for outdoor tables and chairs as part of our work to open High Streets Safely. |

Supporting MK's high streets and the safe reopening of city and town centres, responding to changes to the retail and leisure sectors

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| B3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Continue to use Reopening High Street Safely funding to improve confidence in our high streets, taking action including creating pedestrian zones, and removing street clutter. |
| B4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Allocate funding to work with city and town centres across the borough on projects which support the continued recovery of our high streets. |
| B5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Continue to work in partnership with My Milton Keynes to improve Central Milton Keynes as a business location. |
| B6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Bid to government (submitted in August 2020) to secure early grant project funding of £1m to deliver initial schemes for Bletchley and Fenny Stratford, as part of the Towns Deal process. Submission covered the provision of new Redway links for Bletchley and works to prepare the former Bletchley Fire Station site for redevelopment, a programme which will be delivered by the end of March 2021. (COMPLETED) |

Ensuring local businesses can access existing support and the new programmes that will be developed

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| B7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Continue to deliver government programmes of financial support to eligible businesses and explore, wherever practical and financially possible, options for locally extending schemes of support. |
| B8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Extend discretionary business rates relief to cultural and arts organisations with a rateable value of more than £51,000. (COMPLETED) |

Helping business prepare for the end of the transition period for leaving the EU trade zone

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| B9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Working with the MK Business Resilience Forum and SEMLEP, continue to provide information and guidance to MK's businesses to prepare for leaving the EU trade zone. |
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Restore - medium term restoration activity:

Supporting new start-ups, as well as existing businesses, and strengthening local supply chain activity.

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| B10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Working with the Federation of Small Businesses, develop a subsidised membership package for small businesses in Milton Keynes, providing them with access to legal, tax and employment law support along with many other resources that will help them through the Covid-19 crisis. |
| B11 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Provide funding to the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership to deliver additional business recovery and support schemes specifically for Milton Keynes. Specific programmes to be investigated include enhancing the Peer to Peer Network programme and the forthcoming SME Recovery and Resilience fund to ensure more SME's in MK are supported through these programmes than would have been otherwise. |

B12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Support new start-ups in Milton Keynes by running a programme of virtual events over the next year with the Pop-up Business School in Milton Keynes, giving practical help and advice to aspiring entrepreneurs.
B13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Develop a support scheme for businesses in the Care sector
Creating a business environment for innovation and success	
B14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Support the work of First Base who are investing £200 million to transform the Saxon Court site into a tech and innovation hub with up to 220,000 sq ft of flexible workspace alongside 215 high quality new homes.
B15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the successful SEMLEP bid announced in July, continue working with Cranfield University to deliver the MK:U Innovation Hub, known as the Smart City Living Lab (SCLL), to provide support to scale start-up businesses. The SCLL will open in October 2023 in Central Milton Keynes and will focus on smart city technologies.
B16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Accelerate the provision of a 5G test network to support innovation in commercial and public services, completing network installation by March 2021.
B17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Work with Connected Places Catapult to create a programme for start-ups and SMEs developing 5G-enabled technology, to be launched in September 2020.
B18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Lobby government by end September 2020 for a change in the tax system that levels the playing field for physical traders.
B19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Publish a review highlighting Milton Keynes as a prime location for jobs and investment in digital, artificial intelligence and robotics by end September 2020.
B20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Support the Tech and Artificial Intelligence meet up communities within Milton Keynes by allocating funding to a 'Wonder Lab' hub for tech entrepreneurs (which will have a virtual and physical presence) and the MK Artificial Intelligence Development programme that will deliver practical AI learning sessions to develop skills in the industries of the future.
B21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Create MK Business Ambassadors scheme to support engagement with existing and prospective businesses and investors to understand their needs and promote the Milton Keynes opportunity
Renew- long-term renewal and structural change:	
Leading the council's effort to grow the Green Economy and encourage green business practices, including remote working	
B22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Encourage the development of the green economy in MK by launching a 'Green Business Recovery Fund', which will allocate funding to schemes which support MK Businesses and encourage and develop green practices.
B23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Fund a Green apprenticeship scheme for 8-10 participants to build skills in practical conservation and landscaping management.
B24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Collaborate with CityFibre to support all strands of MK communities in accessing a gigabit full fibre network that will see them thrive both socially and economically.
B25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Continue to work with Openreach to deliver the existing BDUK schemes whilst identifying other options to extend the reach of fibre networks and superfast broadband across the Borough.

SUPPORTING OUR CITY

Restart- the immediate actions we're taking:

Promote walking and cycling, including renewing and extending the Redways, to provide viable alternatives to the car for work and leisure journeys

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| C1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Use Emergency Active Travel Funding to provide safer walking and cycling environments, with a commitment to installing 250 bike racks to promote cycling. |
| C2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Deliver small scale access to bikes project (potential initiative to improve access to bikes and e bikes for people by operating a bike loan scheme) in 2020/21. Investigate the potential for additional funding to scale up and deliver by end of 2020. |

Restore- medium term restoration activity:

Securing funding for city scale investment and growth projects

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| C3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Support Santander's development of their flagship UK technology hub that represents an investment of over £150m and will be home to over 6,000 employees. |
| C4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Securing £95m of government grant to provide essential infrastructure in the MK East development which can then be recycled to support future development in the City. |
| C5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Take forwards South East MK Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) by April 2021. |

Renew- long-term renewal and structural change:

Integrating carbon reduction and green objectives into place-based economic initiatives

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| C6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Deliver 5 year £165 million investment programme across MK Council housing stock to provide homes which deliver affordable warmth, alleviate fuel poverty and lower carbon emissions. Upgrade all fuel-poor homes to an Energy Performance Rating (EPC) Band C by 2035, upgrading components such as doors, windows, roofs, insulation, and installing energy efficient heating systems. We have allocated £50m over the next 3 years to retrofit our assets with new and evolving green technology in line with our ambitions to become a carbon neutral city by 2030 and carbon negative by 2050. |
| C7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Work with partners ENGIE to improve the energy performance of MK Council's sheltered housing stock through new and evolving technologies that provide cleaner renewable energy, such as air sourced heat pumps and solar voltaics. |
| C8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Set out plan to deliver the expansion of the Milton Keynes Waste Recovery Park into a wider Resource Campus that will deliver a green, low carbon, cyclical economy by treating waste as a resource, extracting recycling and creating green energy that can be used as a renewable fuel for the Authority fleet and wider industrial usage. |
| C9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Create local energy centre to provide green energy to homes within the regeneration programme on the Lakes Estate. |
| C10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Undertake a pilot study with Local Partnerships on a scheme for householder incentives for improving the energy performance of homes. |

Inward investment and place marketing, including opportunities linked to SEMLEP and the Oxford to Cambridge Arc

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| C11 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Cement MK's role as a key player in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, making the case for investment in key infrastructure in MK and the Arc, such as the electrification of East West Rail and the delivery of MK:U. |
| C12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Work with Cranfield University to seek funding from Government for the development of £400m MK:U main build project, a critical intervention in the MK skills environment. |

Bringing forward significant place shaping schemes including MKC's Renaissance CMK project, the Towns Deal focus in Bletchley, and a Local Housing Company	
C13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Progress CMK Investment Framework to demonstrate the strength of our city centre offer and opportunities, including bringing forward plans to improve Station Square and CMK market. Promote Milton Keynes as a place to invest, create and relocate sustainable jobs and investment, working with land and property owners.
C14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Work with MK Development Partnership to determine and progress a preferred option for the CMK market that will improve the layout, generate more activity and a greater variety of stalls whilst preserving the market's existing essence and strengths.
C15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Create business plan with MK Development Partnership by end November 2020 for a council-owned housing development company to build genuinely affordable housing.
C16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Working with Bletchley/Fenny Stratford Town Deal Board, submit to government a Town Investment Plan by end of October 2020.
C17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Support MK College with their plans to establish during 2020/21 an Institute of Technology in Bletchley.
C18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Seek to secure proper funding for growth and infrastructure through a 'deal' with Government and /or a partnership with Homes England.
Promoting neighbourhood economies in which local shops, services and facilities can be easily accessed by those working and learning at home	
C19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Take forwards the principle of supporting and allocating well located spaces (those which minimise the need to travel and promote sustainable travel) for local services and community facilities in new and existing developments into the next local plan.
C20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Take forward the principles of delivering co-located public services and community spaces that are fully inclusive and accessible for the whole community where the needs of everyone are considered from the outset, in the Council's Community Led Regeneration and Estates Renewal Strategy, which will be taken forwards for formal decision in October.
Transforming MK's transport system, to embed MKC's commitment to becoming the greenest and most sustainable city and provide viable alternatives to the car.	
C21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Develop an ambitious programme to dedicate £500k of the Council's Covid 19 Recovery Framework allocation to sustainable transport schemes, including those that promote cycling and walking to be taken to Delegated Decision in September 2020.
C22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Launch a multi-operator e-scooter scheme in Summer 2020 to support new sustainable modes of transport and animate the Redways.