

# Full Council Meeting – 7 July 2020

## Report of Councillor Marcus Kravis – Asset Management and Economic Development

### Section 1 – Asset Management

- 1.1** Asset Specialists are working with the Directors to conclude a new Asset Management Strategy.
- 1.2** Estates Surveyors and the Asset Team have continued to provide specialist expertise and guidance on Commercial Investment's Special Projects, notably on developments at Coal Orchard and Firepool, as well as helping with Commercial acquisitions.
- 1.3** As a team, Asset Management has continued to carry out work on confidential projects.
- 1.4** Land at Seaward Way – Actively engaging with lease formalities for Snazaroo. Housing development land is being led by housing.
- 1.5** The Lease for occupation of Building 2 to Novanta at Taunton Technology Park has been completed. The wider site development is under review.
- 1.6** The Team supported the programme to acquire additional Housing Revenue Account dwellings for social rent, in order to increase the Council's stock of Affordable Housing and to utilise additional Right to Buy receipts continues. Properties are acquired at market value in areas where the Council already holds stock. All programmed acquisitions have completed for 2019/2020.
- 1.7** Earlier in the year, the Leisure Procurement Exercise for the councils 5 leisure sites was completed. These sites are now managed by SLM trading as Everyone Active. This lengthy exercise has been commercially beneficial.
- 1.8** Part of the ground floor of Deane House is now occupied by Meridian. The remaining areas are: the War Room in solicitors' hands for letting to SOMPAR, strong interest from the Probation Office for the remainder of the ground floor. Several interested parties for the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor but no offers to date.
- 1.9** The Capital Receipt programme is being actively progressed although targets are under review due to third party delays and some potential disposals have fallen away.
- 1.10** The current figure for the increased revenue in this financial year exceeds half a million. This figure has been helped by the acquisition of the former Thales site head lease and the Gaumont Theatre.

- 1.11 Over the course of the year we have had Vail Williams looking into the business rates we are paying. So far this has led to £399,744 in savings with a further £157,500 expected in savings from pending cases.
- 1.12 A large program of work has been carried out with the goal of bringing all of our properties, Housing and General Fund, in line with current statutory and recommended compliance regulations,
- 1.13 The Commercial side of Asset Management has taken on responsibility for Facilities Management and new processes have been put in place for pool car management, general FM tasks and compliance monitoring for tenanted and corporate properties.
- 1.14 Corporate buildings are being actively managed including ongoing snagging at Deane House.
- 1.15 Case managers within the Facilities team have undertaken training to be able to take ownership of all BAU requests received on a daily basis
- 1.16 Provided information relating to the Carbon audit and the MHCLG request for data on high rise properties, including working on ways to have information more readily available for future audit requests.

## Economic Development and Inward Investment

<b>Overarching strategic</b>
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1. **SWT's first economic development strategy** as a glossy professional publication is now live on SWT's business support website pages & stakeholders and businesses being alerted to the live link.
2. **County and SWT Recovery plans** – the economic development team is shaping and informing the County's economic recovery strategy and the evolving SWT recovery strategy, including the **re-pivoting of the economic development strategy high level action plans over the next 12-18 months** to support businesses in re-starting, re-vitalising and growing over the next 12-18 months **(see attached high level plan in Annexe A).**
3. **Cultural strategy** – further development has taken place on the evolution of the cultural strategy including consultation with the cultural forum on their priorities given the Covid19 crisis, as well as a report received on how over **700 young people of the district see the cultural and creative opportunities** and offers in our town centres. Furthermore, Taunton is cited as a case study in a soon to be published LGA handbook on how to support the creative sector.
4. **Innovation Park concept and feasibility study** – consultants who are used to developing business cases and implementing innovation and science parks will be appointed shortly to progress the concept development for a **cleantech/healthtech sustainable innovation park** which will be undertaken between July until the end of October 2020.

## Business support

- **Covid19 crisis emergency responses** – significant intelligence gathering, government grant provision, business advice newsletters and sector support as well as lobbying through the Local Enterprise Partnership economic resilience group (HEROG) in response to immediate business needs. This has also involved **re-positioning the support provided through the £4m Business Rates Pilot** to benefit our businesses including **£0.5m bid to support the tourism, leisure, culture and hospitality sector** and **£0.5m to develop a single point of access for education, skills, training, redundancy and job matching support**.
- **Newsletter distribution** - now **reaching 4,000 businesses** on a significantly expanded business database of businesses engaging with the Council.
- **Comms team support** - since the announcement of lockdown and the financial support grants from Central Government the communications team have been **instrumental in ensuring our communications were reaching all corners** of the district.
- **Business Rates Business support programme** – the economic development team is ensuring our sectors and businesses **benefit from the new programmes of support and funding including sector capacity grants** including Digital Taunton, the Somerset Arts and Culture Alliance, Taunton Chamber and Words gets Around amongst others
- **Business engagement strategy** – business engagement strategy with supporting rationale produced with engagement plan.  
**Taunton Chamber Business Briefing** - the first of several cross Council business breakfast and quarterly business briefings took place on **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June with Taunton Chamber** with an attendance of over **50 businesses** and nearly **30 questions** answered on the day; whole event professionally produced as a webinar and recorded for future reference. Planning to start for **similar events in Minehead and Wellington**, working closely with partners to shape the agenda.
- **Covid 19 business grants** - eligible businesses were contacted directly in early April. The number of grants processed – **3,210 (83.2% claim rate)**  
Total amount of grant funding distributed to date - **£38.2m**
- **Covid 19 Discretionary grants** - available since Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June  
Aimed at B&Bs, charities, market traders and those in shared space premises  
Funding available - **£2.1m**  
**207 claimants** to date equating to just under **£1m claimed as at Friday 12th June**
- **Hinkley Tourism Action Partnership (HTAP)**
  - **HTAP phase 4 action plan report was approved** at Full Council Feb 2020
  - HTAP steering group held recent meeting to review its phase 4 allocations and identified £90k match fund pot. **They have agreed to divert some of this fund toward Covid-19 recovery initiatives**, if HTAP agree and they align with the HTAP strategy aims/objectives
  - HTAP partners are feeding in to a **Somerset County Council wide visitor economy support project for the use of £500k Business Rate Retention funding to aid recovery of this sector**. The aim is to provide a discrete programme of intervention. The programme will include business support,

marketing and developing/supporting the offer. Details are expected to emerge in July.

- **Tourist Information Centres (TIC)**
- Ongoing overseeing and monitoring of Minehead, Porlock and Watchet TIC service level agreements (SLA's)
- SLAs renewed annually for the 3 year period of 2019, 2020 and 2021. SLAs for 2020/21 are being adapted to include Covid-19 recovery plan activity

#### **People - education, skills, training and employment**

- **An employment and skills strategy** – a skills strategy and recovery plan has been developed and planned programme of activity, linking in with **Hinkley C and their workforce development activity** as well as with County and other partners in **extending the Skill Up programme** and **developing a skills, education, training and redundancy/job matching facility through one single portal**, including the development of additional **employment hubs** across the District.
- **A Local Labour Agreement (Social Value)** - has been developed and worked up as part of the Council's social value activity **for approval in 2021 as part of the Local Plan**, which will endeavour to commit any developer to employ or train the local workforce in construction projects over £1m.
- **Employment Hubs recovery plan funding bids** - identified actions from the Employment and Skills recovery plan forms part of Business Rates Retention Pilot and bid for funding **to expand Employment Hubs to Taunton and Wellington**, including equality of access to support, sector specific development of 'routes into' offers and virtual career fairs.
- **West Somerset College EDF training centre** - agreement now reached that adult **EDF Hinkley C Mechanical Engineering and Heating training can be delivered at West Somerset College** from February 2021 onwards which will provide a pipeline of future job opportunities for residents as Hinkley Support Operatives going forward and start to leave a lasting training legacy and facility in West Somerset.
- **Digital Skills training - digital E-commerce webinar and 3 workshops** delivered to businesses on how to sell online etc. during the Covid19 crisis – supported **over 141 total attendees**

#### **Place – infrastructure, regeneration and place based interventions**

- **Safer Opening of the High Streets** – significant cross Council working over the last three weeks to prepare for the safer opening of the High Streets involving active travel, street wardens, signage, advice and guidance to retailers and town BIDs and Chambers, utilising the **£138k safer high street opening funds** and additional planning in expectation of the opening of the hospitality sector on 4<sup>th</sup> July.
- **Taunton High Street Regeneration Fund/Digital Taunton Innovation Centre** - submission of full business case for **High street Regeneration Fund £25m bid in March 2020**, including a final business plan and application for an ERDF funded **Digital Innovation Centre for Firepool**, as part of the commercial zone, involving over 90 businesses responding to a demand and need survey and informing the architectural design and innovation support services

needed, linking in with the national 24 innovation centre network of Barclays Bank Eagle Labs..

- **Taunton railway station forecourt - £ 91k CIL funds secured** for enhancement of Taunton Station Forecourt
- **Wellington Station** – a bid to re-open Wellington station has been given the go ahead by Government being led by the Devon and Somerset Metro group and supported by £50,000 fund
- **Enterprising Minehead (EM)**
  - The first phase of Minehead seafront esplanade enhancements were completed Autumn 2019. The place based strand of the Enterprising Minehead project included hard and soft landscaping, planting, lighting, seating and two play areas. **The enhancement planting schedule and maintenance was handed over to the SWT ground maintenance team in Feb 2020**
  - Minehead Coastal Community Team hosted a visit toward the end of 2019 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to recognise the success of the project. They were given a Steam Bus tour of the town, harbour and seafront followed by a presentation of projects and plans for the future
  - EM continued roll out the **esplanade enhancements are expected to start in the autumn (further East from kiosk toward Golf Course)**. Due to Covid-19 some initiatives have been postponed until 2021
- **Hinkley C EDF Community Impact Mitigation Fund (CIM)**
  - Ongoing monitoring of Hinkley CIM funded live projects
  - The majority of the live projects have been affected by Covid-19 and POB are dealing with these on a case by case basis
  - In relation to ring-fenced CIM funding allocation for Cannington Parish Council (CPC). The Planning Obligations Board (POB) agreed to transfer ring-fenced monies. A Council report was then agreed by Executive Committee Feb 2020 for the funding to be transferred to the CPC.

## **ANNEXE 1 Economic Development High Level Workplan 2020-2021**

### **Proposed high level priorities for the economic development team and link to corporate outcomes until March 2021**

- 1. Contribution to the development of the business support section of the County's and SWT's recovery strategy and action plan** – September 2020

**Corporate outcome:** Openness, transparency, participation and effective communication in the development of a recovery strategy which will determine clear priorities for the Council and leverage Government funding streams and facilitate collaborative partnership working.

- Input into SWT's recovery plan
  - Input into Somerset's recovery plan
- 2. Delivering a climate change industry and business workstream programme, as part of Somerset's climate change emergency**

**Corporate outcome:** deliver more and better paid jobs by attracting inward investment and adapt to and mitigate against climate change impacts, moving toward zero carbon

- Commissioning a scope and feasibility study into a cleantech innovation park
- Developing a cleantech/environmental services cluster mapping and development strategy
- Delivering a cleantech business support, signposting and grants programme
- Supporting the workforce development strategy for the sector

### 3. Progressing the delivery of strategic employment sites and future employment land allocations

**Corporate outcome:** facilitating the re-development of the commercial parts of the Firepool site in Taunton and provision of adequate and affordable employment land

- Finalising the business case for the physical design and build of the ERDF Digital Innovation Centre (DIC) on Firepool
- Support the finalisation of the Nexus 25 planning conditions and marketing of the site
- Roll out and implementation of rural Local Development Order (LDO)
- Continued input in development of the Local Plan refresh

### 4. Delivering Covid 19 grant funding programmes to business

**Corporate outcome:** delivering Governmental funding streams to support survival and re-start

- Deliver Government grant programme for business rate payers
- Deliver second Governmental discretionary grant programme for non-business rates businesses
- Deliver any future funding opportunities in support of the economy, following submission of the Somerset and SWT recovery plans

### 5. Delivering new enterprise and innovation support services to business

**Corporate outcome:** sustaining and attracting higher value jobs and inward investment and enhanced levels of start up and survival

- Engage businesses with launch of new pre-start up and enterprise support programme, including support of SWT'S enterprise centres
- Ensure businesses optimise the opportunities out of the funding calls arising from the business rates pilot support programme
- Engage businesses with Catalyst innovation support service provider
- Develop innovation zones concept and programmes
- Develop digital business transformation grant programme and support

### 6. Deliver existing and emerging sector and cluster capacity funding

**Corporate outcome:** support enhanced levels of enterprise start up and survival and increased levels of innovation and productivity

- Leverage funding and provide match in response to Business Rates Pilot to support existing sector/cluster capacity for strategic development including food and drink, tourism, nuclear digital, creative/cultural
- Leverage funding and provide match in response to Business Rates Pilot to support mapping and development of emerging sectors/clusters, especially

healthcare and social enterprises

## 7. Finalisation of the cultural strategy and delivery of cultural grants programme management

**Corporate outcome:** deliver more and better paid jobs by strengthening the Council's relationship with business and creating a vibrant creative, digital and cultural collaborative innovation environment

- Work across the Council with cultural forum to finalise strategy and identify businesses that will be supported
- Deliver cultural grants programme funding in light of above recommendations
- Use insight from CICCIC Youth project to inform evening destination and leisure opportunities, including Multi Purpose Venue (MPV)

## 8. Implementation of business engagement strategy and business facing marketing communication plan

**Corporate outcome:** deliver more and better paid jobs by strengthening the Council's relationship with business

- Organise series of business engagements virtually with business member networks and events and update the CRM system
- Develop and implement an ongoing business marketing communications plan
- Upgrading SWT's economic development website content pages
- Organise annual business conference

## 9. Progress inward investment support service and promotion

**Corporate outcome:** deliver more and better paid jobs by attracting inward investment and knowledge economy jobs

- Launch a fully operational employment and property search facility
- Develop Somerset Cleantech proposition (nuclear, advanced engineering, digital)
- Maintain active inward investment and business growth enquiry pipeline
- Develop key employment site case study pack

## 10. Leaving a lasting and sustainable economic legacy from Hinkley C and its communities

**Corporate outcome:** deliver more and better paid jobs by strengthening supply chains, growing existing businesses, attracting better paid jobs and re-skilling and upskilling the workforce, social inclusion and mobility

- Allocate Hinkley c S106 funding for skills and business support for recovery period of next 12 months
- Support Nuclear South West Inward investment and supply chain programmes
- Oversee and monitor the community impact mitigation programme

## 11. Education, skills and training workstream

**Corporate outcome:** increasing social mobility and inclusion, including increased health and wellbeing

- Delivery and completion of the **West Somerset Opportunity Area project**
- Secure funding to **maintain skills posts** beyond December 2020

- Secure funding to extend the deployment of the **employment hubs across the District** with 2 co-ordinators.
- Support delivery of the **Business Rate recovery pilot workstreams and programme**
- Support the EDF **workforce development strategy recovery programmes**
- Develop **sector career pathways events** and programme, including **West Coast 360 Hospitality programme** and **climate change awareness** raising programme
- Deliver **digital skills resilience** course
- **Secure adoption of the CITB Local Labour Market Agreement** within SWT for all new major construction contracts and support post to monitor impact and agreements

## 12. Town Centres

**Corporate outcome:** Shape and protect our built and natural environment

- Provide a **mechanism to support retail businesses trade online**
- Work with BIDs or representative bodies to **support the marketing and revitalisation of towns**, including markets, events and street trading
- Consider **undertaking town centre healthchecks** to position for future inward investment

## 13. Tourism and Coastal Communities

**Corporate outcome:** shaping and protecting our built and natural environment and supporting better jobs including tourism; revitalising local places and better economic prospects through placed based intervention

- Development and support for the **Leisure, tourism and hospitality sector** of the future with the DMOs and HTAP
- Develop and implement the **Business Rates pilot £0.5m fund** and workstreams for the leisure, tourism and hospitality sector
- Lobby the LEP and Government regarding the **opportunities proposed in the Coastal Productivity strategy**
- **Support the development of an Enterprise Exmoor strategy and action plan**, aligned to core ED activity and funding
- Engage the Town and Parish councils/Business groups in the process

## 14. Digital connectivity and Infrastructure

**Corporate outcome:** contributing to carbon neutrality, better paid jobs and increased productivity and social inclusion and mobility in peripheral rural and coastal areas

- Ensure County appoint new delivery body to progress the roll out of the **Connecting Devon and Somerset Broadband** programme