

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

13 JANUARY 2021

UPDATE REPORT ON ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROGRAMMES

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To update Members on progress of initiatives identified within the Economic Growth Strategy 2021-2026 including: Town Reopening Campaigns; Kickstart; and Business Events.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 In November 2020 Members endorsed the Newark & Sherwood Economic Growth Strategy 2021-2026. The Strategy contained an Action Plan which included actions for supporting the communities through the pandemic. These actions included working with partners on the Kickstart programme, supporting the reopening of high streets and working to support businesses through events and information, advice and guidance.

2.2 Town Reopening Campaign: The Council were successful in being awarded £108k for the reopening of High Streets in June 2020. This money has been used to support a number of initiatives since June to support the local high streets. This has included:

- Provision of specialist advice through a Business Information and Guidance Officer.
- Communication campaigns utilising social media, articles, press releases, adverts, posters, banners and stickers to ensure compliance the rules and provide information and guidance to retailers and the public. This included marketing material on 'Hands, Face, Space' and 'Safe Distance'.
- Equipment and materials for road closures and social distancing.
- A Newark/Southwell/Edwinstowe/Ollerton is Open Campaign; which has included activity via radio, news articles, posters, flags, banners, and stickers. This campaign is ongoing and aims to encourage people to 'Shop safely and shop local.'
- The creation of a Shop Assurance Standard which provides shoppers the reassurance that local retailers are undertaking measures to keep their shop safe for trade.
- The establishment of footfall counters for Newark, which will allow the first fixed measureable data collection for the Town and matched the funding contribution with the Newark Heritage Action Zone grant funding allocation to provide cameras for 4 years from 2021-2025. This will allow the Council to monitor the level of footfall in 4 locations of the town. The data will inform policy and be used as a mechanism to attract retailers to the town through marketing material.
- The Council have also implemented the creation of a 'High Street Diversification Fund' to provide a grant programme that allowed independent retailers the opportunity to redevelop their website, improve search engine optimisation or develop online payment functions. This has been successful with over 100 independent retailers supported and a 2nd round was implemented in December 2020.

2.3 Kick Start Programme: In Autumn 2020 the Government announced the Kickstart Scheme which provides funding to employers to create new 6-month job placements for young people who are currently on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment.

Funding was available following a successful application process for a minimum of 30 job placements, but if the organisation is creating fewer than 30 job placements applications must be made through a Gateway Organisation. Due to most Small & Medium Enterprises not being able to offer 30 placements, potential Gateway Organisation providers were sought.

Newark & Sherwood Council Officers have worked with Lincoln College Group at the Newark campus and a submission to Government was made by the College in late November for 51 placements in the area. The Council, as a large employer in the town would offer 7 placements, whilst other employers included offering roles ranging from Grounds Maintenance Assistants, Credit Controllers, Trainee Mechanics, Web developer, Retail Assistant, Warehouse and Logistics Assistant, Trainee Joiner, Groom, Gym Crew and Kitchen Assistants. These first placement will start in December 2020 and it is hoped that a second round can be undertaken in Spring 2021.

2.4 Business Support Programmes and Events: The Economic Growth Team have undertaken more than supporting business and industry with support grants, this has included provision of a number of business support events and information, advice and guidance. There are a number of programmes that have been delivered or are being planned which includes:

- September 2020; “Supporting Business in Newark & Sherwood” which focused on identifying what is needed to support businesses to grow after the pandemic.
- December 2020; “Good for Business – Business Finance” which focused on supporting business with advice and guidance on finance, performance and success
- January 2021; “SME Bounce Back” – which is a partnership event with the FSB to assist businesses to become more resilient.
- January 2021-March 2021; “Creativity for Growth Masterclasses” which are focused on growing your business, marketing, brand and future strategy”
- February 2021 – April 2021; “Business Doctors; Business Support Programme” which is an intensive series of workshops for 12 businesses to cover issues such as Accountancy, HR, Funding, Legal, IP, Websites, IT systems, Social Media to enable growth.
- March 2021; “Solutions Driven Cyber Security Masterclass” which aims to assist businesses with data security and is delivered in partnership with Nottinghamshire Business Venture.

2.5 In addition to the above Officers are recommending the provision of a Business Resilience Programme with the aim of supporting industry to build resilience and growth due to the pandemic. This, it will be recommended to the Policy and Finance Committee, will be a £300,000 fund made up of the £100,000 of the Additional Restrictions Grant funding that the Council received during November 2020 together with an allocation of budget during 2021/22. The Program will be targeted at supporting the key industries of Manufacturing, Construction, Accommodation, Food, Retail, and Health & Social Care. It is proposed that a procurement exercise is undertaken to secure 4 suppliers to provide additional support in these areas. The first contract to be secured is proposed to be the retail support contract, which will be developed in January with a view to a contract start in February/March, subject to approval from the Policy and Finance Committee.

3.0 Proposals

3.1 It is proposed that Members note the report and provide a strategic steer and comment on any of the programmes.

4.0 Equalities Implications

4.1 There are no equalities implications within the report.

5.0 Digital Implications

5.1 There are no equalities implication within the report

6.0 Financial Implications (FIN20-21/5183)

6.1 During November the Council received an allocation of £2,448,420 in Additional Restrictions Grant to support businesses (alongside the Local Restrictions Support grants for both Open and Closed businesses), which has been used to provide direct grant support to businesses. At the time of writing the report the total spend against the allocation is £1,966,000. This leaves a balance remaining of £484,420.

6.2 As suggested at paragraph 2.5 the Senior Leadership Team agreed to top slice £100,000 from the remaining balance, with the rest of the grant to be distributed as direct grant awards to eligible businesses in order to top up the mandatory grants from the Governments Local Restrictions Support Grant scheme, in order to support the proposal.

6.3 The balance of £200,000 is proposed to be funded through the 2021/22 budget process and is included within the proposed budget report elsewhere on this agenda.

7.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

7.1 This project directly aligns to the Community Plan priority of ‘Deliver inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that Members:

- (a) note the contents of the report;**
- (b) support the proposed Business Resilience Programme detailed at paragraph 2.5 above, recommending to the Policy & Finance Committee that they support the associated funding of £300,000; and**
- (c) provide a strategic steer and comment on any of the programmes.**

Reason for Recommendations

Members are required to be informed of initiatives and programmes undertaken by the Economic Growth Team.

Background Papers

Nil

For further information please contact Neil Cuttell, Business Manager – Economic Growth on Ext. 5853.

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