

Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	20 March 2019
Officer	David Walsh, Economy & Enterprise Manager
Subject of Report	Enabling Economic Growth Strategy - Progress
Executive Summary	This paper reports on progress with delivering the County Council's Enabling Economic Growth Strategy, focusing on priority actions. A presentation to the Committee will raise issues which could lead to recommendations for the economic vision of the new Dorset Council.
Impact Assessment:	Equalities Impact Assessment: an EqIA was completed and approved for the County Council's Enabling Economic Growth Strategy.
	Use of Evidence: a considerable evidence base was used to devise the Strategy, and this is up-dated on a frequent basis to provide an effective and up-to-date local economic assessment.
	Budget: No budget implications arising from this report.
	Risk Assessment: Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the County Council's approved risk management methodology, the level of risk has been identified as: Current Risk: LOW Residual Risk LOW

	Outcomes: please see outcomes focused monitoring report March 2019 (item 9 on the agenda for this Committee)
	Other Implications: none
Recommendation	It is recommended that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. progress with delivering the County Council’s Enabling Economic Growth Strategy 2018-2020 be noted; and 2. Members consider appropriate recommendations to inform the economic vision of the new Dorset Council.
Reason for Recommendation	Economic growth is vital to the achievement of the County Council’s four corporate priorities, especially ‘Prosperous’, and is likely to be a priority for the new Dorset Council.
Appendices	None
Background Papers	Enabling Economic Growth 2018-2020, Dorset County Council
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1. Context

- 1.1 Dorset County Council's active engagement in economic growth has been informed for several years by its Enabling Economic Growth Strategy. The delivery of the strategy was overseen by the Economic Prosperity Board, which also rolled the strategy forward on an annual basis (the most recent being December 2017). The Board prioritised the following actions for delivery: -
- Deliver the implementation plan for Dorset Innovation Park (Enterprise Zone) in collaboration with Purbeck District Council and the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (DLEP).
 - The Council will support growth and development of the key sectors for the local economy.
 - Review and roll-forward the Digital Infrastructure Strategy for Dorset, in order to continue to secure investment and improvements.
 - Monitor the delivery of the National Mobile Infrastructure Programme, to ensure effective mobile phone service coverage to support economic growth across Dorset.
 - Take a strategic approach to work with schools to deliver impartial careers advice, improve their knowledge of the local economy, including local career opportunities and routes to employment, and engagement with the business community.
 - Develop and deliver the concept of the Western Dorset Growth Strategy with partners, to clarify ambition and secure investment to realise the economic growth potential of the corridor.
- 1.2 This report will focus on these priorities, with the third and fourth bullet points covered in the following agenda item on Digital Growth. See also item 9, outcomes focussed monitoring report.

2. Dorset Innovation Park (Enterprise Zone)

- 2.1 Considerable progress has been made with Dorset Innovation Park since Dorset County and Purbeck District Councils, together with the DLEP, actively intervened to secure Enterprise Zone status from Government, and purchased the site: -
- Twenty small workshop units, known as the Quadrant, have been constructed providing 1800 square metres of workspace. Almost half the units are occupied or under consideration, and the Quadrant continues to be marketed by local agents. The prescribed occupation policy for the units is likely to deter some would be applicants.
 - Atlas Elektronik UK has significantly expanded its presence on site with a new manufacturing workshop and additional jobs.
 - A Local Development Order (LDO) was approved by Purbeck District Council in December 2018, following detailed preparation activity by the appointed consultants, Stride Treglown. The LDO streamlines the planning application process for companies wishing to relocate to Dorset Innovation Park, and a decision can be reached within 28 days if the appropriate information is provided. This reduces the wait, uncertainty and cost for applicants.
 - Plots in the Park are being actively marketed at national and international levels, generating several promising leads; progress should be apparent with the approval of the LDO.
 - Additional tenants have been attracted to Chesil House, thereby increasing the rental income.
 - Plans for a new Gatehouse at the entrance to the Park have been drawn up and the contract is currently out to tender.

- Early designs have been drawn-up for an Innovation Centre, or Hub, in readiness to secure funding once appropriate opportunities are identified.
- A funding application has been submitted to the European Regional Development Fund to establish an innovation centre in Chesil House as a precursor and test bed to a purpose-built centre.
- New signs have been erected at the entrance and throughout the Park, in accord with the design guidance prescribed in the LDO.
- Environmental management of the site has been reviewed and amended to better reflect the setting of the Park and the design guidance within the LDO.
- As can be seen from the outcomes focussed monitoring report, Dorset Innovation Park has created or safeguarded 4 new enterprises, 2,100 square metres of new workspace and 40 new or safeguarded jobs since designation as an Enterprise Zone.

3. Support for key sectors

3.1 The Dorset economy is not reliant upon any one sector, and its resilience is enhanced by the presence of sound if not spectacular sectors in terms of high productivity. As such resources have been focussed on sectors with potential to grow and increase productivity (advanced engineering and manufacturing, and agritech/aquaculture) and improving aspects of sectors which are important to the local economy (construction, visitor economy).

3.2 Interventions to support these sectors include: -

- Inward investment; preparation and dissemination of sector propositions to raise the profile of opportunities and benefits of locating in Dorset. Material utilised by Department for international Trade (DIT) and Invest in Dorset Ambassadors (created by the Council under the banner of DLEP)
- Co-production of a Higher Potential Opportunity with DIT for aquaculture in Dorset
- Leading the work of South West Agritech to identify and exploit opportunities for investment and growth arising from the greater critical mass of the south west LEPS
- Active engagement in the South West Rural Productivity Commission to identify barriers and opportunities for increased productivity and employment opportunities in rural areas
- Providing support for companies through the Dorset Engineering and Manufacturing Cluster, and enhanced delivery of South West Manufacturing Advisory Service with support from the European Regional Development Fund
- A 'Building Careers in Construction' day is being organised for 8 May 2019 in Poundbury, Dorchester, raise awareness of the full range of jobs and skills involved in construction. This is aimed at school students, careers advisors and people considering alternative careers
- Land and premises; the Council enables access to workspace through Property Pilot (an interactive database of employment and commercial land and premises), and intervention in cases of market failure, such as Dorset Innovation Park

3.3 Understanding the challenges faced by businesses is crucial to informing Council policy and resource allocation. Effective engagement, or account management, with companies is pursued through personal visits, and participation in Business Improvement Districts, the Ambassador scheme mentioned in 3.2 above, and various working groups.

4. Working with schools and employers

- 4.1 DLEP contracts Dorset County Council to deliver the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) Enterprise Advisor Network to County schools and colleges. In October 2018 we recruited a second Enterprise Coordinator giving the capacity to offer every secondary school, Further Education College, Learning Centre, Specials School and Middle school to join the network and access support for the Careers agenda. Forty schools and colleges have joined the network to date with five remaining.
- 4.2 Recruiting the volunteer Enterprise Advisors to support the strategic development of a school / college careers plan remains challenging; to date fourteen Enterprise Advisors have been matched to schools / colleges. Significant time and effort is being spent on trying to achieve the target of 30 Enterprise Advisors matched by the end of July 2019. Dorset County Council staff have been encouraged by Mike Harries' blog to consider the role. A targeted communication to employers is being planned alongside approaches to individuals.
- 4.3 The Dorset CEC has recently been rated 'green' by the CEC in terms of Dorset schools / colleges achievement of the Gatsby benchmarks for employer engagements. Dorset County Council provided a letter of support for the DLEP bid for a CEC Careers Hub. If successful this will be operational from September 2019 providing additional resource to the area with employer engagement and in particular for Weymouth & Portland schools and Weymouth College. £50k match-funding for the two Enterprise-Coordinators is required for the next academic year.
- 4.4 The CEC activity engages with careers events at schools and has been involved in organising special events such as the Big Bang at the Tank Museum to raise awareness of STEM careers (12 March 2019) and the construction skills event referred to in 3.2 above.

5. Western Dorset Growth Strategy

- 5.1 The Western Dorset Growth Strategy was approved by the Cabinets of Dorset County, North Dorset, West Dorset, and Weymouth & Portland Councils in December 2017. The Strategy sets an ambition for economic growth in excess of that based on past performance, and within growth levels provided for in current Local Plans. This work provides a basis for the development of the new Dorset Councils economic growth strategy.
- 5.2 Among the notable success associated with the Strategy are: -
- Multi-council consensus on economic growth ambition and policy.
 - Securing £9 million from Highway Infrastructure Fund to enable new development.
 - Public realm and junction improvements completed in Dorchester.
 - Successful delivery of a range of careers fairs, young enterprise and disability confident events.
 - Working constructively with new initiatives, such as Eden Portland.
 - Visit Dorset website refreshed.
 - Investment in Dorchester retail and Weymouth development sites.

6. Related underpinning activity

- 6.1 In addition to the work on the priorities above, a substantial body of work takes place to enable economic growth across Dorset, including: -
- **LEADER**; delivery of the EU funded rural development programme is currently at its peak, investing some £2.7 million across a broad range of growth-related projects devised by local communities.
 - **Economic intelligence**; the Council maintains a comprehensive evidence base to underpin policy development and inform investment opportunities. Economic impact assessments have recently been commissioned and provided for Eden Portland, the Duchy of Cornwall (impact of development at Poundbury), and Coastal Communities funding bids. A significant piece of independent research commissioned by the Council quantified the monetary value of the environment and its management for Dorset.
 - **European Union funding**; the Council has been active in advising on investment of European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. These amount to some £43 million across Dorset. The Economy and Enterprise Team has also received income for providing Technical Assistance to a range of applicants for EU funding.
 - **Business support**: this is primarily provided through the Dorset Hub Growth, which receives considerable support for EU funding. Council resources are used as match funding, and officers engage through steering groups to ensure effective coverage and service provision across Dorset.
 - **Dorset LEP**; Dorset County Council is the Accountable Body for the DLEP and this role will be assumed by the new Dorset Council. The Council is active in the delivery of various DLEP funded infrastructure projects, and operational sub-groups, including Inward Investment, Rural Enterprise Group, Growing Places Fund, Enterprise Zone Management Board, Dorset Gateway, Connected Dorset, and the BIG Programme Steering Group.
 - **Brexit**: monitoring of the implications of leaving the European Union has been underway for two years, including the likely impact upon the provision of Council services and the functioning of Dorset businesses. Priority work areas have been identified and pursued, including seeking to inform the development of alternative funding streams such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

7. Looking forward

- 7.1 The policy, investment and activity referred to above provides a context and foundations for the new Dorset Council to develop ambitious and sustainable proposals for economic growth. A presentation at the Committee meeting will consider changes in the national context which will require a review of how Dorset presents its opportunities and challenges if it is to secure investment funds in future, and the importance of establishing effective working relationships new and established bodies and partnerships.

Matthew Piles

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March 2019