

Reinvigorate and Repurpose

An action plan for Gloucester's Economic Recovery post COVID-19

25 June 2020

Introduction

Gloucester is a growing, successful city, home to enterprising and creative people and with strong productive businesses. Gloucester offers competitive living and business costs, excellent transport and communications infrastructure, and a first class built and natural environment. The City has the youngest population in the County making it a perfect place for businesses to make the most of upcoming talent.

The city is changing and no more so than in the city centre where regeneration over recent decades is spurring on the next generation of projects – King’s Quarter, The Fleece hotel, Quayside. These and other projects that are of regional and even national significance are all firmly in the development pipeline and promising to continue the city’s transformation.

However, as the UK emerges from the Coronavirus lockdown it is likely that a period of economic downturn and recession will ensue. The impact on the local economy will be profound and complex.

- It will impact on different sectors in different ways – where face to face businesses and location-dependent leisure and retail sectors may be hit very badly, online businesses and business operating remotely could do very well.
- Businesses will emerge at different rates. Many visitor-focussed businesses have already lost much of the peak season, but the real impact may not be known until the Government’s furlough funding ends.
- It will lead to profound and long term changes in the way businesses operate, whether it is changing demand for business premises, a switch to on-line, or greater flexibility within the labour force.

The recession will impact on business closures and redundancies, creating empty retail units, high levels of unemployment, business failures, and low appetite for investment and risk. While in the short term consumer spending may bounce back, the effects of recession will be long lasting and profound, potentially leading to radical changes in direction.

Reopen, Reinvigorate and Repurpose

There will inevitably be a period of economic downturn as businesses struggle with the months of lockdown and the loss of much of the summer’s trading opportunities. However, beyond that short to medium to term Gloucester has the opportunity to transform itself, to reinvigorate and repurpose the economy and to create new opportunities for businesses and residents.

It is anticipated that the economic recovery will be in three stages:

Stage 1 - Reopen	Stage 2 - Reinvigorate	Stage 3 - Repurpose
Easing of the lockdown (the restarting of the economy through the creation of safe spaces and places) during June and July;	Recovery and reopening of the economy through the remainder of 2020	Creating business opportunities and forging new directions for the economy and the city as we develop a 'new normal'.

The Gloucester Economic Recovery Task Force.

Gloucester City Council has an important role to play in supporting how the city recovers, working with partners at the local and County-wide level. A collaborative approach is important to ensure that local agencies are working alongside County and regional partners, allocating responsibilities to the agency best placed to provide it, and respecting the strategic versus delivery focus of different bodies. The Gloucester Economic Recovery Task Force has been set up to confront the Recession head on, identifying opportunities to stimulate inclusive economic recovery across the city. The Task Force is chaired by Cllr Dawn Melvin, Gloucester City Council Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economy and Growth.

The Task Force acts primarily as a consultative body, comprising individuals and organisations that share the Council's commitment and ambition to see Gloucester's success, and that can make a difference. However, the Task Force is also be a 'doing' group, comprising subgroups focussing on specific workstreams and services and with the ethic and ability to create and instigate change. The Task Force sits alongside the county-wide Economic Recovery Group, led by the GFirst LEP, supporting its work, avoiding duplication of effort, and drawing upon its strategic linkages to maximise the benefits for Gloucester.

Economic Recovery Action Plan

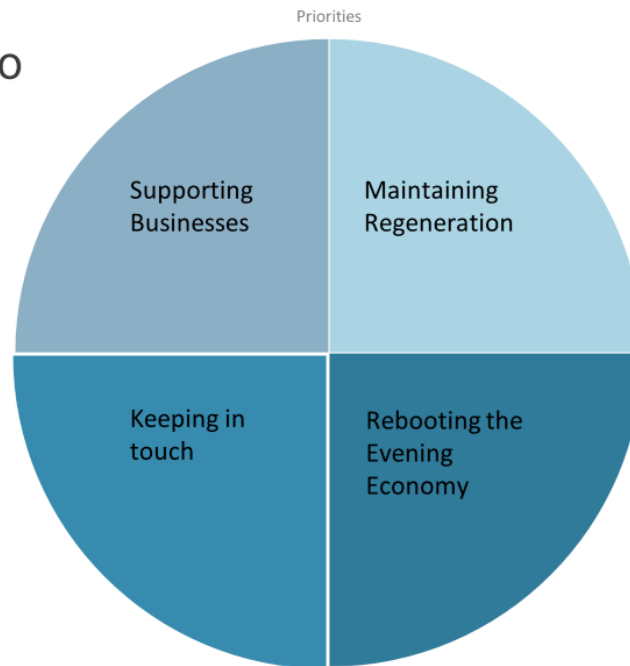
The remainder of this plan describes the actions to be led by the Economic Recovery Task Force intended to reopen, reinvigorate and repurpose the City. The plan is intended to be relatively short term, addressing actions that will enable the successful reopening of businesses during the aftermath of the Covid-19 lockdown. The longer term agenda for transformation and change will be designed by the new City Centre Commission, which will be progressed during the remainder of 2020. The plan sets out 4 areas of activity as follows:

1. Supporting business recovery and inspiring new ideas
2. Maintaining the momentum on regeneration
3. Rebooting the evening economy
4. Keeping in touch with business in order to understand their situation

Reinvigorate and Repurpose

Activities to support sustainable business recovery

July to December 2020

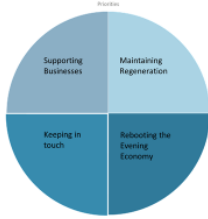


Supporting business recovery and inspiring new ideas



1. Reopen the city centre safely
 2. Actively attract new retailers and businesses to the city centre - explore and progress new retail specialisations
 3. Make better use of the Eastgate market and street markets as an opportunity to start a new business
 4. Finalise and launch new inward investment material for the City
 5. Launch a new Destination marketing Organisation for the City (led by Visitor Economy Task Force)
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Maintaining momentum on regeneration



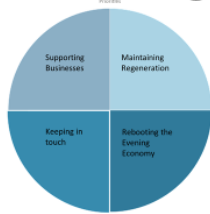
1. Focus on key schemes in the City Centre:
 - King's Quarter, King's Square and the Railway Station
 - Westgate Street, including HSHAZ and The Fleece
 - The Docks, including HKP warehouse and the Food Dock
 - Blackfriars incl. Quayside and the Prison
 2. Produce better regeneration literature and promotion, including a city centre roadshow
 3. Targeted intervention in key voids in and around the city centre
 4. Matson and Podsmead estates
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Rebooting the Evening Economy



1. Issue written guidance and advice to eating and drinking establishments on how to reopen safely
 2. Encourage proposals for temporary change of use and development to assist reopening.
 3. Encouraging eating and drinking establishments to apply for a temporary license to open outdoors
 4. Work with the Licensed Victuallers Association (LVA) to:
 - Provide training and awareness raising on preparing to reopen safely
 - Marketing and promotion of the city's evening economy
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Keeping in touch with business to understand their situation



1. Gloucester Economic Recovery Task Force
 2. County-wide coordination led by the GFirst LEP
 - Contact with largest 200 businesses
 - Sector groups meet on a monthly basis
 - Business survey
 - Gloucestershire Economic Recovery Task Force
 3. Maintain contact with business representative organisations – Business West, FSB, BID – and serviced office providers.
 4. Data collection and creation of a data dashboard, incl. footfall data in city centre, demographics, business trends and ownership of vacant properties.
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