

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

27 April 2022

COUNCILLOR R KERSHAW - CABINET MEMBER FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

For the period to March to April 2022

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Covid-19 Business Support

On 30 March all of the remaining Covid grants schemes closed for final payment. Over the last two years the Council has successfully distributed over £130m in Covid-related business grants and business support. This unprecedented activity has required a significant amount of staff resource, time and commitment and the speed and diligence in which Officers conducted themselves is a credit to the Council. The Council's success in delivering these schemes has been recognised by nominations for two prestigious national awards. On 28 September, in recognition of its exceptional performance in the issuing of COVID-19 business grants and support for North Norfolk's businesses, NNDC won a Public Finance Award for 'Digital Finance Project of the Year'.

The most recent grants were focused on responding to the Omicron variant and its impact on businesses, particularly within the hospitality, accommodation and leisure sectors in the post-Christmas period. The Council's Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant (OHLG) has provided grants totaling **£6,664,710**, supporting **2347** business (**82.6% of the Government allocation**).

In addition to the mandatory schemes (which supported eligible businesses paying non-domestic rates), the Council has also provided a significant amount of additional funding to support those not eligible for the main schemes. This initially took the form of a Discretionary Grant (June to August 2020), but was subsequently replaced by the Additional Restrictions Grant scheme which ran in varying phases and guises for much of the peak of the pandemic. The Council was successful in fully delivering its initial allocation (£3,028,013) and subsequently qualified for an additional £760,411. In recognition of the impact of the Omicron variant the Council was additionally awarded a further allocation of £176,267. Of these additional monies, the Council has successfully delivered **£904,348 (96% of the top up allocation)** to support local businesses still struggling to recover from the pandemic. In addition to the discretionary grants the Council has also supported or delivered a number of business support schemes including

- The Go Digital scheme (Norfolk County Council) - to provide up to 9 hours of business digitalisation advice and a grant (50 businesses supported);
- Visit Norfolk Norfolk Membership Scheme - to support visitor economy businesses with marketing, tourism data and to provide relevant Covid information (172 businesses supported – doubling the number of VNN Members);
- The North Norfolk Care Academy - to support care businesses recruiting jobs within the care sector (6 jobs created, final number TBC);
- The Business Recovery and Resilience Grant scheme (39 businesses supported).

North Walsham Town Centre Heritage Action Zone

A number of key activities have commenced/are presently being undertaken, summarised as follows.

- Repair and restoration work has commenced on the Cedars building. Early conversations are being held with a range of potential future users;
- A substantial amount of ground preparation work is being undertaken on the Church Approach/Shambles slope, with the first paving slabs being laid imminently;
- The Building Improvement Grant scheme has been well received and a strong number of applications are in the pipeline. The first three grant offer letters have been issued and work on these projects should commence shortly.

Visitor Economy

The Council has continued to collaborate with Visit North Norfolk and to liaise closely with Visit Norfolk and other local authorities and Destination Management Organisations in the region. This has helped keep local tourism businesses informed and has encouraged greater collaboration and support for collective action. The next campaign film is now live entitled 'Experience North Norfolk'. The video highlights experiences in north Norfolk themed by culture, fun, nature, history, food and drink and freedom (outdoor activities). Many visitors look for experiences that can be enjoyed on their holiday and this influences their choice of destination. This video showcases the wide variety of activities that can be carried out in north Norfolk. The film can be viewed [here](#) and the accompanying blog can be found [here](#). The film and blog will be promoted via ads on Facebook, Instagram and Google Remarketing as well as e-comms to a database of around 30,000 consumers.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

- Economic Growth Strategy – this strategy was postponed due to the resource commitment required to support the Covid reponse, but work is now being undertaken to deliver this piece of work. This will be produced alongside two other complementing strategies, also shortly to commence:
 - A Local Skills Strategy will identify the immediate and long terms skills needs of the north Norfolk businesses, the support needed and the partners/organisations who will help to deliver this. This will also provide the evidence base to support bids for future funding opportunities
 - Business Engagement Plan – this will establish the way the Council will engage with businesses, including the use of innovative communication solutions e.g. the development of a Virtual Business Hub.

3 Meetings attended

Sheringham Chamber of Trade
Oyster Yachts
Solana Seed
Wroxham Barns
Sheringham Little Theatre
Place UK
Wildcraft Brewery

