

Report for: Economy PDG

Date of Meeting:	8 June 2023
Subject:	Economic Development Team Update
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Steve Keable, Planning & Regeneration
Responsible Officer:	Richard Marsh, Director of Place
Exempt:	[details of any exemptions] which are Exempt from publication under paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
Wards Affected:	[name(s) of any wards affected]
Enclosures:	N/A

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

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

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 four months, since the last committee meeting.

2.0 Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)

2.1 Since the last Committee meeting, we received the funding for Year One of the SPF programme. Outcomes from delivery activities are reported separately.

3.0 Business Support Activities

3.1 Jobs Fairs

3.1.1 The Economic Development Team has worked with the Tiverton branch of the DWP on a number of careers fairs. Tiverton Pannier Market hosted another successful event on 22 March with dates confirmed for future events in June and September. Around 300 job hunters and 20 employers attended the March event with more employers expressing an interest in the next event (in June).

3.1.2 Crediton businesses are served by Exeter's branch of the DWP, therefore they have been contacted for dates of upcoming jobs fairs in Exeter so that we can extend our support for Crediton businesses. Options are also being explored for a similar event in Cullompton.

3.2 Business Support Surgery

3.2.1 On 19 April, we held our first Business Support Surgery; a combined event between Revenues and Economic Development to offer support and guidance to our businesses. The event was held at the New Hall in Tiverton.

3.2.2 We saw 10 businesses attend the event with a further 5 enquiries received as a direct result of the reminder messages. Enquiries included:

- Five enquiries about business rates, from which two businesses successfully applied for rate relief.
- Seven funding enquiries, one of which has followed through with an application to the shopfront scheme and others potentially suitable for support through the Shared Prosperity Fund.
- Further enquiries for enquiries for commercial units, training and skills support and recruitment support.

3.2.3 Feedback from the business community was positive; they appreciated being able to talk to us in person. A further event is planned for 21 June at The Bookery in Crediton.

3.3 Digital Skills Training

3.3.1 Through engagement with the town business groups, it was identified that town centre businesses would like support with digital skills. The Team appointed an external provider to deliver a package of workshops in each of the three towns covering:

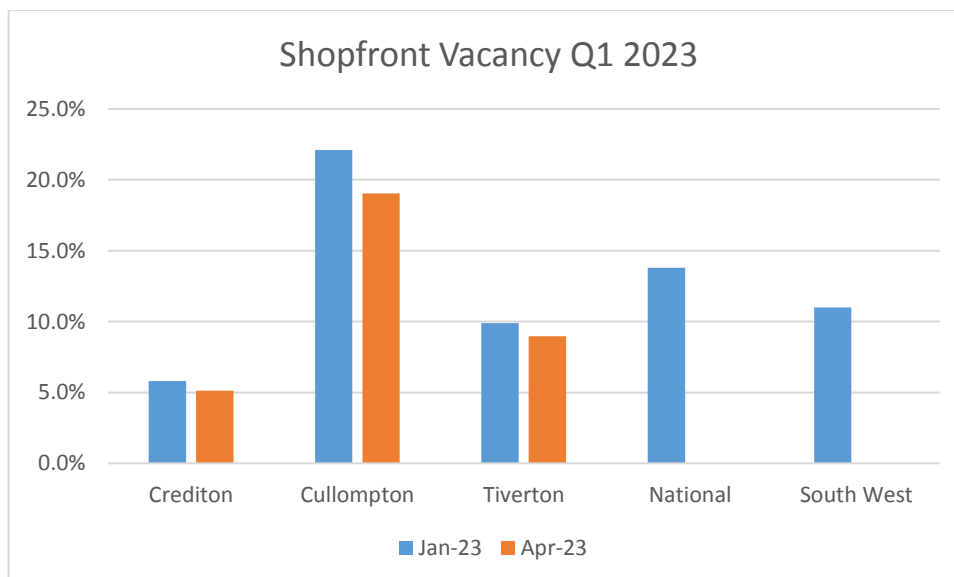
- Google my Business getting businesses to show on Google maps, the benefits of using this feature, reviews, etc
- Connecting Digital and Physical Retail: use of QR codes, intelligent software to connect sales between the two
- Introduction to modern e-commerce: websites and selling products on social media
- Introduction to social media and how to use it for retail businesses (including Facebook and Instagram) with information on hashtags

3.3.2 Despite consulting over days/times for best attendance and a full communication plan including direct engagement with businesses, bookings have been mixed for these workshops and we have not seen the desired outcome for their delivery with 8 Crediton businesses, 1 Cullompton business and 3 Tiverton businesses attending the workshops. There are two sessions remaining over the planned timetable and we are reviewing these with the provider and the town teams to best meet the local need.

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 most recent survey took place in early April and shows a positive change in each town:



4.1.2 In terms of turnover, five businesses vacated premises, with 11 new businesses taking on premises. We are also aware of a further 2 empty premises with new occupants soon to move in.

4.2 Town Centre Footfall

4.2.1 We have commissioned an external supplier to provide us with real-time data to measure and monitor the footfall in our three main towns. 'Geofences' are created to align with the Local Plan maps, measuring footfall within the town centre boundaries. We expect to gain access to the system from June onwards, initially for this financial year only. The data will allow us to better understand the behaviour of our towns by reporting on visitor footfall (broken into time of day and days per week), dwell time, visitor hotspots in our towns and visitor origin (where they visit from). We will use this to guide future campaigns and feedback to town teams and business groups (to help evaluate impact of events).

4.3 Tiverton Public Realm Enhancement Project

4.3.1 This is an active project to improve Tiverton Town Centre's Public Realm, with specific outputs relating to pedestrian signage using funds secured through S106 specifically for this work.

4.3.2 The first phase is nearing completion with a series of new fingerposts being installed over a two-week period in June. The next phase, focusing on visitor information boards, is in progress with consultation activities with the Town Centre Partnership and procurement exercises underway.

4.4 Crediton Masterplan

4.4.1 Work continues on the Crediton Masterplan; the first stakeholder consultation event takes place on 25 May. This is 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 will be followed up by a further consultation event seeking views and input from all stakeholders.

5.0 Visitor Economy

5.1 Visit Mid Devon

5.1.1 The Visit Mid Devon project continues to support our leisure, tourism and hospitality businesses with free website listings. This is complemented by a package of other support including digital (social media), analogue (the Visit Mid Devon Guide and promotional leaflets) and physical (attendance at Mid Devon Show) as well as ongoing business support.

5.1.2 In the last quarter, we have had 13 businesses add listings to the website (4 accommodation businesses, 2 eateries and 7 leisure and tourism businesses).

5.1.3 We are working through a programme of wider campaigns to improve the Visitor Economy through the SPF and REPF.

Financial Implications

The report is an information report and does not of itself have any financial implications.

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.

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:

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date: LT 23/5/23

Statutory Officer:

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: LT 23/5/23

Chief Officer:

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

Date: LT 23/5/23

Performance and risk:

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: LT 23/5/23

Cabinet member notified: Yes

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Zoë Lentell, Economic Development Team Leader

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Telephone: 01884 234298

Background papers:

None