

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

22 June 2022

COUNCILLOR R KERSHAW - CABINET MEMBER FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

For the period April to June 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. Colleagues within Economic Growth and Revenues continue to be engaged in the reconciliation of these funds, providing information to BEIS and other Government bodies as requested.

Recent Government figures have confirmed that NNDC was 24th in the country for awarding business grants by the number of payment transactions and 32nd by value. These figures place the Council firmly within the top quartile for grant performance and reconfirms the Council's success in delivering timely support for local businesses during the pandemic.

The Economic Growth are now heavily engaged in continuing to support local businesses, to which a key element of this is to better understand their needs in the emerging new landscape. To support this, two pieces of work are presently in progress:

- The Employment and Local Skills Strategy - this 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.
- The Business Engagement Plan – this will establish the way the Council will engage businesses, including the use of innovative communication solutions eg the development of a Virtual Business Hub.

Levelling Up Fund Round 2

In the Levelling Up Fund Round 2 Prospectus published by the Government in March, North Norfolk was identified as a Priority 1 area for support. This

means the Government was keen to see applications for projects from the district and has provided £125,000 of funding to support the development of good quality proposals.

NNDC and local partners are set to bid for two exciting projects in the district. These will include a new swimming pool and multi-sports area in Fakenham and a major revamp of the clifftop gardens and North Lodge Park in Cromer. Work continues on developing the applications, with the submission deadline being 6 July 2022.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda and is the successor funding model to the former EU Structural Funds. It will provide £2.6 billion of new funding into the UK for local investment over a three period, through to March 2025.

The intention of the fund is to invest in local priorities, targeted towards a number of areas: building pride in place, supporting high quality skills training, supporting pay, employment and productivity growth and increasing life chances.

It has now been confirmed that north Norfolk's allocation is £1,238,269. Whilst this funding is not subject to a competitive process, local authorities are required to set out their key priorities for this money within an Investment Plan, identifying their interventions and anticipated outputs and outcomes.

Work is currently in progress to develop a submission which will require engagement with relevant stakeholders and delivery partners. The deadline for the submission is 1 August 2022 and it is anticipated that the Council will have Government approval for the Plan in October 2022.

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 continues on the Cedars building, to which the next pieces of work will address the electric and heating systems. Early conversations are being held with a range of potential future users;
- A substantial amount of work has now been completed on the Church Approach/Shambles slope, with the upper element now opened up for public access to and from the St.Nicholas precinct/Market Place;
- The Building Improvement Grant scheme has been well received and a healthy number of applications are in the pipeline. The first three grant offer letters have been issued and work on these project 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 and entitled 'Love North Norfolk beaches'. 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.

Business Break Networking at Cromer Library

June 16, 11am-12:30pm

Details can be found at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/new-business-break-networking-at-cromer-library-tickets-267374433127>

NNDC Officer's will be on hand to support this new event

3 Meetings attended