

Economic Development Service Update

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Richard Chesterton
Responsible Officer: Stephen Walford, Director for Growth

Reason for Report: To update members on progress with key Economic Development Service Priorities

RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted

Relationship to Corporate Plan: It supports the corporate objectives for the economy.

Financial Implications: There are no additional financial implications arising from the report

Legal Implications: None

Risk Assessment: None

Equality Impact Assessment: None anticipated

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress of key projects and initiatives developed or supported by the Growth, Economy and Delivery team (GED team).

2.0 Devon Hydro and Smart Grid Project ('Mills Project')

- 2.1 The mills project is being presented to the Economy PDG at this meeting, and this will cover the following areas:
- Study and reporting undertaken by the University of Exeter's Penryn Campus (CUC) Masters Students
 - Commissioning of works towards necessary statutory permissions required for scheme delivery
 - Funding opportunities, next steps and timescales.

3.0 Rural Broadband

- 3.1 An application to the gigabit voucher scheme was submitted to DCMS in partnership with other EHOD authorities in January 2018. This bid was unsuccessful, but only for the reason that the government has decided to put a national voucher scheme into place. This means that businesses will be able to apply for vouchers valued at up to £3000 per business to improve their broadband connections. A positive element of the scheme is the ability to aggregate vouchers, so a group of businesses could work together to improve broadband connection to a whole business park, for instance.

This is something that the Economic Development team will be promoting with business communities across the district.

- 3.2 There is still the opportunity to develop a bid to the Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) fund, but this is complicated due to the changing landscape at Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS). The programme's latest mapping shows that they have expanded their proposed fibre network to include several areas within the district to the west of Tiverton. This creates potential duplication with the initial project proposal put forward to members towards the end of 2017, and Mid Devon District Council would find it difficult to override the official body for delivering broadband in the HotSW area. We therefore need to focus on working with CDS to ensure that delivery of services proceeds and that the same outcomes are met.

4.0 Enquiries & Investments

- 4.1 The GED team are now in conversation with every employment land owner with an allocation in the local plan. The purpose of establishing this dialogue is to get a better understanding of when sites might come forward, the barriers preventing them from coming forward and what role the Council may need to play in helping them to come forward for development.
- 4.2 There is significant demand in the district for B1, B2 and B8 classification employment space. With the district at almost full employment, we are able to focus on supporting inward investment and indigenous business growth in areas that will hopefully achieve skills progression and higher paid jobs.
- 4.3 Work is well underway at Hitchcocks' Business Park at Willand, with the demolition of some of their older buildings and their replacement with a modern, 31,000 sqft unit which has already received significant interest. Further to this, Hitchcocks Business Park has been shortlisted for a South West award with the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, for the best commercial development in the region.
- 4.4 Since our last meeting Goonvean have commenced works on the land at Venn Farm near junction 28. This textile and aggregates business is building out 128,000 sqft of B1 and B2 space which is expected to be completed in 2019.

5.0 Cullompton Townscape Heritage Scheme

- 5.1 The Heritage Lottery Board will be meeting on the 21st May to make decisions about applications to this, the last round of the Townscape Heritage Initiative Programme. Mid Devon District Council's application for Cullompton is the only application going forward from the south-west, so we have high hopes that it will be successful this time round, but it is expected to receive strong competition from other regions of England. We will hear the outcome soon after the 21st May, and this will be relayed to members as soon as we are able.

6.0 Masterplanning

- 6.1 As members will be aware, the public consultation on the Tiverton Masterplan is currently underway, and will finish on June 10th 2018. Once this feedback has been collated and considered the Economy PDG will be updated and it is suggested that the group may wish to receive a presentation on the findings.
- 6.2 The Culm Garden Village masterplanning exercise has begun, and there have been a number of stakeholder events take place across the town. The need to deliver a

Cullompton Masterplan in parallel with the Culm Garden Village Masterplan has been agreed, and work is being undertaken by officers to commission the piece of work. It is likely that the masterplanning exercise will begin at the end of the summer.

- 6.3 A masterplanning exercise for Crediton has been agreed in principle to be taken forward in the next financial year.

7.0 Tiverton Shopfront Scheme

- 7.1 The Tiverton Shopfront Scheme continues to receive a steady stream of applications. There is now £2,673 left uncommitted in the scheme, with a couple of enquiries still outstanding. This is a valuable scheme for encouraging and supporting town centre businesses to maintain and update their shopfronts and keep the main shopping areas in a tidy condition. The original funding for the scheme came from government through the High Street Innovation Fund. Once the scheme is fully committed, it may be something that members may want to continue to invest in in the future.

8.0 Tiverton Night Market

- 8.1 Tiverton's Night Market Events (Electric Nights) are scheduled throughout the spring and summer, with the first event having taken place on the 5th of May, themed around a masquerade. These events are a significant success for the district, and have won a national and county award. They continue to pull thousands of visitors and residents into the area. A verbal update on the 5th of May event will be provided at this PDG.

9.0 EHOD Economic Strategy

- 9.1 The Policy Development Group received an update on progress with the Exeter and Heart of Devon Shared Economic Strategy at its last meeting in March 2018. The EHOD Economic Strategy identifies areas of joint working where we can add value to economic initiatives by working together with our colleagues in the Greater Exeter area. The Strategy is now 18 months old and at the last officers meeting it was agreed to refresh the Economic Strategy to reflect the new economic landscape, including the development of the LEP productivity plan, and the proposed LEP industrial strategy. One area of joint working we are pursuing is on the Skills and Employment agenda, where as a single Council we may not be able to influence sufficiently. The EHOD officers group is actively looking at a project to support Skills development in the construction sector, which will be particularly important given the proposals for future development.

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List of Background Papers: None