

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

December 2022

COUNCILLOR R KERSHAW - CABINET MEMBER FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

For the period November to December 2022

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Funding and Programmes

Rural Prosperity Fund

On 3 September the Government announced the launch of The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). This fund is a top-up to the UK Shared Prosperity Plan (UKSPF) and succeeds EU funding from LEADER and the Growth Programme, which were part of the Rural Development Programme for England. NNDC has been advised that North Norfolk will receive an allocation of £1,457,851. This will need to be committed and defrayed by March 2025. This funding, which is essentially an extension to the UKSPF fund, will have a more rural focus and the Council needed to submit an application by 30 November. To help shape and inform the submission, the Local Partnership Group (composed of a number of local stakeholders and originally created to help develop the UKSPF bid), was reconvened to discuss the challenges facing rural businesses/communities and identify the priority interventions. The key interventions that were identified to support were:

Supporting Rural Business

1. Funding (capital grants) for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas. Including capital funding for net zero infrastructure for rural businesses, and diversification of farm businesses outside of agriculture to encourage start up, expansion or scale up of these businesses where this involves converting farm buildings into other commercial or business uses;

Supporting Rural Communities

2. Funding (capital grants) for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups;
3. Funding (capital grants) for existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions that make up the local cultural heritage offer;
4. Funding (capital grants) for impactful volunteering and social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places.

It is anticipated that local authorities will receive approval for their submission from January 2023, with receipt of their first allocation in April 2023.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

The 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 for local investment by March 2025, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation from the Fund via a funding formula rather than via a competitive bidding process.

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.

On 7 December the Council received confirmation that its Investment Plan had been approved. NNDC will shortly receive the first allocation of funds (£150,275) for this financial year. The indicative allocation for 2023/24 is £300,551 and £787,443 in 2024/25.

The interventions identified within the Investment Plan to be supported are:

1. Funding for new, or improvements to existing, community and neighbourhood infrastructure projects including those that increase communities' resilience to natural hazards, such as flooding. This could cover capital spend and running costs;
2. Funding for the development and promotion of wider campaigns which encourage people to visit and explore the local area;
3. Community measures to reduce the cost of living, including through measures to improve energy efficiency, and combat fuel poverty and climate change;
4. Funding to support relevant feasibility studies;

Supporting Local Business

5. Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems, and supporting businesses at all stages of their development to start, sustain, grow and innovate, including through local networks;
6. Supporting decarbonisation and improving the natural environment whilst growing the local economy. Taking a whole systems approach to invest in infrastructure to deliver effective decarbonisation across energy, buildings and transport and beyond, in line with our legally binding climate target. Maximising existing or emerging local strengths in low carbon technologies, goods and services to take advantage of the growing global opportunity;

People and Skills

7. Tailored support to help people in employment, who are not supported by mainstream provision to address barriers to accessing education and training courses. This includes supporting the retention of groups who are likely to leave the labour market early.

Suitable projects/delivery model(s) will be shortly implemented, with the initial priority being to commit/expend this financial year's allocation.

Town Centres

Stalham High Street Task Force

Following a submission a considerable time ago, Stalham's town centre has been identified for support from the Government High Streets Task Force (HSTF). The HSTF will look to work with the Council and local stakeholders to help identify the critical issues that may be holding back the town and seek to develop a range of support/solutions. The team plan to visit the town and meet relevant stakeholders in January.

North Walsham Town Centre Heritage Action Zone

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

- Repair and restoration works have continued over the summer on the Cedars building. Work still to be completed includes: the installation of data points, re-plastering with lime plaster, installation of a new electrical heating system and completion of window repairs followed by internal and external redecoration. Conversations are being held with a range of potential future users;
- The Church Approach/Shambles slope is open to the public, with just a few items outstanding. Repair and redecoration work has been carried out on the rear wall of 28 Market Place, which backs onto the public realm area and will contribute to the overall improvement of the space, this has been temporarily held up by bad weather;
- Improvements to the highways and public realm in the Market Place have commenced. Works to be carried out include: widened footpaths and paved areas for pedestrians, paved road surface, installation of seating and planters, installation of bike racks, provision of power points and arrangements for market stalls and events, provision of new crossing points and increased capacity for loading and deliveries through new and better positioned bays. Cleaning and maintenance of existing areas and paving will also be undertaken;
- The Building Improvement Grant scheme has been well received and a healthy number of applications are in the pipeline. Six grant applications have been approved to-date and twenty eight expressions of interest have been received. Projects that will have the greatest visual impact and can be delivered within the timescale for the scheme will be prioritised, for example shopfront reinstatements and improvements to building façades.

Tourism

Visit North Norfolk Networking Event

On 23 November 2022 Visit North Norfolk and NNDC hosted a networking event at the Woodlands Holiday Park for local tourism business. The event was very well received with 60+ attendees. Presentations and discussions included an outline of the forthcoming marketing campaigns, a summary of the 2021 Economic Impact of Tourism report and information about the Deep History Coast and the Visitor Economy Network Initiative.

Christmas Marketing Campaign

The 'Christmas in North Norfolk' marketing campaign has been recently launched. This campaign seeks to promote a number of Christmas events / things to do in North Norfolk. A promotional video can be found on the Visit North Norfolk [home page](#) and also on [Youtube](#). There is also an accompanying events round up (found [here](#)). The video is being promoted through e-comms and social media advertisements.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

- Development and delivery of the UKSPF and REPF funds
- Supporting the Stalham High Street Task Force team
- Final phases of the North Walsham HAZ place making works

3 Meetings attended

North Walsham Business Partnership Meeting
Visit North Norfolk Networking Event
Various local business engagement meetings