**Cheltenham Economic Recovery Task Force**

**Terms of Reference**

**Role & Purpose**

The purpose of the Cheltenham Economic Recovery Task Force is to respond to the challenges facing the borough, with a particular focus on the town centre as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic whilst also maintaining the longer term vision; essentially supporting the economy now in such a way that does not preclude current thinking on future ambitions. Hosted by Cheltenham Borough Council, the Task Force will be a vehicle with which conversations and actions focussed on economic recovery can be driven forward in partnership with the Borough Council.

Our Values underpin a commitment to:

* Engaging with partners to maximise integrated working
* Being bold, ambitious and innovative
* Helping communities to help themselves
* Getting on with delivery

It is important that the Recovery Task Force does not duplicate activities, such as those being led by the Cyber Board or the Culture Board or duplicate where other partnerships exist, for example Cheltenham BID. Where agendas overlap the emphasis will be on where the Economic Recovery Task Force can add value.

It is impossible to have an absolute blue-print for action given factors such as:

* The on-going evolution and roll-out of central government advice
* The risk of secondary waves of the pandemic as noted by the WHO and the implications for Cheltenham businesses
* Planning reform proposals and the potential significant change to the planning sytem
* The economy adapting to the new ‘normal’ with a consequent risk of business closure and wider consumer spending fragility. KPMG predict an acceleration of physical retail space shrinkage of 25% by 2022/23 and 50% on-line sales by 2025
* The need to re-establish consumer trust in the ‘safety’ in our culture offer, including the many festivals and events that have been the hallmark of Cheltenham and categorise ‘The Festival town’
* Building on the opportunities drawn through Covid-19 on delivering on the modal shift agenda.

For these reasons the Cheltenham Economic Recovery Task Force will be cognisant of wider concerns and fleet footed/opportunistic in its approach in order to adapt to changing circumstances. The key will be rapidly seeking safe but effective new or temporary uses for any distressed assets within the town. Emerging future agenda items for the Task Force include, responding to funding opportunities across the economic recovery agenda, lobbying to partners, stakeholders, government to drive flexibilities to delivery of economic recovery interventions.

Whilst this Task Force is being established to help drive recovery for the borough, on a Task & Finish basis, by bringing together key stakeholders and the skills sets they bring to the table may lay the foundations for a longer term response; i.e. longer than an initial 18 month horizon which will allow the Recovery Task Force to reconsider its role early in 2022. This longer term outcome may feed into a wider Gloucestershire Growth Board.

**Board Membership**

**Chair:** Independent Chair

**Membership:** Senior political, public, private, voluntary and charity sector representation focussed on the industry knowledge and experience around property, retail, commercial, culture, political, place making and sustainability.

**Wider engagement:** It is important that the Task Force looks beyond its core membership and has an active relationship with other key partnerships. Regular newsletters will be produced to share key issues, priorities, outcomes and initiatives

**Meetings**

Cheltenham Economic Recovery Task Force meetings will take place on a 6 week cycle. The Task Force is an advisory board and is not a decision making body. At appropriate times to support the activities of the Task Force confidential information will be shared. Task Force members are asked to manage that information appropriately. Chatham House rules will apply to ensure Task Force members can speak openly on the topics debated and to express views. Summarised notes will be prepared and published.