

Report for: Economy PDG

Date of Meeting:	5 October 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 Prosperity Programme Grants

- 2.1.1 Following a tender exercise, we appointed Diverse Regeneration Company (DRC) CIC to work with us to undertake the grants administration and monitoring for the Prosperity Programme. DRC will assess and score applications against the scheme criteria before they are considered by the Funding Panel for grant award decisions and follow-up with ongoing monitoring to measure the impact of the funded projects.
- 2.1.2 The Prosperity Programme Grants Scheme launched in June 2023. We received 16 Expressions of Interest by the close of the first round (23 July 2023), of which 10 were invited to Full Application. One applicant has since withdrawn and three applicants have announced their intention to apply to Round Two. The remaining 6 applications will be considered at a Funding Panel meeting on 20 September. A verbal update on grant decisions will be made at the PDG meeting.
- 2.1.3 We continue to receive enquiries about the Grants Scheme and are actively promoting the funding opportunities amongst our business communities.
- 2.1.4 The team has commissioned 'Be Grant Ready' workshops to support businesses, community groups and town and parish councils to produce quality applications. The workshops, one on 11 October and one in February, are free to attend and bookable via EventBrite. Delivered by Business West, the workshops will cover the requirements of the Prosperity Programme and help potential applicants with the fundamentals of bid writing including:
- What makes a good application
 - The funding requirements – understanding match funding
 - How to translate your proposal into outputs
 - The importance of a good business case

2.2 Love Your Town Centre

- 2.2.1 Under the Love Your Town Centre umbrella, we have a number of small-scale grant schemes aimed at increasing the vibrancy and vitality of our three main market towns. These schemes include:
- Shopfront Enhancement Schemes: grants of up to £2,500 to help improve shopfronts or signage.
 - Vibrant Town Centres: grants of up to £5,000 for businesses working in partnership or £1,000 for individual businesses, to go towards town centre projects that drive new footfall through events, cultural or arts activities.

- Business Growth: fit-out grants of up to £2,500 to businesses taking on an empty unit to help bring new commercial, community and leisure opportunities into the town centre.
- Digital High Streets: offers grants of up to £1,500 to help independent high street retailers, leisure and tourism businesses establish or upgrade e-commerce websites.

2.2.2 Since the previous PDG, we've received:

- One application for the Business Growth Scheme for a business taking on an empty unit in Tiverton.
- Two applications for the Shopfront Scheme in Tiverton and three enquiries in Cullompton.

2.2.3 The next round of Vibrant Town Centres opens for applications on 2 October 2023. 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 Business Support: Prosper

2.3.1 Mid Devon businesses have had access to free business supported through the 'Thrive' programme, coordinated by Devon County Council. This scheme ended earlier this year. Through the Shared Prosperity Fund, Mid Devon (and other Devon authorities) have commissioned a follow-on programme of support: Prosper.

2.3.2 Following a tender exercise, Business Information Point (working in partnership with Cosmic) are delivering the support with Devon County Council coordinating the offer.

2.3.3 Prosper will provide a mixture of specialised online support and in-person one-to-one sessions or workshops offering:

- support with running a business,
- help to improve energy efficiency and become more environmentally sustainable,
- support to start a new business and,
- support for businesses looking to take on additional staff.

2.3.4 To access the programme, businesses need to complete an enquiry form on the Heart of the South West Growth Hub's website.

2.4 Local Growth Fund

2.4.1 The Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is offering top-up funding to local authority partners to compliment emerging provision of business support through Shared Prosperity Fund, Rural England Prosperity Fund and other

funding sources. This Local Growth Fund (LGF) is capital funding primarily to support grant funding for SMEs looking to install measures to improve resource/ energy efficiency.

- 2.4.2 The proportion of capital funding available to local authorities is based on the number of enterprises in their geographical area, taken from ONS data, compared to the number of enterprises in entire South West. For Mid Devon, this amounts to £24,245. We have submitted an application to the LEP; we will find out the outcome of our application in early October.
- 2.4.3 If we are successful, we will use the LGF to extend the green business support through the provision of capital grants to help businesses implement actions that reduce their carbon emissions. The introduction of the grant scheme will enable businesses to apply the knowledge gained from the support workshops, generating additional impact from those support interventions. Working with Exeter City and East Devon District Council, we are proposing an aligned scheme whereby the Green Business Grant will offer up to 50% of the cost of any works, to the maximum value of £5,000.

3.0 Town Centre Health

3.1 Shop Vacancies and Footfall

- 3.1.1 Quarter 3 shopfront surveys will be carried out in October and presented to the next PDG meeting along with footfall data.

3.2 Cullompton Heritage Action Zone

- 3.2.1 Works to enhance the public realm are well underway and are currently running to programme. The work are being phased to minimise disruption to residents and businesses, but unavoidably there will be some disruption as works progress. The appointed contractors have been liaising with adjacent properties to keep them updated on the programme. The initial stage of works has now been completed, without the need for three way traffic lights. Work on the next phase is now underway with paving on the southern end currently being laid.
- 3.2.2 The aim of the project is to make the town centre a more desirable place for businesses, visitors, investors and residents.
- 3.2.3 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.
- 3.2.4 The Cultural programme continues to undertake tremendous work in the town. The Roman festival was a big success and achieved excellent engagement and really positive feedback. The public art project is progressing with installations underway. Three permanent pieces of mosaic artwork are being installed at the Library, the Baptist Church and the former Porters restaurant as follows:
- 3.2.5 A 'Selfie' project was created by Art students at Cullompton Community College and 18 members of the public who took part in a workshop at the Hayridge library. It consists of a panel of low-relief ceramic tiles. Each tile was created by participants who took a close-up selfie on their mobile phone. They were then given a raw clay tile on which to build up a self-portrait based on the image they

have captured, including a few faces based on photographs of residents who live at Clark's Court. It has been installed outside the library.

3.2.6 The 'Home' project was undertaken with over 120 pupils from Willowbank Primary School and from St Andrew's Primary School Cullompton PTFA. The programme and resulting ceramic artwork explores the concept of 'home' through 3D modelling and writing. Sessions were led by a local ceramic artist and writer. The children made a small 3D model of the building in which they live, or in which they would like to live.

3.2.7 'Wool Wall' is being installed at the Baptist Church. It is being created from knitted squares which will be cast in clay, these squares have been designed by a local business who worked alongside members of the local community including members of the Baptist Church and ran knitting / crochet workshops to create the knitted squares.

3.2.8 Another wool version of the work will be installed inside the Church as another legacy of this community project.

3.3 Crediton Masterplan

3.3.1 Work continues on the Crediton Masterplan; the first stakeholder consultation event took place on 25 May 2023. 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 has been followed up by a first round of public consultation, which ran from 21 July 2023 until 4 September 2023.

3.3.2 The consultation asked 2 questions:

1. What are the main issues that Crediton town centre currently faces?
2. What opportunities do you think there are to enhance Crediton town centre?

3.3.3 This has led to a broad range of issues being raised by correspondents. In all 78 responses were received which appear to be mainly focused on residents who either live in or visit Crediton Town centre. There was a broad range of comments raised; however most related to traffic, parking and town facilities.

3.3.4 These comments have informed the consultants work in developing proposals which will form the basis of another round of public consultation later this year.

4.0 General Updates

4.1 Jobs Fairs

4.1.1 The team continue to work with the Department for Work and Pensions on jobs fairs. The next event takes place on 20 September at Tiverton Pannier Market. A verbal update on the event will be provided at the PDG meeting.

4.2 Visitor Economy

4.2.1 The Heart of the South West LEP has commissioned Tomorrow's Tourism to develop a business plan for two Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs), one in Devon and one in Somerset. The objectives of this project are:

- To address deep-rooted challenges with a more coordinated, strategic approach.
- To unlock the potential by bringing public and private sector partners together, connecting both the policy and delivery context.
- To reduce the number of unconnected activities, consolidate funding and drive efficiencies.
- To identify the top priorities and the wider opportunities for collaboration.

4.2.2 A representative from the Economic Development Team will attend a workshop in early October, which will focus on the development of the LVEP concept for Devon. It is an opportunity to identify opportunities and risks from the proposal and present a voice for Mid Devon's tourism businesses. Updates following the workshop and as the project develops will be presented to the PDG at a later meeting.

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 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:

Statutory Officer: Maria DeLeiburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date:

Chief Officer: Richard Marsh

Agreed by Corporate Director

Date:

Performance and risk: Dr Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 19 September 2023

Cabinet member notified: (yes/

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Zoë Lentell, Economic Development Team Leader

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Background papers: