

## **CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**17 November 2021**

### **COUNCILLOR R KERSHAW - CABINET MEMBER FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH**

For the period September to November 2021

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

##### **Covid-19 Business Support**

The Council has distributed over £126m in Covid-related business grants, which required a significant amount of staff resource time and commitment. 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 nominations for two prestigious national awards. On 28 September, in recognition of its exceptional performance in the issuing of COVID-19 business grants and support for North Norfolk's businesses, NNDC won a Public Finance Award for 'Digital Finance Project of the Year'.

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 is now developing a programme of various kinds of business support, including:

- Administering a 'Business Recovery & Resilience Grant Scheme' (BRRG)
- 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 programme for the care sector to support career pathways into social care.

The BRRG scheme has now launched and the first panel meeting was recently held. The first awards will shortly be issued.

##### **Community Renewal Fund**

The £220million Community Renewal Fund was announced by the Government earlier in the year to help stimulate economic growth in areas across the UK as part of its response to the impact of the Covid pandemic. Local authorities around the country meeting certain criteria, which included North Norfolk, were invited to submit bids for funding to support specific regeneration/growth projects in their area.

On 3 November it was confirmed that although bids to support 14 projects in Norfolk were successful in securing a total of £6.5m from the Fund, NNDC's proposals for projects in Fakenham and North Walsham were not supported. The Council will now seek to understand how it can benefit from the winning bids and how it can ensure the successful delivery of the projects that will be delivered within the District. It is understood that ten

projects will still have delivery within the District, providing activity worth £810,117 in North Norfolk.

### **North Walsham Town Centre Heritage Action Zone**

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

- The tender contract to carry out the repairs and restoration work required to bring the Cedars back into use has recently been issued and will close on 29 November. Potential future users are being solicited via a marketing campaign.
- Between 20 September 2021 and 15 October 2021 a wide range of community engagement activities were undertaken to share the design proposals, invite feedback and to inform the final designs. Feedback from local residents has confirmed that many people who use the town centre are in favour of making it more safe and accessible, encouraging active travel, and improving the public realm through greening and creating areas for rest and relaxation. A report of the findings is presently being prepared which the Council will seek to share and advise on the next steps.
- The Building Improvement Grant scheme is now open to applications. Details can be found at: [Social Pinpoint | Building Improvement Grant \(mysocialpinpoint.co.uk\)](https://mysocialpinpoint.co.uk). An accredited Conservation Architecture firm has recently been appointed to support the scheme and ensure the effective delivery on the funds on a number of identified key projects.

### **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 November and December is 'Wild and Natural North Norfolk'. This can be found on the VNN [home page](#), [YouTube](#) and the accompanying [blog](#).

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.

### **Economic Impact of Tourism Report**

This report, received annually, provides a useful understanding of the volume and value of tourism to the District. In recent years, North Norfolk has continued to receive a steady rise in both the number and length of stay of visitors, historically contributing over £500 million to the District through direct, indirect and induced spend. However, unsurprisingly, the recently received report (for 2020) indicates a drop in numbers across the board for all metrics, reflecting the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The total value of tourism dropped from £528,931,378 (2019) to £237,339,241 (-55%). The number of day trips fell 56% and the number of overnight trips fell by 53%.

Nevertheless, since the easing of lockdown measures in early summer, accommodation providers have reported strong numbers for bookings through to the winter period, further aided by the restrictions on international travel. NNDC will continue to work with partners to support the sector through grants and marketing support.

<b>2      Forthcoming Activities and Developments.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Delivery of grants/package of wider business support (funded through the ARG top up fund).</li><li>• VNN new website to go live in November. The Economic Growth team will shortly implement a membership grant scheme to help businesses to promote their business.</li><li>• Continue to support the North Norfolk Kickstart Gateway programme to help 16-14yrs old into employment</li><li>• Finalise and publish the HAZ place making consultation report and progress designs</li></ul>
<b>3      Meetings attended</b>