

## **CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**22 February 2023**

### **COUNCILLO R KERSHAW - CABINET MEMBER FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH**

For the period December 2022 to February 2023

#### **1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.**

##### **Funding and Programmes**

###### *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 has now received the first allocation of funds (£150,275) for this financial year and work with partners is underway to deliver this fund. The indicative allocation for 2023/24 is £300,551 and £787,443 in 2024/25.

###### *Rural England 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.

It was anticipated that local authorities would receive approval for their submission in January 2023, with receipt of their first allocation in April 2023. It is understood that approval decisions have been delayed and we presently await confirmation that our submission has been approved. Following approval, a paper providing further details on the UKSPF and REPF and the anticipated delivery mechanisms is anticipated to be provided to Cabinet.

## **Town Centres**

### *Stalham High Street Task Force*

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 solutions to support them. The team plan to visit Stalham on 3 March.

### *North Walsham Town Centre Heritage Action Zone*

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

- Following the previous contractor going into liquidation, the redevelopment of the Cedars is now being delivered by Malcolm Abbs Ltd under a Measured Term Contract held with the Council. Project management is being undertaken by NNDC's Property Services team. Given the changes in contractor, and the consequent delay between re-establishing the new contractors on site, a revised schedule of work is has been prepared. The work that remains to be completed includes: installation of data points, re-plastering with lime plaster, installation of electrical heating system and completion of window repairs followed by overall redecoration internally and externally. The anticipated costs of the remaining works and the delivery timescale are presently being developed. Early conversations are being held with a range of potential future users;
- The public realm improvements carried out on the Shambles/Church Approach area have essentially been completed, with full access available, including to the rear of 28 Market Place which has benefitted from substantial exterior improvements through funding identified within Building Improvement allocation, although there remains some additional work still to be completed to the façade in early spring when the weather is better.
- Improvements to the highways and public realm in the Market Place commenced in September. 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 north side is complete and the south side is being progressed, with much of the kerbing and stone now in place to establish the carriageway and significant progress has been made on widening the pavements, completing the loading bays and adding in a pedestrian crossing. The works is slightly behind schedule due to poor weather pre-Christmas and a sinkhole that was discovered on 18 January which was caused by existing damage to a water pipe. Anglia Water were swift to respond and all necessary works were completed promptly. However, laying rates on the present phase have been higher than expected overall;

- 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 facades.

## **Tourism**

### **North Norfolk's Market Town Campaign**

Visit North Norfolk have launched their Jan – March 2023 marketing activity – driving visits in the Spring. The latest [video](#) highlights the market towns and encourages consumers to plan their next break, with January being a key time for some consumers to plan their 2023 holiday. The winter wildlife promotion activity is still carrying on, encouraging visits now and into February.

### **Staffing and Resources updates**

- The Project Enabler post was approved by the Corporate Leadership Team and the new post-holder commenced their role on 9 January.
- Following a successful recruitment process, the new North Walsham High Street Heritage Action Project Manager started on 23 January. The new post-holder has previous experience of project managing another local HAZ and brings a wealth of conservation/regeneration experience.
- The Business & Skills Support Coordinator has notified of her intention to retire at the end of March. Diane Evans has been exemplary in her work with businesses, schools and training providers to support employment/skills opportunities for individuals and in helping businesses with their labour needs. The importance of this post is acknowledged and a business case will be taken to the Corporate Leadership Team to determine the future of this post.

- 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**

Recent business visits/meetings include: Raynham Estate  
Tattersett Business Park, Swift Aircraft, Albert Bartlett, Wildcraft Brewery,  
Sheringham Golf Club