

## **Appendix 1**

### **Emergency COVID-19 business and employment support, community support and recovery initiatives**

#### Business Assistance

The Growth, Economy and Delivery team has been working alongside the Revenues and Benefits team in processing Government funded business grants. Over £20 million of business grants have been issued following more than 1,700 applications. This relates to the initial scheme up to the 28<sup>th</sup> of August close. The Government Discretionary Grant Scheme has been available to businesses which did not qualify under the previous grants, and which fell within certain criteria, such as operating from shared workspace, or operating within one of the District's priority business sectors. Launched at the end of May, the scheme has now closed and all grant payments have been made. The scheme supported over 220 businesses, providing £1,129,000 in grants and helping to protect over 910 local jobs.

There are two grant schemes for businesses affected by the latest national restrictions:

Local Restrictions Grant Scheme (LRGS) for local or national restrictions with addendum for the nationwide restrictions for businesses with business rates accounts that have been forced to close their main business due to the national lockdown

Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) is a discretionary local scheme for all businesses that have stayed open but have suffered a severe loss of income directly because of the national lockdown or for businesses without a business rates account that have been forced to close their main business due to the national lockdown.

Applications opened on 11<sup>th</sup> November with all applications being run through anti-fraud checks. Payments will be made weekly from 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020.

Prior to the latest national restrictions the GED team has been developing the application process for the next Government grant scheme, to be delivered to local businesses mandated to close if a local lockdown is put in place. Mid Devon is leading on the development of the application process and has been sharing this work with other Devon local authorities to ensure as far as possible that the application process is consistent across the County. These grants would be made payable on a fortnightly basis (in arrears). The level of grant payable will be determined by the rateable value of business premises. For those businesses which are forced to close but which do not operate from rateable premises, there will be a discretionary scheme.

Tier 2 designation will bring further Government funding schemes which are to be confirmed.

The GED team continues to signpost businesses to the Growth Hub for information relating to Government loan schemes and other support. The team has also been liaising with members and local MPs in circumstances where businesses are still falling through the gaps in support provision.

#### Community Support Plan for Vulnerable Residents

The Mid Devon COVID 19 Support Fund is a Devon County Council funded hardship fund administered by CHAT and Navigate Charity on behalf of Mid Devon District Council. The fund allows for emergency payments to those in financial hardship due to the Covid19 outbreak to pay for essentials such as food, energy costs, essential travel etc. The scheme continues to receive a steady stream of applications and hardship is increasing.

#### Recovery Interventions and Prioritisation

A range of initiatives are aimed at supporting businesses and striving towards building the economy back better. The County Council is setting out a package of support and seeking funding of circa £60 million to take forward a number of the priorities, working with Team Devon partners to deliver the 'Team Devon' COVID-19 Economy and Business Recovery Prospectus. The prospectus focuses upon securing support and delivering relief in four core areas: Our Businesses, Our Places, Our People and Our Opportunities.

#### Business and Sectors update

The 'Made in Devon' initiative is a brand for businesses looking to demonstrate their quality promoted through a comprehensive marketing campaign and coupled with an approved trader scheme, which indicates to customers that the business is legal, honest and fair. District Council Officers continue to liaise with County Council colleagues with this emerging scheme.

The Small and Medium Enterprises and Tourism 'Kick Start Grants' were launched on 1st September 2020 and have been administered on behalf of the HOTSW LEP by Devon County Council. The funding for these grants is from the European Regional Development Fund and there are conditions on what the funds can be spent on. After the initial launch more than 600 applications were received in 3 days and the schemes were closed to allow time for processing and consider if there was sufficient funds to re-open. The tourism grants received less take up and was re-opened for 48 hours to additional applications. This second call has now been closed.

The County Council is identifying the degree of over-subscription, and noting the support required by businesses that is currently not eligible for funding under these schemes. This will be used to support additional funding requests to aid our businesses in line with the actions identified in the Recovery Prospectus.

Work continues across the partnership to develop and deliver programmes to assist those sectors that are most vulnerable.

#### Place update

There have been a number of areas of activity in which Mid Devon officers have been engaged with furthering the 'Team Devon' place agenda.

The One Public Estate (OPE) programme is a partnership between the Office of Government Property in Cabinet Office, the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The joint aim is to bring public sector bodies together, to create better places by using public assets more efficiently, creating service and financial benefits for partners and releasing land

for housing and development. The partnership also delivers the Land Release Fund (LRF), a programme which enables councils to bring forward council-owned land for housing development.

Work on the Getting Building Funding continues with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership. This includes 11 projects based in Devon. If projects are successful they will be able to proceed quickly as the funding has to all be spent by March 2022.

Towns Study - the HotSW LEP has allocated funding to a study on town centre regeneration post Covid-19 with 4 towns put forward for more in-depth study as part of the exercise, 2 in Devon and 2 in Somerset. Ilfracombe and Dawlish were put forward for Devon as two of the hardest hit areas. Lessons learnt will be applicable to Mid Devon towns.

#### Opportunities update

Work has begun on developing ideas around entrepreneurship and business start-ups, including building on Student Entrepreneurship activity led by Exeter University, promoting new social entrepreneurs working with the Dartington School of Social Entrepreneurs.

Similarly work has started to scope in more details green technology opportunities and how to stimulate ideas and innovation, through a potential grant or challenge fund if investment can be sourced.

#### People update

Significant additional activity around the People strand has continued. The majority of this activity has related to the delivery of the Chancellor's various announcements around people and skills during July / August, seeking to take forward the implementation of relevant elements. Core elements include:

Work has been ongoing on the implementation and arrangement of the Kickstart Programme within Devon. The Kickstart Scheme provides work placements for young people. It is a £2bn programme to support employers to create 6 month work placements for young people (16-24) to commence in November 2020. The scheme covers a young person's wages for 6 months at minimum wage for up to 25 hours a week. Also provides £1,500 of additional support to the employer towards training and other costs of employment.

Following the beginning of the new term, Devon's Careers Hub staff are currently working across the County to implement the Careers Hubs expansion. This has included recruitment of additional staff to cover the Devon area, following a redistribution of capacity and the picking up of circa 20- 30 additional schools. Though still feeling a significant level of disruption from COVID, Schools have responded well to the offer to date.

Redundancy and Employment Support – Following discussions with partners Devon County Council has employed and deployed two additional members of staff to support emerging redundancy and employment support activity across the County. Staff are currently focused on both working with employers, but also seeking to put in place new

processes and systems for addressing larger shocks which may yet occur. In addition, DCC is in discussions with colleagues at DWP about extra provision and projects in support of vulnerable groups, including youth employment support, mental health provision and support for older workers.

Additional work has been taken forward on NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) monitoring and support as young people have returned to formal learning and vocational training. This has included specific activity focused on tracking and support individual interested in undertaking an apprenticeship across Devon, working with young people facing a barrier to progression, and enhanced tracking activity to capture and provide both the authority and partners with as complete a picture of young people destinations as possible.

Digital Bootcamps / National Retraining Scheme – Led by the Digital Skills Partnership, a formal application for £1.75m of support for 10 fast tracked training opportunities into high demand jobs within the Digital and Engineering sectors has been submitted to DfE on the 2 October 2020. This included 7 proposals covering the Devon and Plymouth area, across digital health careers, cyber security, electrical engineering and photonics and wider digital and coding options.

Whilst subject to national formula and regional decision making, Devon Colleges have benefitted from additional capital support over the summer period, including around £5m of direct support from DfE towards capital renewal, and £3m of funding from the HotSW LEP through the Get Building Fund towards new projects. This includes additional provision at Exeter College (Future Skills Centre), South Devon College (High Tech Centre) and City College Plymouth (Welding Centre).

In addition to the above, work has been ongoing to consider announcements around future skills provision and resourcing. This includes the Government proposed universal offer to provide a Level 3 qualification to all those who have not currently achieved one (within a higher demand area), as well as additional investment in skills capital and other activity. Facilitation of this provision will provide a key focus for the People group over the next period, seeking to align the immediate support packages put forward by the Government to this new provision.

#### 'Love Your Town Centres'

Two rounds of funding from this Council's GED budget under the 'Love your Town Centre Fund' have been developed to date with first round payments having been made within each of the three towns in support of initiatives from local businesses, town councils or organisations for projects that will help revive high streets and help them to flourish for the future. Funding decisions are in the process of being made in relation to the second round of this fund.

Applications must be for projects delivered within designated Mid Devon town centres or within Mid Devon town boundaries with a demonstrable direct positive effect on the town centre.