

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

28 March 2023

COUNCILLOR R KERSHAW - CABINET MEMBER FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

For the period February to March 2023

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Funding and Programmes

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

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 programme. The priorities for 22/23 are to:

- Support funding for new, or improvements to existing, community and neighbourhood infrastructure projects through the North Norfolk Sustainable Communities Fund;
- Work with Visit North Norfolk to develop a programme of support for local visitor economy businesses; and
- Deliver the Go Digital programme to support business digitalisation (working with Norfolk County Council).

A programme for 23/24 is currently in development. 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.

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. However, discussions are presently ongoing with neighbouring authorities and partners to develop a suitable programme in readiness for when the first tranche of funds are awarded.

Town Centres

Stalham High Street Task Force

Stalham's town centre was 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 first step of the process was to host a visit from the Task Force, which took place on 3 March and included a meeting with key local stakeholders and a guided tour of the town. A diagnostic report with recommendations for appropriate actions is now awaited.

North Walsham High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ)

The whole HSHAZ programme is being delivered as expected, with end of year funding deadlines being met. Several shopfront and other building improvements, funded by the HSHAZ, are underway and there is a good pipeline of proposals for the coming year. The Market Place improvements are due for completion by 23rd March and the first market (Farmers' Market) will be held there on 30th March. The compound at Vicarage Street Car Park will therefore be removed by the end of the month. The renovation work to the Cedars is ongoing but the setbacks caused by the principle contractor's liquidation has meant that the programme and budget need to be reviewed. The project is now being managed by the Property Services team and the work being undertaken by the Council's MTC contractor.

The HSHAZ Cultural Programme is detailed in the update provided by Cllr Gay, whose portfolio includes culture.

Tourism

Visit North Norfolk is presently delivering its January – March 2023 marketing activity – aimed at driving visits in the Spring. A new promotional video called 'Make a Break for the Past' has recently been launched which highlights the area's history, heritage, places to visit and things to do. Discovering history and heritage is one of the top influences for people to visit the east of England and so this video seeks to showcase the breadth of the local offering in North Norfolk.

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

Recent business visits/meetings include: North Walsham Business Partnership Steering Group, East Coast Plastics, Albert Bartlett, Stalham High Street Task Force, Pub is the Hub.