

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

22 September 2021

COUNCILLOR R KERSHAW - CABINET MEMBER FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

For the period July to September 2021

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters

Engagement with businesses

The usual engagement with businesses has been maintained, albeit that the site visits have been conducted below normal levels. Much of the recent 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 access other local and national support. However, the focus moving forward will be less on helping business to continue trading and more on supporting the next phase of their recovery, business growth and helping them to address their (non-financial) needs. When resources allow and businesses are ready, we will take the opportunity to re-engage the District's larger business to better understand their current position, their investment intentions, the drivers for change and how we can support them with recovery/growth aspirations.

Lockdown Support Grants

The Council has now distributed over £126m in Covid-related business grants, which required a significant amount of staff resource. All of these schemes have now closed, with the Restart Grant being the last mandatory scheme.

The Council's success in delivering these schemes has been recognised by successful nominations for two prestigious awards: The Public Finance Awards 2021 – finalist for 'Digital Finance Project of the Year' and The Institute of Revenues Ratings and Values 2021 Performance Awards 2021 – finalist for 'Excellence in Innovation'.

At the Spring Budget on 3 March 2021 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that Local Authorities could receive an additional top-up to the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) allocation (amounting to £760,411 for north Norfolk). In order to qualify, Councils needed to have fully defrayed all of their previous allocation by 30 June 2021 (subsequently extended by one month in line with the national restrictions extension), which the Council was successful in doing.

Utilising the ARG top-up allocation, following Cabinet approval, the Council will develop and implement a programme of various kinds of business support, including:

- Administering a 'Business Recovery & Resilience Grant Scheme'
- Supporting business digitalisation (through investing in the 'Go Digital' programme);
- Collaboration with Visit Norfolk Norfolk to support visitor economy businesses with marketing and workforce/skills support;
- Developing a Sector-Based Work Programme for the care sector to support career pathways into social care.

North Walsham Town Centre Heritage Action Zone

A number of key activities have commenced/are presently being undertaken, summarised as follows.

- Surveys have been conducted on The Cedars to understand its condition and the work required to repair and restore the main building to occupiable condition. A detailed design is now being completed. Contractors will soon be procured to carry out the repairs and restoration work required to bring the Cedars back into use. Potential future users are being solicited via a marketing campaign.
- A consultation exercise will be held in September and October in order to elicit feedback that will inform the town centre place making proposals and the statutory consultation on highways related matters.
- The Building Improvement Grant scheme is now open to applications. Details can be found at:
<https://northnorfolkdistrictcouncil.mysocialpinpoint.co.uk/Building-Improvement-Grant/>
- The virtual community engagement platform, developed as part of the programme, has proved an invaluable tool. To date there have been 3111 'page views' and 858 'unique users'. A Communications & Events Support Co-ordinator will join the Council on 15 September to create fresh and interesting content to engage stakeholders and members of the public in the HAZ programme and to further support the continued communication effort about the scheme and the emerging Cultural Programme.

Visitor Economy

The Council has continued to collaborate with Visit North Norfolk and to liaise closely with Visit Norfolk and other local authorities and Destination Management Organisations in the region. This has helped keep local tourism businesses informed and has encouraged greater collaboration and support for collective action.

Visit North Norfolk's campaign for September-October is 'Enjoy North Norfolk

Without a Car'. This can be found on www.visitnorthnorfolk.com/ and the accompanying blog can be found at [Enjoying North Norfolk Without a Car \(visitnorthnorfolk.com\)](http://www.visitnorthnorfolk.com/). The film and blog will be promoted via ads on Facebook, Instagram and Google Remarketing as well as e-comms to a database of around 30,000 consumers. A new Deep History Coast film about fossil hunting will also shortly go live on 1 October

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments

- Delivery of grants/package of wider business support (funded through the ARG top up fund)
- Continue to support the North Norfolk Kickstart Gateway programme to help 16-14yrs old into employment
- Development of a programme consultation events to support the next stages of the HAZ place making scheme

3 Meetings attended

To complete