

SSDC Annual Achievements Report 2019-20 Appendix A – Economy

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| Executive Portfolio Holder: | Cllr John Clark – Economic Development including Commercial Strategy |
| Strategic Director: | Martin Woods, Director of Place |
| Lead Officer: | Joe Walsh, Specialist Economic Development, Economic Development |
| Contact Details: | Joe.walsh@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462289 |

Purpose of the Report / Appendix

1. This report provides further details regarding the Economy section of the SSDC Annual Achievements Report 2019-20. The purpose is to provide additional information regarding the work which the Economic Development team has progressed during 2019-2020.

Background

2. a) This report sets out in more detail the 2019-20 achievements in the Council Plan priority of Economy. This is the crucial area that contributes to the future prosperity of residents and businesses by enabling real progress in business productivity and growth; broadband and mobile connectivity; reducing rural isolation; skills, innovation and enterprise; tourism; inclusive and green technology.
- b) The Economic Development Strategy has been adopted for 18 months and much work has been completed in progressing the 6 priority themes:
 - PT1: Business Support, Retention, Innovation and Inward Investment
 - PT2: Transport and Communications Infrastructure
 - PT3: Economic Inclusion – Skills, Careers and Training
 - PT4: Land, Sites and Workspaces
 - PT5: Supporting Urban Economies
 - PT6: Supporting Rural Economies
- c) It should be noted that due to the nature of the work, and external funding streams available, substantial elements are delivered in partnership with other organisations. Some of these include:
 - Other SSDC Teams (including; Tourism, Planning, Regeneration, Commercial etc)
 - Other Councils - County and District
 - Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership
 - Educational Institutions – including Yeovil College
 - Training Providers
 - Businesses (including major employers such as Leonardo, Numatic, Thales etc)
 - Universities and Science Parks

- Land owners and developers

d) Given the circumstances and timing regarding Covid 19, work had commenced on the response to Covid 19 and preparations were being made for recovery prior to year-end however full reporting will be made in later reports.

Report Detail - SSDC Annual Achievements Report 2019-20

Appendix A – Economy

3. Business productivity and growth;

- a) Engaged over 200 businesses including 83 'one to one' individual business meetings – working with businesses to ensure our projects are aligned with their needs
- b) Worked in partnership with Yeovil Chamber and industry to establish a manufacturing group that seeks to strengthen the sector within South Somerset
- c) Business Rates Retention Pilot (BRRp) funding secured to promote Somerset as a place for businesses to relocate and attract inward investment – securing jobs for the future South Somerset residents
- d) Work commenced on developing a circular economy in line with the Environment Strategy work stream.
- e) Business cases for BRRp funding approved to 'Enable Growth' and 'Unlock (infrastructure) Growth' to deliver employment land, plus housing growth and regeneration through improved planning and enabling infrastructure provision. Work is underway to evaluate the current methods to see how we can deliver better sites for employment and housing – more efficiently for residents within the area.
- f) Discussions progressed regarding A303 infrastructure improvements and continued work to promote that impacted locations are "open for business".

4. Broadband and mobile connectivity;

- a) Over 135 (in excess of £300,000) Gigabit Broadband Vouchers allocated in South Somerset throughout the LFFN Programme.
- b) Over 162 (in excess of £250,000) Rural Gigabit Vouchers allocated in South Somerset through the current DCMS Rural Broadband Scheme.

5. Reducing rural isolation;

- a) Broadband and mobile coverage (see above) is crucial in offering rural businesses and residents the opportunities they deserve. In addition, the inadequacy of public transport is an area we are at the cutting edge nationally in progressing.
- b) Bid submitted in partnership with SCC to the Rural Mobility Fund to provide a pilot of Digital Demand Responsive Transport in Somerset with South Somerset having a particular focus on employment and leisure activities.
- c) Work progressed with the Connected Places Catapult to evaluate Digital Demand Responsive Transport solutions
- d) Cycling and active travel reviews conducted in line with Regeneration Schemes – allowing residents to move safely through the district for commuting and leisure purposes



6. Skills, technology, innovation and enterprise;

- a) Successful pilot of the Somerset Catalyst Entrepreneurs Boot Camp and successful funding submission into the BRRp for an extension of the scheme – providing Somerset residents with the opportunity / coaching to start their own business through a tailored accelerator programme
- b) Work progressing in partnership with SCC, HotSW LEP and Leonardo to develop the iAero build project and innovation aspects. Leading to a more resilient future for aerospace within South Somerset
- c) Working with Somerset Education Business Partnership (part funded by SSDC) who have engaged over 66 employers and 16 educational institutions bringing business and education together in South Somerset working closely with students to provide work experience, work placements, apprenticeships opportunities. Additionally learning from businesses the requirements they have now and in the future to help establish the correct courses to provide a talent pool for future opportunities
- d) Business Rates Retention Pilot “Skill Up” funding secured and commenced across South Somerset to support apprenticeships and training and allow individuals to upskill / retrain to fit the changing employment needs
- e) Representation on a strategic “Think Tank” hosted by Yeovil College to work with public and private sector partners to establish a route map to driving Yeovil and the surrounding area forward in terms of industry, innovation, aspirations, education and entrepreneurship
- f) Significant contributions and representations within the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership’s Local Industrial Strategy – a localised version of the national Industrial Strategy which seeks to drive productivity and business growth within the area

7. Tourism

- a) Tourism Service Plan produced for the year
- b) Tourism agreed new partnership with Visit Somerset to help boost tourism
- c) Continued key account visits to tourism businesses
- d) Continued engagement with key attractions on possible expansions and new attractions on their promotion
- e) Work with Visit Somerset to host an event for tourism related businesses concerned about the impact of A303 dualling works between Sparkford and Podimore.
- f) Completed the £420K Heritage Lottery Fund project in Yeovil and secured a first round pass for a £1.6m National Lottery Heritage Fund project; enhancing the authorities own attractions and open spaces.
- g) Delivered a pre-season exchange and networking event for attractions and accommodation providers.
- h) Surveyed and supported Local Information Centre’s across the district.
- i) Started the River Parrett Trail re-launch project with an evaluation workshop and consultation activities

8. Regeneration programmes - supporting urban economies

- a) Yeovil Refresh Programme
 - Yeovil Access Strategy Produced January 2020
 - Public Realm Design Guide Approved and Adopted March 2020
- b) Chard Regeneration Programme



South Somerset District Council

- Planning Permission Granted in Sep 2019
 - Demolition on site started Dec 2019
 - Construction of Leisure Centre currently underway
 - Awarded £1M from the High Street Heritage Action Zone Fund September 2019
- c) Wincanton Town Centre Regeneration Programme
- Wincanton Town centre Strategy supported by Area East Committee July 2019
 - Full Council approved overarching budget October 2019
 - Wincanton Regeneration Board established November 2019

Report End