

**Report for: Economy PDG**

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Date of Meeting:	16 November 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 A separate report outlines progress up to 30 September 2023 against the SPF Investment Plans

2.2 Activities to highlight over the last month include:

- We have commissioned an extra Be Grant Ready Workshop to take place on 29 November. The first workshop held in October had 14 businesses/organisations attend. We have another 14 booked to attend the November workshop and another 4 booked for January.

- The deadline for expressions of interest for round 2 of the Prosperity Grants was extended and closes on 7 November. As of 30 October, 12 EOIs had been submitted. An update on EOIs received will be provided at the PDG meeting. From the first round, we issued three grant offers, one each against the Growth and Innovation theme, Visitor Economy theme and Work Hub Development theme.
- Applications for the second round of Vibrant Town Centres closed on 31 October. We received one application this round (for Cullompton); the Funding Panel meet on 15 November. The team are exploring options for using unallocated funding this year to support tie-in events with the walking festival to hit outputs for events and activities supported and increased footfall.
- The team has commissioned Work Box CIC to undertake a study looking at opportunities for workhub provision across the District and the potential use of the former Market Centre site as a social work hub. The study will identify gaps in our current provision, how different work hub offers could complement each other and operating models should we pursue a potential facility in Tiverton. This exercise will take 12 weeks, following which an update will be presented to PDG.
- The team is in conversations with Food and Drink Devon, Devon Food Partnership and Devon County Show over potential support packages under the Field to Fork theme. We are planning a meet the buyer event to take place in March 2024, with more updates to be provided at the January PDG.
- Following promotional activities in October, we've received a further nine enquiries for shopfront, digital high street and fit-out grants under the Love Your Town Centre scheme and six enquiries for Prosperity Grants.
- Work continues on the Walking Festival and Sculpture Trail elements. The Visit Mid Devon website now has a dedicated section for the Walking Festival which will be updated with the programme in due course: <https://www.visitmiddevon.co.uk/walking-festival/>.

### **3.0 Local Growth Fund**

3.1 We have received confirmation from the LEP that they have approved our bid for £24,245 Local Growth Funding (LGF) as a top-up to SPF/REPF towards a small-scale grant scheme to support business decarbonisation:

- We intend to launch this scheme with Round 3 of the Prosperity Programme with funding awards in the 2024/25 financial year. The application and decision-making process will align with our existing SPF/REPF processes.
- Businesses are able to access green business advice through the Prosper business support programme. We will use the LGF to extend

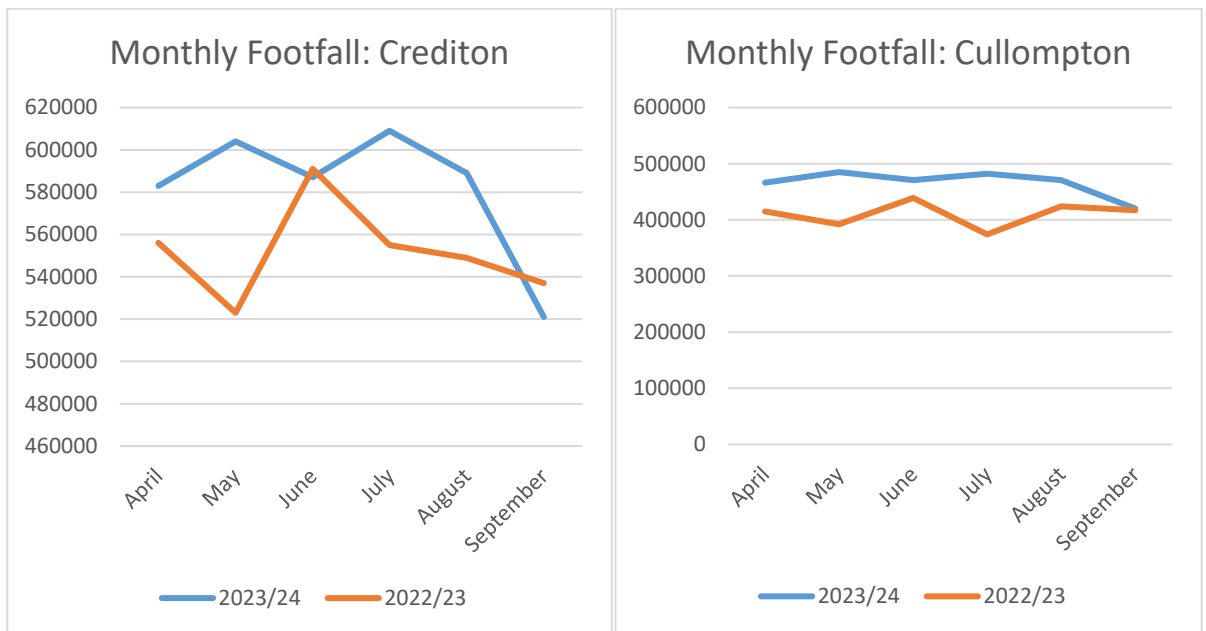
the green business support through the provision of capital grants to help businesses implement actions that reduce their carbon emissions. The introduction of the grant scheme will enable businesses to apply the knowledge gained from the support workshops, generating additional impact from those support interventions.

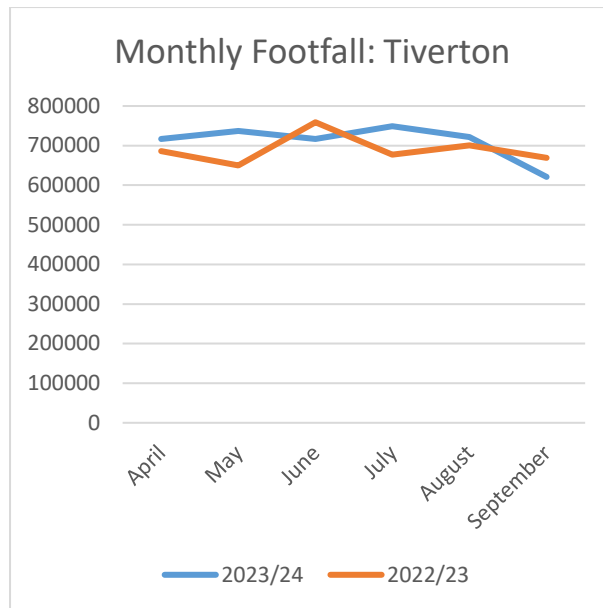
- The Green Business Grant will offer up to 50% of the cost of any works, to the maximum value of £5,000.
- Target impacts:  
Enterprises receiving grant support: 5  
Kg CO2 emissions avoided: 1,000

#### 4.0 Town Centre Health

##### 4.1 Town Centre Footfall

4.1.1 Footfall data for the past three months shows that in all three towns footfall was higher in 2023/24 than the previous year for July and August but lower than the previous year in September. Footfall usually grows in October with the half-term activities, which we will expect to see reflected in the next quarterly report:





## 4.2 Shopfront Surveys

4.2.1 In order to consistently monitor occupancy data across the three towns, we have standardised the baseline data (for instance, the Town Hall had been included in Cullompton's data but not Tiverton's yet both are shown within their respective town centre boundaries as per the 2020 Local Policy Maps). This has resulted in some variations to previously reported statistics. Therefore, for this quarter's report, we have included updated statistics for all three quarters this year to date. Not-actively-trading properties (NAT) are those that are occupied but not open to the public. The national vacancy rate for high streets in quarter 3 was 13.8%.

### Crediton

		Apr-23	Jul-23	Oct-23
<b>Ea</b>	Retail	49.6%	50.4%	49.6%
<b>Eb</b>	Restaurants & Cafés	9.4%	10.3%	11.1%
<b>Ec</b>	Financial & Professional Services	12.0%	12.0%	11.1%
<b>Ee</b>	Health & Medical Services	2.6%	1.7%	2.6%
<b>Ef</b>	Indoor Sport, Recreation & Fitness	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%
<b>Eg</b>	Other uses	2.6%	3.4%	2.6%
<b>SG</b>	Sui Generis, including pubs and takeaways	11.1%	11.1%	10.3%
<b>C1</b>	Accommodation	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%
<b>F1</b>	Learning and Non-Residential Inst.	4.3%	4.3%	3.4%
<b>F2</b>	Local Community	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Vacant	5.1%	3.4%	6.0%
<b>NAT</b>	Not Actively Trading	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%

4.2.2 Crediton is showing an increase of three vacant units from quarter 2, which includes a travel agents, charity shop and the Wetherspoons Pub. The NAT property is the new wine bar opening in the former Natwest bank. The repair works have completed and the unit is due to open soon.

#### Cullompton

		Apr-23	Jul-23	Oct-23
<b>Ea</b>	Retail	37.9%	42.5%	41.4%
<b>Eb</b>	Restaurants & Cafés	6.9%	6.9%	8.0%
<b>Ec</b>	Financial & Professional Services	9.2%	8.0%	8.0%
<b>Ee</b>	Health & Medical Services	4.6%	4.6%	4.6%
<b>Ef</b>	Indoor Sport, Recreation & Fitness	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Eg</b>	Other uses	4.6%	4.6%	4.6%
<b>SG</b>	Sui Generis, including pubs and takeaways	14.9%	13.8%	13.8%
<b>C1</b>	Accommodation	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>F1</b>	Learning and Non-Residential Inst.	2.3%	2.3%	2.3%
<b>F2</b>	Local Community	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%
	Vacant	17.2%	14.9%	13.8%
<b>NAT</b>	Not Actively Trading	1.1%	1.1%	2.1%

4.2.2 Cullompton is showing a decrease of one vacant unit from quarter 2, with the opening of a nail bar. Two properties are now showing as NAT with one temporarily closed (reopening soon) and one property has a new tenant preparing to open. We are aware that since the survey, another vacant unit in Cullompton has a new tenant preparing to open soon.

#### Tiverton

		Apr-23	Jul-23	Oct-23
<b>Ea</b>	Retail	52.5%	52.1%	52.5%
<b>Eb</b>	Restaurants & Cafés	7.6%	7.6%	7.6%
<b>Ec</b>	Financial & Professional Services	6.7%	6.3%	5.9%
<b>Ee</b>	Health & Medical Services	2.9%	2.9%	2.9%
<b>Ef</b>	Indoor Sport, Recreation & Fitness	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Eg</b>	Other uses	1.7%	1.3%	1.3%
<b>SG</b>	Sui Generis, including pubs and takeaways	15.1%	14.7%	15.1%
<b>C1</b>	Accommodation	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%
<b>F1</b>	Learning and Non-Residential Inst.	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
<b>F2</b>	Local Community	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%
	Vacant	8.0%	8.8%	8.4%
<b>NAT</b>	Not Actively Trading	1.3%	2.1%	2.1%

4.2.3 Tiverton is showing an overall decrease of one vacant unit from quarter 2, with the opening of two new businesses (a takeaway and pottery shop) balanced with the closure of the Natwest bank. Five properties are showing as NAT, no change from quarter 2.

### 4.3 **Cullompton Heritage Action Zone**

4.3.1 The aim of the project is to make the town centre a more desirable place for businesses, visitors, investors and residents.

4.3.2 Works to enhance the public realm are well advanced and are due for completion next month. The work has been phased to minimise disruption to residents and businesses, but unavoidably there will be some disruption. The appointed contractors have been liaising with adjacent properties to update them on the programme, with positive feedback received. The initial stage of works has now been completed including provision of the new bus shelter. Work on the next phase is now well underway with the third and final phase (the area from the far side of the memorial to St Andrews Road) due to commence later this month. The contractor will ensure the area around the war memorial is acceptable for Armistice Day/Remembrance Sunday. It may not be fully paved and complete but it will be safe for pedestrians to congregate and power will be available. The contractor has managed the works to date without the need for 3 way traffic lights; however this may be required towards the end of the programme when the road is resurfaced and road marking installed. Opportunities are being sought to minimise disruption through night working.

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.

4.3.4 The Cultural programme continues to undertake tremendous work in the town. Members may recall that the Roman festival was a big success and that the public art project is progressing with the Selfie and Home artworks referred to at the last meeting now installed in the High Street and Hayridge library garden and the ceramics Wool Wall artwork due to be installed on the side of the Baptist Church very soon with a wool version to be displayed on the inside of the Church.

4.3.5 The latest public art is the new mural designed by Cullompton Community College and local artist Owen Williams. 'People Portal' is a colourful work which explores Cullompton's people and past in the form of a time tunnel. The artist has started the mural which is adding interest, colour and discussions about Cullompton's history to the Hayridge Garden.

4.3.6 A further Haiku arts project took place in October with an adults writing workshop in Haiku Poems which was then represented in clay. These clay depictions will be installed in the Hayridge Library Garden later in the year.

- 4.3.7 To celebrate the installation of these new artworks a short event was held in the library garden on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2023, which included a free drop in mask making, badge making and drumming workshops.
- 4.3.8 The Cullompton Autumnfest was held on Sat 14<sup>th</sup> October and was a success with lots of new people and regulars visiting the different areas of the festival. The Creative Cullompton element helped to fund some activities, performers and music. The circus skills was extremely popular with children learning new skills such as plate spinning, uni-cycling, ariel hoop and tightrope walking. There was also Bubble princess Elsa, a colour wall and a willow bouncing fish activity. Lots of parents and grandparents expressed how grateful they were for the free activities.
- 4.3.9 The new Cullompton History Group is now set up and there is a programme of talks arranged up to April 2024. Content for the Historic Cullompton website continues to be added.

## **5.0 General Updates**

### **5.1 Jobs Fairs**

- 5.1.1 Working with the DWP, the Pannier Market has hosted a number of jobs fairs over the past year. At these events, it was identified that there were many under 25s attending who were struggling to engage with the employers due to confidence issues. As a result, the DWP is hosting a smaller, private event specifically for under 25s on 30 November at Seetec in Tiverton. The event called 'Youth 360' will have a range of course providers, employers and mental health / social anxiety advisors.

### **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:** 7 November 2023

**Statutory Officer:** Maria DeLeburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

**Date:** 7 November 2023

**Chief Officer:** Richard Marsh

Agreed by Corporate Director

**Date:** 7 November 2023

**Performance and risk:** Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

**Date:** 06 November 2023

**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:**