

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

23 September 2020

COUNCILLOR R KERSHAW - CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

For the period June 2020 to September 2020

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Business as usual activity

Engagement with businesses

The usual engagement with businesses has been maintained, albeit with a reduced level of site visits. Much of the current resource and activity has been focused on helping businesses to access grants administered by the Council (see below) and helping businesses to obtain funding and other local and national support.

Careers and training

Contact has been maintained with all relevant stakeholders including careers leads in North Norfolk. The North Norfolk Careers Group meetings was held in June and July with good attendance, demonstrating a positive interest in supporting career and employment opportunities in the current climate. Much concern remains for the local economy once the current furlough support ceases. However, a number of local support schemes are anticipated to which NNDC is actively engaged in their development through the New Anglia LEP's Workforce Workstream.

North Walsham Town Centre Heritage Action Zone

This round of HAZ is expected to be officially launched (nationally) on Saturday 19th September (although clearance for lifting the embargo locally was given previously). The post of Project Manager has now been filled (by Jenni Jordan). A number of key activities have commenced including a condition survey on The Cedars and the formulation of a community engagement plan.

The Council has also been successful in its bid for funding from the *Getting Building* Fund to support a programme of townscape improvements for North Walsham Town Centre. The grant of £1.17m will provide a significant amount of match funding to support the delivery of this critical element of the project, with greater haste and more certainty than would otherwise have been the case. This will allow for work to progress on engaging stakeholders and designing a suitable scheme to remodel public spaces within North Walsham

town centre.

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:

Through the *Small Business Grant* (£10k Grant) and the *Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant* (£10k/£25k Grant), the Council has supported 4,788 businesses with £53,445,000 awarded (as at 10 September 2020).

The Council is also currently finalising the payments for the Discretionary Grant, which will further support over 200 more businesses with an additional £2.76m.

Business impacts

Between 13 May and 12 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. The results (from the 319 respondents) will be used to inform response plans, strategies and actions.

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. The present campaign, aligned with national marketing, is entitled 'Unexplored North Norfolk' (see latest video <https://youtu.be/pM7zfTXftsc>)

A consortium comprising Norfolk Local Authorities, together with Visit East of England, has secured funding from the Norfolk Strategic Fund for a 'Tourism Sector Support Package.' On the basis of the proportion of businesses operating in the appropriate sector, North Norfolk received an allocation from the fund of £330,000; which is divided between measures to assist in meeting the additional costs for the safe operation of the towns, resorts and visitor hotspots; and funding towards initiatives that will support the visitor economy and businesses that it supports. Combined with the remaining £25,000 from the 'Reopening High Streets Safely' fund that is allocated for marketing purposes, a total pot of £175,000 is proposed to support a grant scheme, with expressions of interest initially welcomed and final recommendations concluded by a Cabinet Working Party.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Norfolk and Suffolk Innovation Launch

15 September 6:00pm to 7:30pm

To support Norfolk's ambition to be the best connected rural county in the UK, this event marks the official launch of the Norfolk and Suffolk Innovation Network, the largest public sector low-power wide-area network (LoRaWAN) deployment in the UK.

Norfolk County Council leader Cllr Andrew Proctor and a number of technical experts will explain how businesses can grow using this innovative tech, and how to sign up to benefit from it

To register, visit: www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/norfolk-and-suffolk-innovation-network-launch-tickets-117655900967

Also see www.norfolk.gov.uk/digital

Rise! A Recovery Event for Food and Drink Producers

23 September 2020 2pm-4:30pm

Norfolk County Council in partnership with Tech East, New Anglia LEP, Norfolk Chambers of Commerce and Local Flavours are delighted to bring a food and drink producers webinar.

The agenda will feature sector experts and businesses that have survived and thrived over the last few months during COVID-19, showcasing what has worked and why.

This event will help to inspire businesses to think better and bigger and to rise above the current situation, including learning how digital technology can play a key role in business growth.

Speakers already confirmed include:

Andrew Fearne, Professor of Value Chain Management at University of East Anglia

Emma Taylor, Funding Manager at New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership

Matt and Steph Brown, Wild Knight Distillery

Sam Steggles, Fielding Cottage

Edwina Mullins, Social Media Trainer at Socialb

Tim Robinson, COO at Tech East

More speakers to be confirmed soon.

To register, visit: www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/rise-a-recovery-conference-for-food-and-drink-producers-tickets-116092015343

**Restart Festival
29 and 30 September 2020**

Practical advice, inspirational speakers and innovative new ideas will all be showcased at the RESTART Business Recovery Festival on 29 and 30 September.

Taking place virtually, RESTART will deliver two days of free, informative and exciting sessions to give Norfolk and Suffolk's businesses the support they need to kickstart and consolidate their recovery from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

To register, visit: <https://newanglia.co.uk/restart-festival/>

3 Meetings attended

Parish Council meetings in ward, by Zoom and in person
Development Committee meetings
Planning policy meetings
North Walsham HAZ Working Party meetings by zoom and site visits
Discretionary Grant panel meetings
Regular Economic & Career Development briefings with officers