

Public Document Pack

Mid Devon District Council

Economy Policy Development Group

Thursday, 3 August 2023 at 5.30 pm
Phoenix Chambers, Phoenix House, Tiverton

Next ordinary meeting
Thursday, 5 October 2023 at 5.30 pm

Please Note: This meeting will take place at Phoenix House and members of the Public and Press are able to attend via Teams. If you are intending to attend in person please contact the committee clerk in advance, in order that numbers of people can be appropriately managed in physical meeting rooms.

To join the meeting online, [click here](#)

Membership

Cllr G Cochran
Cllr A Cuddy
Cllr J M Downes
Cllr M Farrell
Cllr B Fish
Cllr M Fletcher
Cllr N Letch
Cllr R Roberts
Cllr G Westcott

AGENDA

Members are reminded of the need to make declarations of interest prior to any discussion which may take place

- 1 **Apologies and Substitute Members**
To receive any apologies for absence and notice of appointment of substitutes.
- 2 **Public Question Time**
To receive any questions relating to items on the Agenda from members of the public and replies thereto.
- 3 **Declaration of Interests under the Code of Conduct**
To record any interests on agenda matters.
- 4 **Minutes** (*Pages 5 - 10*)
To consider whether to approve the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 8th June 2023.
- 5 **Chairman's Announcements**
To receive any announcements that the Chairman may wish to make.
- 6 **Car Parking Working Group Update**
To receive a verbal update from the Chairman of the Working Group, Cllr Guy Cochran.
- 7 **Economic Development Team Update** (*Pages 11 - 18*)
To receive a report from the Director of Place updating Members on activities undertaken by the Economic Development Team during the last two months.
- 8 **Finance and performance update**
To receive a verbal update from the Corporate Manager for Finance, Property and Climate Change and to receive further training designed to provide greater clarity on the financial responsibilities falling within the remit of this Policy Development Group.
- 9 **Identification of items for the next meeting**
Members are asked to note that the following items are already identified in the work programme for the next meeting:
 - Economic Development Team Update

Note: This item is limited to 10 minutes. There should be no discussion on the items raised.

Stephen Walford
Chief Executive
Wednesday, 26 July 2023

Meeting Information

From 7 May 2021, the law requires all councils to hold formal meetings in person. The Council will enable all people to continue to participate in meetings via Teams.

If you want to ask a question or speak, email your full name to Committee@middevon.gov.uk by no later than 4pm on the day before the meeting. This will ensure that your name is on the list to speak and will help us ensure that you are not missed. Notification in this way will ensure the meeting runs as smoothly as possible.

Please note that a reasonable amount of hardcopies at the meeting will be available, however this is a limited number. If you are attending the meeting and would like a hardcopy of the agenda we encourage that you notify Member Services in advance of the meeting to ensure that a hardcopy is available. Otherwise, copies of the agenda can be found on our website.

If you would like a copy of the Agenda in another format (for example in large print) please contact Andrew Seaman on: aseaman@middevon.gov.uk

Public Wi-Fi is available in all meeting rooms.

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Public Document Pack Agenda Item 4

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **ECONOMY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 8 June 2023 at 5.30 pm

Present

Councillors

G Cochran, A Cuddy, J M Downes,
M Farrell, B Holdman, N Letch, R Roberts
and G Westcott

Apology

Councillor

B Fish

Also Present

Councillors

D Broom, J Buczkowski, S J Clist, F W Letch and D Wulff

Also Present

Officers

Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Richard Marsh (Director of Place), Matthew Page (Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste), Paul Deal (Corporate Manager for Finance, Property and Climate Change), Luke Howard (Environment and Enforcement Manager), Adrian Welsh (Strategic Manager for Growth, Economy and Delivery), Zoë Lentell (Economic Development Team Leader), Linda Perry (Economic Development Officer), David Parker (Member Services & Policy Research Officer) and Sarah Lees (Member Services Officer)

1 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN (00:00:17)**

RESOLVED that Cllr J M Downes be elected Chairman of the Economy Development Group for the municipal year 2023/24.

2 **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN (00:07:26)**

RESOLVED that Cllr M Farrell be elected Vice Chairman of the Policy Development Group for the municipal year 2023/2024.

3 **START TIME OF MEETINGS (00:08:49)**

It was **AGREED** that the start time of meetings for the remainder of the municipal year remain at 5.30pm.

4 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00:09:17)**

Apologies were received from Cllr B Fish who was substituted by Cllr B Holdman.

Cllr M Fletcher attended the meeting virtually.

5 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00:09:32)**

There were no public questions.

6 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00:09:53)**

No interests were declared under this item.

7 **MINUTES (00:10:11)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2023 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

8 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (00:10:48)**

The Chairman had the following announcements to make:

- He informed those present that he would be taking the Introduction and Overview item from the Economic Development Team after the financial outturn report.
- He stated that whilst the Policy Development Group did not have many statutory responsibilities it did have responsibility for maximising opportunities to improve revenue streams.
- He also reminded Members that the meeting was being recorded and the public would be able to access the recording during and after the meeting.

9 **REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT FOR 2022 - 2023 (00:17:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive presenting the Revenue and Capital Outturn figures for the financial year 2022/2023 for both the General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The contents of the report were outlined and a high level summary provided as follows:

- The outturn position on the General Fund showed a small overspend. This represented a good achievement given the current economic circumstances. The Housing Revenue Account showed a small underspend.
- Notable variances included a higher than expected staff pay award, investments in schemes such as Bin-It 123, a significant VAT refund and an impairment of some loans to 3 Rivers. Despite this small overspend, reserves remained in a healthy position and amounts set aside for future planned capital projects remained untouched.
- Returns on interest rates had been higher than expected.
- It was confirmed that there was no further external borrowing requirement for this financial year.
- Regarding service areas that fell within the remit of this Policy Development, Parking Services showed a £40k over achievement on income and the Economic Development area had come in under budget caused by delays in incurring expenditure. Overall there were no particular issues to highlight from a financial position.

Discussion took place regarding:

- An underspend was showing against some projects as they had not fully got off the ground yet. This could be due to a number of reasons, for example, not being successful in being awarded the funding applied for, capacity within the team or procurement issues. However, it was still hoped that these projects could be brought forward as soon as feasible.
- Members were informed that the forum for discussing economic development growth principally took place at the Planning Policy Advisory Group, which all Members could attend.

Note: * Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

10 **MID DEVON ECONOMY - INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW (00:30:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Director of Place providing an introduction to Mid Devon's local economy, its current position including arising issues and opportunities.

The following was highlighted within the report and by way of presentation:

- The reporting structure of the team was outlined, officers introduced and the role of the function of the team explained.
- Key themes in the work undertaken included, Employment and Skills, Place, Infrastructure, Hi-Tech, Innovation and Green Energy, Agriculture, Food and Drink. It was explained that this Policy Development Group had been a key player in determining these themes as priorities for Economic Development.
- Examples of Growth and Infrastructure Projects were provided and the Shared Prosperity Fund was explained.
- The importance of 'Visit Mid Devon' and the Tiverton Pannier Market which were managed by the team were also highlighted as key areas of work.
- The team actively sought to engage and work with town councils to develop projects in their towns. Members were encouraged to talk to the team at any time about particular schemes, ideas or concerns.

Note: * Report previously circulated; copy attached to the minutes.

11 **ESTABLISHMENT OF A CAR PARKING WORKING GROUP (00:47:00)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Environment and Enforcement Manager providing an update on the forming of a future Car Parking and Permit working group to consider potential future fee and tariff prices. The working group was designed to feed into potential future price increases and assist the consultation by involving the necessary personnel and local representatives from the District.

Consideration was given to:

- The process that had led to the proposal to set up a Working Group.
- The emphasis going forward would be to engage with local businesses and the community.
- The recommendations from the Working Group being a part of the budget setting process each year.

- The aim of the first meeting of the Working Group would be to set the Terms of Reference.
- It was explained that the Group would not only need to look at fees and charges but also, and importantly, amenity provision, demand and supply, availability of parking, discount policies, permits and payment options. There was much to consider in order to make better use of car parks for the public. This would need to be made clear in the Terms of Reference.
- Sustainable travel would be considered as a part of this but would also be picked up and promoted through other Policy Development Groups going forwards.

It was **AGREED** that three Members of the Policy Development Group would join the Working Group, each one representing the views of their town. These would be:

Cllr G Cochran (for Crediton) who volunteered to be Chairman
 Cllr A Cuddy (For Tiverton)
 Cllr M Fletcher (For Cullompton)

Note: * Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

12 **MID DEVON'S PROSPERITY PROGRAMME: UPDATE (01:05:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Director of Place updating Members on the progress under the Shared Prosperity Investment Plan (Year 1:2022/23) and informing them of the Year 2 (2023/24) Delivery Plan for Mid Devon's Prosperity Programmes.

Prior to discussion of the SPF the Group were provided with pertinent information by the Economic Development Officer in relation to types of employment in Mid Devon, the health of the high streets (which were continuing to suffer as a result of the pandemic), employment space and business growth hubs.

Following this the contents of the report were outlined and reference made to the following:

- The primary aim for the team was to make best use of a limited funding resource.
- The team had to be regimented in terms of what it could do as strict criteria was in place regarding funding.
- Many of the projects listed in the report were now in the delivery phase.
- Members of the Policy Development Group were encouraged to act as ambassadors in order to help promote these schemes.
- Recent significant success had included the creation of business hubs.
- Business support programmes were being run by Devon County Council and where there were opportunities to align the District Council's schemes with theirs the team ensured that they did.

Consideration was given to:

- The Policy Development Group had been proactive in the proposal of many of the projects listed in the report.

- It remain a key challenge of the Group to try and identify where economic opportunities existed.
- There was a significant need for ‘shovel ready projects’ as funding was often unexpected but needed utilising quickly according to strict criteria.
- Disappointment with the delay of receiving funding. The first tranche had been received late and the second had not been received yet.
- Members were encouraged to contact the team to understand how the SPF allocation worked within their areas.
- A lot of work had already been undertaken to prepare businesses in readiness for receive funds to grow their business, for example, getting three quotes in order to fulfil any procurement requirements.
- 25 businesses were due to attend a business launch event at Petroc the following day.

Note: * Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

13 **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM UPDATE (01:20:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Director of Place updating Members on activities undertaken by the Economic Development Team during the last quarter.

Note: * Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

14 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (01:25:00)**

The items identified for the next meeting were **NOTED**.

A brief discussion took place regarding the reporting of the economic benefits brought about by the 3 Rivers company and whether this should be reported through the Economy Policy Development Group. It was explained that it may not be wholly appropriate for this to come through the Growth and Economic Development team and that the reporting of this would likely be taking place elsewhere.

Going forwards, the Chairman encouraged Members to bring forward ideas so that the team could be discharged to develop schemes and projects, where funding allowed, in order to improve the economic position of the district.

(The meeting ended at 6.58 pm)

CHAIRMAN

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Report for: Economy PDG

Date of Meeting:	3 August 2023
Subject:	Economic Development Team Update
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Steve Keable, Planning & Regeneration
Responsible Officer:	Richard Marsh, Director of Place
Exempt:	N/A
Wards Affected:	All wards
Enclosures:	N/A

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

To update members on activities undertaken by the Economic Development Team during the last two months.

Recommendation(s):

That members note the contents of the report.

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report provides an update on activities carried out by the Economic Development Team over the last two months, since the last committee meeting.

2.0 Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)

2.1 We received the funding for Year Two of SPF and the first year of the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) on 10 July 2023.

2.2 Prosperity Programme Grants

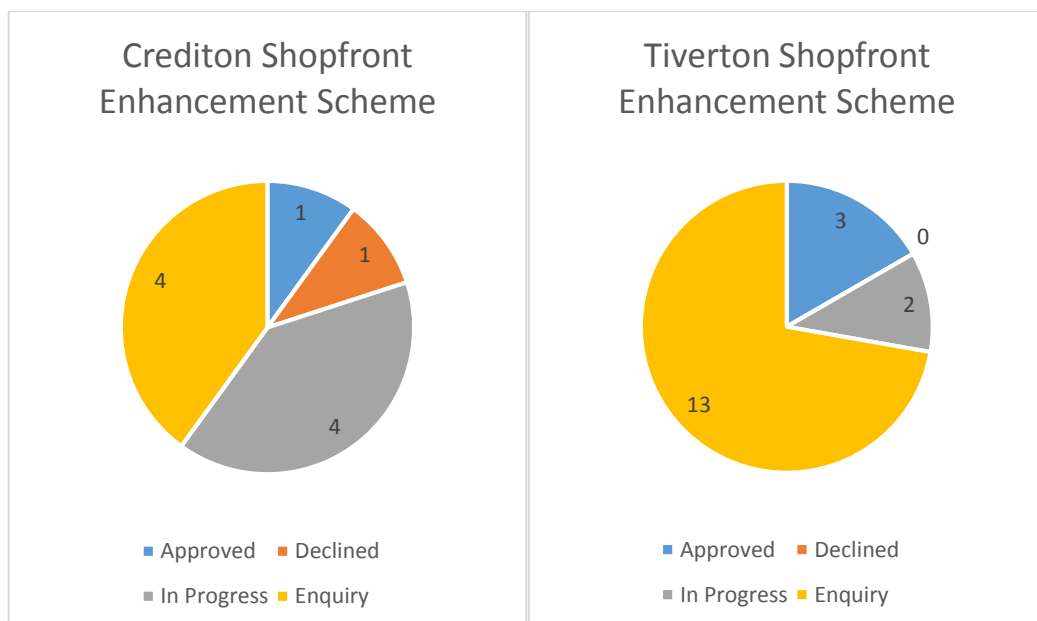
2.2.1 The first round of the Prosperity Programme grants opened for Expressions of Interest. Although Expressions of Interest won't close until 2024, those who register an interest by 23 July and pass the gateway criteria will be invited to full application for the first Funding Panel in September.

2.3 Love Your Town Centre

2.3.1 The Vibrant Town Centre Scheme closed for Round 1 applications on 3 July. We received seven applications across all three towns, six of which were successful (one offered a partial award) and one was deferred to the next round. Applications are being notified of the funding decisions and we will update Members as to the successful projects at the meeting.

2.3.2 The next round opens for applications on 2 October. This scheme contributes towards SPF outputs on number of arts, cultural and heritage events supported as well as increased footfall. Organisations and businesses are encouraged to apply for projects that will deliver against these outputs.

2.3.3 Since the previous PDG, we've received two applications for Shopfront Enhancement Scheme grants and a further two enquiries. This scheme contributes towards SPF outputs on improvements to town centre commercial units. In total, since the scheme launched in December, we have seen the following interest:



2.4 Field to Fork

2.4.1 This quarter, Field to Fork has supported Tiverton Farmers' Market and Cullompton Farmers' Market introduce new producers to their markets through a trader support scheme. The fund also supported Mid Devon producers to trade at the Mid Devon Show for the first time this year, with around ten new traders signing up to the scheme.

2.4.2 We are supporting businesses to promote their offer through a Taste Mid Devon promotional campaign 'Meet the Producer'. A number of producers have come forward to follow their food / drink journey and highlight the care our producers take to rear, produce and grow their product. A local photographer has been commissioned to capture that journey, which will be turned into a series of promotional posts to be published online.

2.5 Sustainable Visitor Economy

2.5.1 Mid Devon's first Walking Festival preparation is underway. To date we have received a positive response from organisations and Town and Parish Councils who are willing to co-ordinate a walk or support the festival in some way across the District.

3.0 Business Support Activities

3.1 Jobs Fairs

3.1.1 Nearly 300 people and 22 employers attended the June jobs fair event at Tiverton Pannier Market. A higher proportion of younger jobseekers attended this event to previous, which is likely due to the timing for school leavers looking for summer jobs and apprenticeship opportunities. The next event is on 20 September.

3.2 Business Support Surgery

3.2.1 On 21 June, we held a Business Support Surgery at The Bookery in Crediton with representatives from the Economic Development and Revenues Teams. The event was well supported by local Members but saw a small attendance from the business community with a total of 4 enquiries. The team advised those businesses on the current grant opportunities and rate reliefs as well as business growth and training support.

3.2.2 Although attendance was small, feedback from the business community was positive. A further event is being planned for November/December to be held in Cullompton.

3.3 Business Support: Thrive

3.3.1 The Thrive business support programme with Devon County Council (funded through the European Regional Development Fund) ran from March 2020 to

June 2023. During that time, 350 Mid Devon businesses received support through the programme, of which:

- The top 5 sectors engaged were:
 - Agriculture, forestry, fishing
 - Manufacturing
 - Wholesale and retail trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles
 - Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities
 - Accommodation and Food Service Activities
- 82% Trading, 18% pre/start-up
- 49% Sole Traders

3.3.2 Businesses will continue to receive support through a replacement programme funded through the Shared Prosperity Fund. In addition to the generic business support, this will also include focused support for the agri-tech sector and workshops to support businesses become employers.

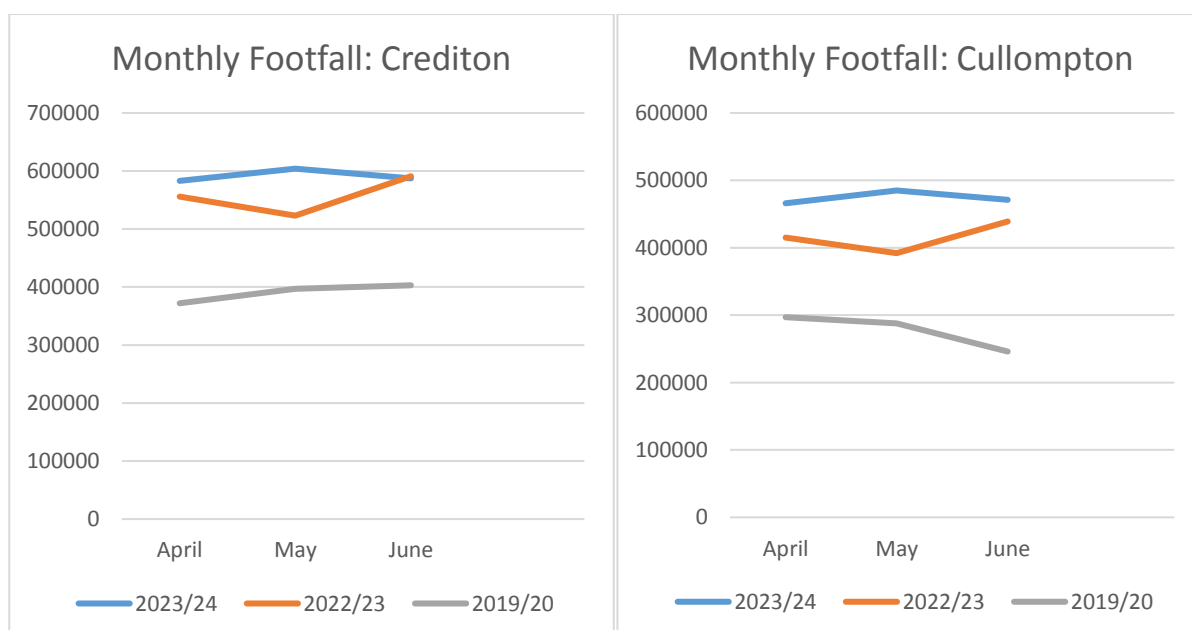
4.0 Town Centre Health

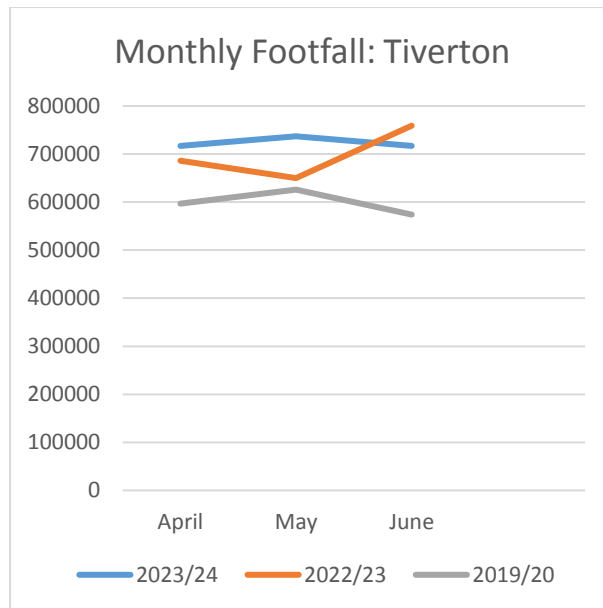
4.1 Shop Surveys

4.1.1 Each quarter, members of the team carry out a shop survey in Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton, monitoring shop vacancy rates. The next survey is due to take place in July and the latest vacancy data will be provided verbally at the meeting.

4.2 Town Centre Footfall

4.2.1 We now have access to footfall data for Crediton, Cullompton and Tiverton town centres. The first quarter of 2023/24 shows that on average, footfall exceeds pre-pandemic levels. Footfall is normally higher during school holiday times (Easter and May half term); 2022 had a later May half-term (which fell in the first week of June) as well as Platinum Jubilee celebrations on 4 and 5 June which spiked the footfall that month:





4.3 Cullompton Heritage Action Zone

4.3.1 Works to enhance the public realm are due to start late July and take approximately 5 months to complete. The work will be phased to minimise disruption to residents and businesses, but unavoidably there will be some disruption. The appointed contractor will be liaising with adjacent properties to update them on the programme. The works comprise the realignment of the kerb line, new high quality paving, new street furniture including planters and landscaping and improvements to the drainage.

4.3.2 The aim of the project is to make the Town centre a more desirable place for businesses, visitors, investors and residents.

4.3.3 The grants for property owners, focused around Fore Street, to improve their properties are progressing with several properties now complete and several now in the pipeline. Grants are still available for people to apply.

4.4 Crediton Masterplan

4.4.1 Work continues on the Crediton Masterplan; the first stakeholder consultation event took place on 25 May. This was the initial consultation session to support the creation of the Crediton Masterplan, outlining the background to the project, the team and a summary of existing plans and evidence. This is followed up by a first round of public consultation, which is currently underway.

5.0 Visitor Economy

5.1 Visit Mid Devon

5.1.1 The Visit Mid Devon project continues to work in partnership with Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life (TIC service). This quarter we have had another 7 businesses list with our Visit Mid Devon project, which now totals 248. The

new guide launched for 2023/24 and highlights a number of Mid Devon businesses, which you can download at <https://www.visitmiddevon.co.uk/>.

5.1.2 We are running a campaign 'Escape to Mid Devon' with adverts in a number of train stations running from Plymouth to Reading and a 'welcome to' at Tiverton Parkway.

5.1.3 We continue to support our leisure, tourism and hospitality businesses through campaigns, blogs, joint promotions and funding / training news. We have engaged with a number of businesses to promote the opportunities to grow the visitor economy through the Shared Prosperity Fund.

5.2 Visitor Signage

5.2.1 Through the Welcome Back Fund, a series of Visitor Information Boards were installed in Crediton, Cullompton, Tiverton and Bampton. The Economic Development Team has identified alternative funding to support a similar board in Bradninch. The team is consulting with Bradninch Town Council over the content and a draft design should be ready by September.

5.2.2 Phase Two of the Tiverton Public Realm Project has commenced with the team engaging with the Town Centre Partnership over opportunities for further visitor information boards. We are looking at different options for frames and functionality and engaging with Highways over potential locations.

Financial Implications

The report is an information report and does not of itself have any financial implications and require any decisions. The report is however providing members with information which is pertinent to the utilisation of SPF and REPF grant monies as well as other grant funding – including the the Cullompton HAZ project.

It is hoped that the report demonstrates that the Economy and Growth team is achieving in line with expectations in terms of the successful utilisation of grant monies and other financial resources.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications arising from this information report.

Risk Assessment

There are no further risks associated with the updates in this report that have not already been reported.

Impact on Climate Change

The impact of individual projects on climate change has been included in the individual reports that will have already been presented to committee.

Equalities Impact Assessment

It is acknowledged that there is a relationship between economy and equality whereby disadvantaged groups of people can have greater or lesser opportunities

for economic advantage depending on the climate and growth potential. Economically disadvantaged individuals are socially disadvantaged individuals whose ability to compete in the free enterprise system has been impaired due to diminished capital or credit opportunities as compared to others in the same or similar line of business who are not socially disadvantaged. There are unfortunate intersections between socioeconomic status and those with protected characteristics or from marginalised or minority communities putting them at greater risk of social and therefore economic disadvantage. Social and digital isolation issues across a rural district has the potential to exacerbate these risks.

Mid Devon's Prosperity Programme and the Economic Strategy outline key projects to tackle these risks and grow the economy. They are supported by equality assessments and communication plans.

Key strands of the work of the Economy and Growth team continue to seek to address and tackle causes of inequality and deprivation.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

The work of the Growth, Economy and Delivery team supports the corporate objectives for the economy:

- Bringing new businesses into the District
- Business development and growth
- Improving and regenerating our town centres
- Growing the tourism sector

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date: 18 July 2023

Statutory Officer: Maria DeLeiburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 18 July 2023

Chief Officer: Richard Marsh

Agreed by Corporate Director

Date: 18 July 2023

Performance and risk: Stephen Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 26 July 2023

Cabinet member notified: yes

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Zoë Lentell, Economic Development Team Leader
Email: zlentell@middevon.gov.uk
Telephone: 01884 234298

Background papers: na