

Economy Policy Development Group – 2023/2024

Chairman's Annual Report

The Economy Group have continued to successfully gain and administer funds for the District and I am pleased to report that the Crediton Master Plan has now commenced with the publication of the initial plan and public consultations. We unfortunately have been curtailed in pursuing any more commercial ventures due to the Government now restricting Local Authorities taking out loans to fund opportunities, such as Three Rivers.

As ever the Group and I are indebted to the work and support of Richard, Adrian and Zoe and all of the Economic Development team.

The main focus of the Economic Development team over the last year has been the Shared Prosperity and the Rural England Prosperity programmes. The Policy Development Group has played an important role in the formulation of Shared Prosperity Investment Plans as part of the District's successful submissions to government. The Policy Development Group will continue to play an important role in overseeing the delivery of these plans over the next few years. It should be noted that a great deal of the ground work for these submissions was informed by the Economic Strategy which this Group had a pivotal role in its development. Over the next twelve months members of the group will again be involved in the formulation of the Council's Economic Strategy for the next five year period.

Overview

During 2023/24 the Group considered a number of issues. In summary these included:

- Various UK Shared Prosperity Fund & Rural England Prosperity Fund reports
- Economic Development Team updates
- Economic Updates regarding Junction 27 and Junction 28
- Business Support Programme – Guest Speaker (Rob Evans, Devon County Council)
- Establishment of the car parking working group and subsequent updates
- Town Centre Health updates
- Various Budget updates and financial discussions

As referred above car parking was often discussed at the meetings. Car parking fees were increased only in line with inflation this year. A working group has been convened, working with resident groups and businesses, which will present any proposed revised parking fees to future meetings. In addition throughout the year members have been provided with a number of reports and presentations providing data and analysis regarding the current economic position nationally and locally. Members have also been updated with progress regarding other initiatives such as:

- Job Fairs in partnership with Tiverton JobCentre Plus (DWP) for local employers and job-seekers
- Business support surgeries
- 'Be Grant Ready' workshops
- Cullompton Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) –public realm enhancements
- Cullompton Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) - distribution of grants
- Cullompton Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) – cultural programme
- Digital skills training for businesses
- Local Growth Fund bid for Business Decarbonisation
- Finger posts installation in Tiverton
- Crediton Masterplan
- Mid Devon Walking Festival
- Sculpture Trail
- Thrive business support programme
- Major Infrastructure updates
- Visit Mid Devon – Leisure, Tourism & Hospitality Business
- Love Your Town Centre grants
- Field to fork programme

Cllr John Downes

Chairman of the Economy Policy Development Group