

## CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

24 June 2020

### **COUNCILLOR RICHARD KERSHAW - CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

For the period March 2020 to June 2020

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

##### **Business as usual activity**

*Engagement with businesses:* The usual engagement with businesses has been maintained however the quantum has increased massively as a result of not only the Covid Economic Support measures (see below) but the close liaison with town centre businesses affected by the gas main replacement works in North Walsham.

*Growth Sites Development strategy:* In accordance with Cabinet Decision, and part funded by the Business Rate Pool, this study has been in preparation and the first draft of the stage one report is now being reviewed, prior to a further instruction being given to the consultants to complete the full strategy. The findings need to be considered in the light of the changed circumstances resulting from COVID-19, however its relevance will be for the long term planning of development and investment in projects that support economic growth in the District.

##### *Careers and training:*

Contact has been maintained with all relevant stakeholders including careers leads in North Norfolk. Unfortunately, all schools have had to cancel work experience for Year 10 and 12 students this year but most are looking at how this invaluable opportunity can be provided in a different format or at a different time. Some employers are providing virtual work experience and there have been virtual careers fairs. There is no data available about how those resources have been received by young people.

*North Walsham Town Centre Heritage Action Zone:* Officers have continued to liaise with Historic England and the Cabinet Working Party meetings have recommenced in the hope of this scheme being announced in the summer. The post of Project Manager is currently being advertised (contingent upon the funding being confirmed).

## **Covid 19 related activity**

### *Business support*

Working collaboratively with staff across the Council, effective procedures have been implemented for the efficient processing of the following grants and business support measures:

- **Small Business Rate Relief (£10k Grant):** supporting 3,420 businesses with a total £34,200,000 awarded
- **Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (£10k Grant):** supporting 951 businesses with a total of £9,510,000 awarded
- **Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (£25k Grants):** supporting 319 businesses with a total of £7,975,000 awarded.

A total of **4,690** businesses have been supported, with a total of **£51,685,000** being awarded (as at 14 June 2020).

At the time of writing, the Discretionary grant scheme (intended to support certain small businesses previously outside the scope of the earlier business grant funds scheme) remains live an update on the number of grants processed may be available at the meeting.

### *Business impacts*

In June a survey was undertaken of businesses in the District to establish a clear picture of the challenges they face as a result of the crisis. Following the close of the survey (on 12<sup>th</sup> June) the results will be analysed and used to inform response plans, strategies and actions (hopefully some initial high level results can be shared by the time of the meeting).

### *Visitor economy*

The Council has continued to support and work very closely with Visit North Norfolk, in order to maintain communication with visitor and hospitality businesses in the District. VNN has kept up contact with their network in the local visitor sector, providing information and important messages to help them plan their response to the crisis and to plan for recovery. Key local businesses were surveyed to better understand the impacts of the current crisis and how they are preparing for a recovery. In addition, Visit East of England has commissioned two questionnaires to understand both the impacts and preparedness of businesses in relevant sectors in Norfolk & Suffolk. There was a good level of response from businesses in North Norfolk and an analysis of the findings at District level is being obtained by the Council, with the intention of that informing a submission to the DCMS Select Committee Inquiry on 'the impact of COVID on the tourism sector'.

### *Economic Recovery*

Officers continue to collaborate with other local councils and strategic partners on the preparation of plans and strategies relating to economic recovery. In particular, the Council has provided feedback to the draft Economic Recovery Plan, prepared by NALEP.

### **3 Meetings attended**

Many virtual meetings have been attended in order to determine the Council's response to the economic impacts of Covid-19.

The only physical visits managed before lockdown were to Aldiss in Fakenham and with Bluemarble group.

The HAZ Cabinet Working Party met virtually in June.