

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

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')

The Policy Development Group considered a presentation at its last meeting. Since then progress has been made in developing bids and any further verbal update will be provided on the day.

3.0 Enquiries & Investments

The GED team are continuing discussions with every land owner with an employment allocation in the local plan. This is helping us gain a better understanding of when sites might come forward and what potential barriers there are. The Council can then decide what actions are required to assist in bringing these sites forward.

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.

In the last couple of months we have had a couple of internal re-location enquiries, where we have been working with businesses to find suitable sites within the district so as not to lose them to the area. This is becoming increasingly difficult as there is a paucity of available sites within the district.

4.0 Cullompton Heritage Project

We heard at the end of May that the Council's bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund's (HLF) Townscape Heritage Programme was once again unsuccessful. This is a great disappointment after all the hard work put into the project over the last three years by the various partners. Feedback from the Heritage Lottery Fund noted the strength of the application but that they had an overwhelming number of applications. In total there were 24 applications nationally to this round, of which only 5 were successful.

However, we are actively looking at ways in which we can take forward some of the strands of the original bid. We have had a very positive discussion with Historic England about how to proceed with a formal partnership under their 'Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas', which may offer the external engagement and some of the funding envisaged under the original HLF scheme. A further meeting will be held with Historic England at the end of July.

5.0 Connection the Culm Project

Members of the GED team have been working with Blackdown Hills AONB, DCC, the Environment Agency, Devon Wildlife Trust, the National Trust and other partners to develop a bid to the last round of the Interreg 2 Seas European Funding Programme. The partners are applying for approximately €903,000 to support activities to:

- Make the Culm river and its floodplain more resilient to flood and drought using nature-based systems and approaches
- Improve water quality and biodiversity on the Culm and consequently in the Exe and its estuary
- Establish an engaged and committed community of knowledgeable and empowered citizens that supports the use of nature-based solutions to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change

The bid has now reached the second round of the application process, with a full bid to be submitted in August. If successful, this project will be able to supplement schemes to mitigate flooding, green infrastructure and the development of a country park for the Culm Garden Village.

6.0 Masterplanning

The Tiverton Masterplan concluded its first round of consultation in June. A report on the results of this consultation will be considered by this Group at its September meeting.

The Culm Garden Village masterplanning has begun, initially considering a vision for the garden village and a number of key principles to inform its development. The first community stakeholder session has been held and further workshops are taking place in July to look at the constraints of the site and consider the opportunities the site offers in terms of infrastructure and community facilities provision. It is anticipated that public consultation on these aspects will take place in the Autumn.

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

Masterplanning for Crediton has been agreed in principle to be taken forward in the next financial year.

7.0 Tiverton Night Market

Tiverton's Night Market events (Electric Nights Streetfood) are continuing to prove popular with local residents and visitors. This year, following customer feedback, the events have been expanded to include other artisan products including handcrafted goods and local produce. Both May and June's events (themed respectively as 'May Masquerade' and 'Magical Mayhem') were successful with crowds turning out to enjoy the music, food and entertainment. A verbal update on the 7 July event will be provided at this PDG.

8.0 EHOD Economic Strategy

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 Economic Development Officers from the four Councils have recently reviewed the current strategy and consider that the policy direction and priorities are still fit for purpose, but that many of the actions identified have now been completed or superseded. It has therefore been agreed that a new action plan will be developed to take the four themes forward:

- Business Transformation
- Inward Investment
- Employment and Skills
- Strategic Planning and Infrastructure

It is envisaged that an updated action plan will be presented to the Group later in the year.

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Circulation of the Report: Cllr Richard Chesterton
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List of Background Papers: None