

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

21 June 2023

COUNCILLOR PAUL HEINRICH - 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 and NNDC received its first allocation of funds (£150,275). Work with partners is underway to deliver this programme. The priorities for 23/24 - to which the Council will receive a further £300,551 allocation this financial year (pending year end sign off) - 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;
- Deliver the Go Digital programme to support business digitalisation (working with Norfolk County Council), and;
- Work with New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership to deliver a business support and advice programme.

A programme for 24/25 (indicative allocation £787,443) is currently in development.

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.

On 6 April DEFRA confirmed that NNDC was successful in its application for this fund. The allocation for 23/24 is anticipated to be £364,462.75 (funds awaiting to be received) and £1,093,388.25 in 24/25. A capital grant scheme to support both local business and communities is presently being finalised. Discussions have been ongoing with neighbouring authorities and partners to develop a suitable programme in readiness for when the first tranche of funds are received. The funding has already developed a number of early enquiries and the Economic Growth Team have developed a strong pipeline of expressions of interest.

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 was subsequently produced. The report identifies the strengths of the town and the main barriers to transformation the *expert* found, as well as recommendations that the Local Authority and partners can action now to accelerate the transformation process. In particular, it identified a need to support further capacity building within the town so that it is best positioned to work towards future opportunities. On 5 June NNDC's Cabinet endorsed the report and agreed to continue to work with interested organisations in Stalham to progress options for supporting its town centre and local businesses operating there.

North Walsham High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ)

The HSHAZ programme is being delivered as expected, with 22/23 end of year funding deadlines having been met and satisfied by the key funders. A number of shopfront and other building improvements, funded by the Building Improvement Grant, are underway and there is a good pipeline of proposals for the remainder of the year. The Market Place improvements have now been completed and the predominant focus will now be on the Black Swan and Bank Loke areas. The renovation work to the Cedars is reaching the final fix stage and negotiations are underway with a number of potential tenants.

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

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