

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S
REPORT TO**

Cabinet
17 March 2021

Report Title: Review of Economic Development Strategy

Submitted by: Regeneration Manager

Portfolios: Corporate and Service Improvement, People and Partnerships

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To report on progress with delivery of the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan in the light of changed circumstances since development of the Strategy and to prioritise action for the next 12 months of delivery.

Recommendation

That

1. That the changed circumstances in which progress against the Economic Development Strategy has been made are noted.
2. That progress on delivering the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan is noted
3. That the opportunities presented by Future High Street Fund and Town Deal are noted and that these continue to be prioritised for delivery against Council Priorities in the next 12 month period

Reasons

To continue to support the economic regeneration of the Borough.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 In 2019 the Council's Economic Development Strategy was refreshed in line with Council Plan priorities. This was considered and approved at the Cabinet meeting of 4 September 2019.
- 1.2 The Year one action plan had actions grouped around three priorities:
 - a. Business Environment
 - b. Place and Infrastructure
 - c. People and ideas
- 1.3 Since approval of the action plan a number of issues have changed both the priorities for delivery and the means of delivering them. These are set out in further detail below.

2. **Issues**

2.1 Since approval of the action plan there has been a need to flex and adapt delivery against the action plan for a number of reasons.

2.2 National issue with a local impact:

- a. A period of uncertainty around the Brexit trade deal and final arrangements for the end of the Brexit Transition Period which had the potential to impact both on the wider economy of the Borough and also on the Council and its suppliers.
- b. The emergence and spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in actions on a national scale to manage the spread of infection and also action locally by the Council to adapt its service delivery, respond to new challenges and continue to serve both the residents and businesses of the Borough. This was set out in the Back on Track Coronavirus Recovery Plan.

2.3 New opportunities to attract funding to the Borough

- a. The development and submission of a Future High Street Fund bid for Newcastle town centre which has resulted in £11 million Government funding being announced for Newcastle town centre.
- b. The development and submission of Kidsgrove Town Investment Plan, working with the Kidsgrove Town Deal Board to submit investment proposals to Government in October 2020
- c. The development and submission of Newcastle Town Investment Plan, working with the Newcastle town Deal Board to submit investment proposals to Government in January 2021.
- d. The grant of £1.75 Million Accelerated Town Deal monies.

2.4 The Council has responded to these challenges and opportunities in a number of ways, most notably for the Economic Development Strategy delivery has taken place through co-operative working across a number of services and has needed a whole Council approach. For example the Revenues team has paid out 950 business support grants for Covid-19.

2.5 The degree of adaptation has meant that delivery of some actions in the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan have received greater attention than others. The scale of opportunity presented by Future High Street Fund and Town Deal meant that delivering against these opportunities was prioritised over other activity as this is where the greatest impact would be delivered for the Economic Development Strategy and Council priorities.

2.6 Further detail about the Future High Street Fund and Town Deal have been separately reported to Cabinet in previous Cabinet reports. A more detailed summary of progress against actions proposed in the Economic Development Strategy is Appendix 1. It is clear that over the next 12 months the Council will continue to need to respond to the challenges presented by Covid-19 and the need to support the re-opening of local High Streets and the wider local economy and will require some degree of flexibility in responding to these issues.

3. **Proposal**

- 3.1 That the changed circumstances in which progress against the Economic Development Strategy has been made are noted.
- 3.2 That progress on delivering the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan is noted
- 3.3 That the opportunities presented by Future High Street Fund and Town Deal are noted and that these continue to be prioritised for delivery against Council Priorities in the next 12 month period.

4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

- 4.1 To use the resources of the Council for greatest impact in delivering for the economic benefit of the Borough economy.

5. **Options Considered**

- 5.1 Delivery against the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan is intended to delivery benefit for residents and businesses of the Borough. Use of the Action Plan assists with the prioritisation of actions and resources for this area of the Council's activity. Without such a mechanism there is a risk that the Council's activity in this area would lose focus.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 The Local Government Act 2000 gives local authorities the powers to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 Delivery of the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan is intended to deliver wide reaching benefits for residents and businesses of the Borough.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 8.1 The Council is delivering against the Economic Development Action Plan using staffing resources from a number of services in the Council. This will need to continue to ensure effective delivery.
- 8.2 The Council seeks opportunities to attract external funding that is relevant to this work area, some of which are set out in paragraph 2.3 above. It will continue to seek such opportunities. Such funding needs effective management and control to ensure both compliance with funding body requirements and maintenance of Council standards.
- 8.3 Cross departmental officer groups will continue to be needed to ensure effective management and oversight of the grant funding received by the Council.

9. **Major Risks**

- 9.1 The greatest risk to the Council would be in not fulfilling its obligations as a local leader in delivering activities for the economic benefit of the Borough.
- 9.2 Each funding opportunity has requirements to fulfil, if these are not met then the Council risks loss of external funding and potential liabilities as a result.

9.3 Risk assessments are developed for individual project and programmes in line with corporate standards.

10. **UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**

10.1 The Economic Regeneration Strategy Action Plan supports UNSDG objectives in a number of ways. Principally, through partnership working, promoting sustainable development, the re-use of land, enterprise, infrastructure and skills, the following UNSDGs are supported.



11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 Delivery of the Action Plan affects all Wards in the Borough however for the major funding streams of Future High Street Fund and Town Deal delivery is focused in a defined area within urban Newcastle.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 Cabinet 4 September 2019

13. **List of Appendices**

13.1 Appendix 1 Economic Development Action Plan Progress Report

14. **Background Papers**

14.1 Economic Development Strategy 2019 – 2023 <https://bit.ly/3aqnytb>