

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

22 November 2023

COUNCILLOR PAUL HEINRICH - CABINET MEMBER FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

For the period September to November 2023

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

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 this element of the programme is largely now committed.

With the Market Place improvements completed, the predominant focus is on the Black Swan and Bank Loke areas. A design exercise is presently being undertaken on the former, which, once completed, will then progress to the construction, following appointment of a suitable contractor.

The renovation work to the Cedars building has now been completed and the building was officially opened on 7 September. Lets have also already been agreed for 187m² of the 251m² of lettable space, with negotiations ongoing for the remainder

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

Funding and Programmes

Rural England Prosperity Fund

On 3 July NNDC launched the Rural Business and Communities Grant. This capital-only grant, funded by the Rural England Prosperity Fund, is intended to support the following activities:

Businesses

- 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.

Community groups

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

The allocation for 23/24 is £364,462.75, of which grants have so far been offered to £329,896 (with a further £303,836 of private investment generated in match funding). A strong pipeline of investments has been developed through to the next financial year.

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.

The following activities have now commenced:

- 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, including an additional staff resource to support this;
- 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.

There has been a high take up from beneficiaries across the programmes.

The budget for this financial year is £364,462, of which £125,867 has been expended so far and £185,000 is already committed. This contrasts with the national picture where it has been recently commented in the national press that 95% of Local Authorities were unable to commit their funds within the timeframes for this programme, thus placing NNDC within the top 5% for committed spend.

Progress is also being made towards developing programmes for the next financial year, including:

- A support package to support business decarbonisation, through audits, advice and funding;

- A programme to support skills development, and;
- A programme to support energy efficiency retrofit works for houses in need in North Norfolk

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Development and delivery of the UKSPF and REPF funds

Finalisation of the first draft of the Economic Strategy

Taking forward the recommendations of Stalham High Street Task Force team

Final stages of the North Walsham HAZ place making, and settling the final account

3 Meetings attended

Bittern Line CRP

Stalham High Streets Task Force Workshop