

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

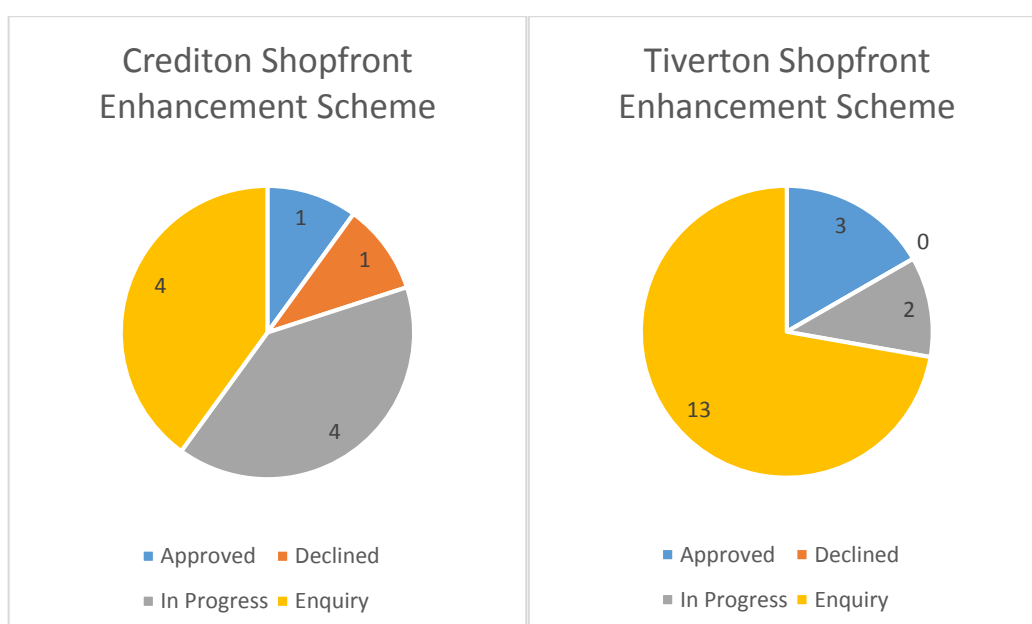
2.2.1 The first round of the Prosperity Programme grants opened for Expressions of Interest. Although Expressions of Interest won't close until 2024, those who register an interest by 23 July and pass the gateway criteria will be invited to full application for the first Funding Panel in September.

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.

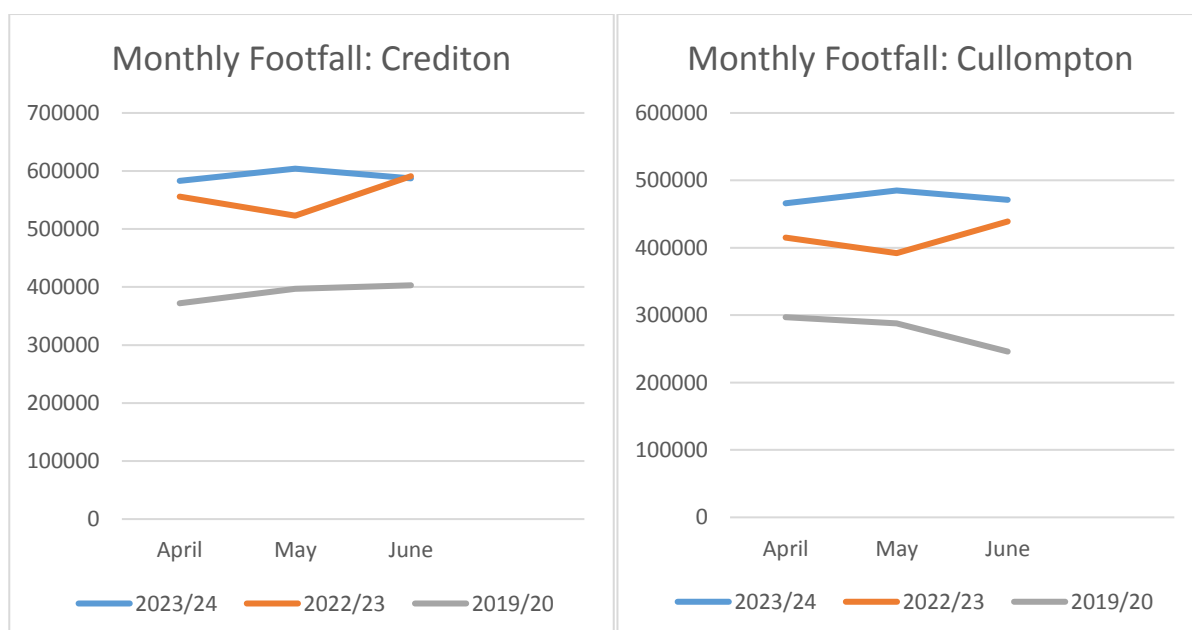
4.0 Town Centre Health

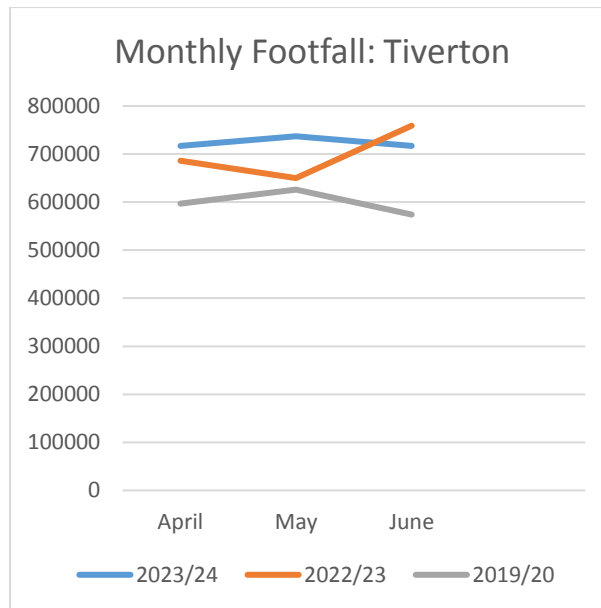
4.1 Shop Surveys

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