

## BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

<b>To: Council</b>	<b>Report Number: CMU1</b>
<b>From: Cllr John Ward, Leader and Cabinet Member Economic Growth</b>	<b>Date of meeting: 22 November 2022</b>

### TO PROVIDE AN UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

#### 1. Overview of Portfolio

- 1.1 This report summarises the key areas of activity and sets out the priorities for this financial year for the Economic Growth portfolio. This portfolio includes two main areas of work; (a) Economy and Business and (b) Regeneration and Capital Projects - with the latter also providing project management services for wider Council large capital projects. A summary of services within the Portfolio include – inward investment, funding bids and management, skills development, town centre regeneration and pipeline, economic analysis and business grants. The peer review in 2022 recognised the positive impact and contribution of the service on local businesses and against the Council's own strategic objectives.
- 1.2 Over the past 12 months, officers have been focused on delivery of the Recovery Plan with progress against the plan outlined below. However, significant challenges continue for businesses in the District including the ongoing impact of Brexit resulting in labour and supply chain issues and the growing cost of living concerns. It is important to continue to monitor the situation and divert staff and other resources, if required, to ensure the local economy and businesses are supported.

#### 2. Recommendation

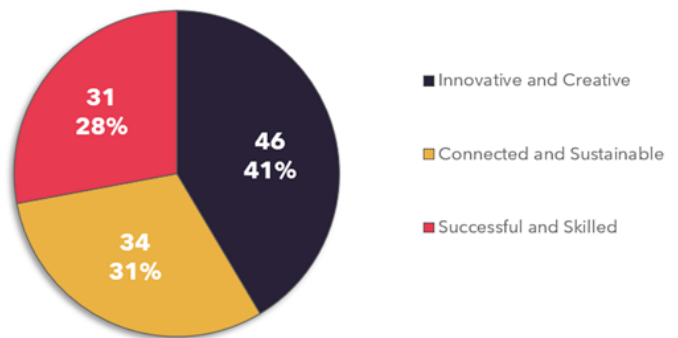
- 2.1 That Council notes the report.

#### 3. Recovery Plan Update

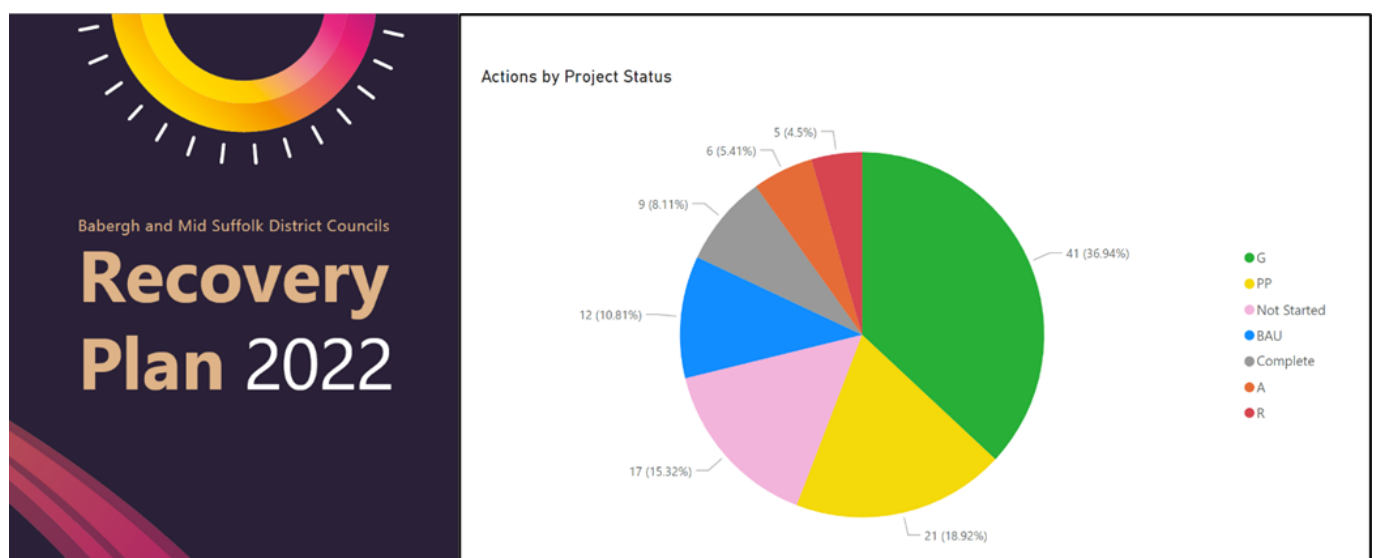
The Recovery Plan was launched by the Councils in 2021 and contained over 100 actions to support businesses, town centres or regeneration delivery. It focused on the following categories of support, under the overarching banners of REACT, RECOVER and RE-GROW.



RECOVERY PLAN ACTIONS BY THEME



The Plan focuses on the three areas above with activity underway in each category.



**37%** of projects are green with only **4.5%** being red. Those projects not started fit into the delivery within the 5-year timeframe of the plan.

**10%** fit into 'business as usual' category and over **10%** of activities are now complete.

#### 4. Key updates

##### *Economy and Business*

- 4.1 The team continue to support businesses to grow and become more resilient through a range of measures.
- 4.2 The final Covid Grant programmes have been completed with 8,476 payments of £42,865,040 made to businesses across Babergh since March 2020. Fraud, audit and reconciliation returns to BEIS and HMRC are being managed by colleagues in Audit, SRP, Finance and Economy.
- 4.3 The Business Innovation Grant scheme launched in 2021 provides grants across 4 categories and has so far supported 11 businesses in Babergh with £29,287 of funding. This has supported the delivery of projects worth over £76,000. [Babergh & Mid Suffolk Grants » Babergh Mid Suffolk](#)

- 4.4 Work has started on a first ever Cultural, Heritage and Visitor economy Strategy which will help provide us with the evidence needed to support and strengthen these sectors across Babergh and building their long-term growth over the next 5-10 years. It will help to define our priorities, set out planned programmes of work for delivery, set criteria for grant aid - being very clear about the outcomes we'd like to see achieved and be used to seek and attract more investment, investing more in facilities and infrastructure and through better collaborations and partnerships. A series of workshops for businesses and stakeholders has been organised alongside a cross party member working group to ensure collaboration and partner engagement in the process.
- 4.5 The Council held its first face to face Innovation Awards in October 2022. With 10 award categories and sponsors, 160 attendees and over 60 nominees the event was a great success and ran at no cost to the District other than staff time due to the success securing event sponsorship.



- 4.6 Launch of the Innovate to Elevate scheme at the 2022 Innovation Awards has opened up a fully funded programme of fast track growth opportunities for small businesses. Match funded and co delivered by the University of Essex, and supported by Innovate UK, the scheme will see business supported in a range of areas such as product development ,innovation and commercialisation.

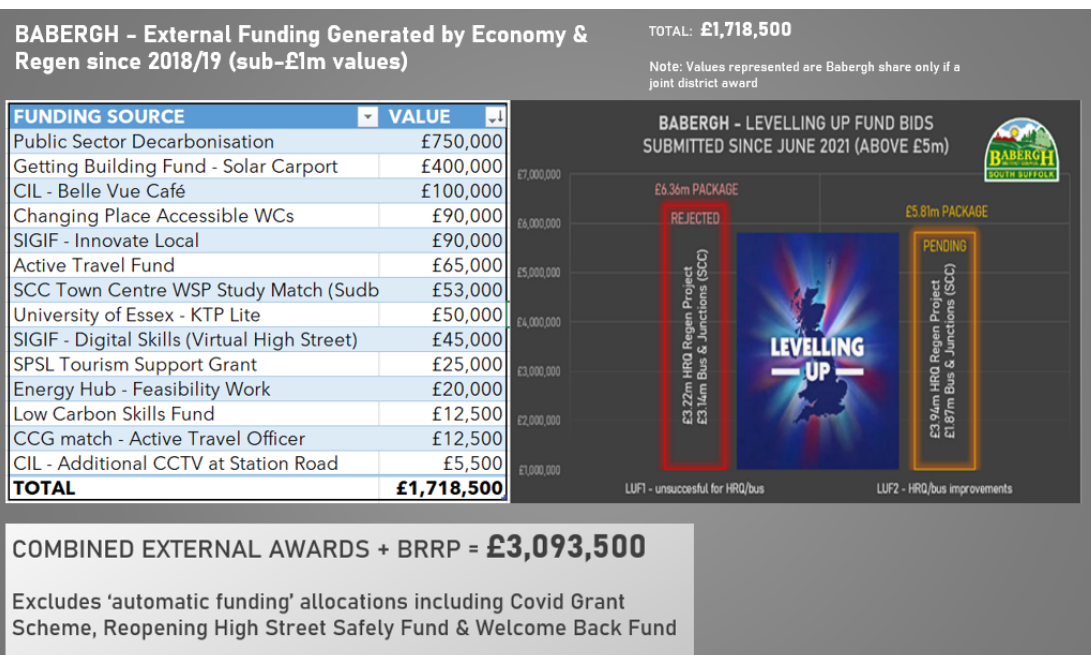
<https://www.essex.ac.uk/business/expertise/funding-opportunities/innovate-to-elevate>

## ***Regeneration and Capital Projects***

- 4.7 Progress on capital projects and regeneration has been good with high-profile schemes such as St. Peters Cultural Venue and Gainsborough's House supported by the Council through capital funding and officer expertise/resource. With Gainsborough's House opening later in 2022 and St. Peters during 2023, these cultural assets continue to be a key part of the regeneration and economic vitality of Sudbury town centre.
- 4.8 Planning has now been secured for a new accessible park entrance at Belle Vue Park, with a linked café facility under design development and 5-year park improvement plan published in January 2022. Discussions continue in respect of the adjacent site sale which has been progressed to planning after many years without viable or deliverable uses coming forward for the house and former pool site.
- 4.9 Work continues to bring forward a new mixed-use scheme for the Hamilton Road Quarter combining with SCC-led bus and junction improvements. Masterplan concepts having been developed and exhibited during summer 2022.
- 4.10 A small commercial light industrial unit development alongside the A1071 at Hadleigh is being led by the Council, to address market failure and support local business and employment. A planning application is targeted for submission in early 2023.
- 4.11 The team has developed highly collaborative project and programme management approaches, embedding construction industry good practice, successfully supporting the wider Council's capital assets and works including Leisure Centre capital investments and climate action plan including localised microgeneration developments.
- 4.12 Solar PV installed canopies have been installed covering 40 parking bays adjacent the Kingfisher Leisure Centre – generating up to 16% of the total annual electricity demand of the centre, saving over 30 tonnes of carbon emissions per annum and combining with battery storage to power 7 new electric vehicle charging points. It will be operational at the end of this month. Whilst the project has been impacted by global delays in some energy technology components the project will be delivered under budget (by c.£100k) for the Council's investment. The Regeneration Team also successfully gained a £400k central government grant towards capital costs. Learning from this project will guide future microgeneration investment opportunities.

## **Funding**

- 4.13 In order to support project delivery, officers continue to work on essential pipeline, preliminary and de-risking work to help secure match funding and there has been notable successes - although announcements around the £5.8m Levelling Up Fund Bid for Sudbury are still awaited.



## Town Centres

- 4.14 The Council continues to support and develop cross town partnerships and business support through a range of measures.
- 4.15 The Welcome Back Fund allocated a total of £161,673 projects across Babergh. This fund supported Sudbury with funding for projects including a temporary town centre ambassador, street bunting, green Sundays and heritage open days tours and talks. In Hadleigh the funding was used to turn a redundant BT phone box into a visitor information point, purchase new planters and hanging baskets, support the Christmas fayre and market and a midsummer festival of flowers.
- 4.16 The Virtual High Street now has 236 businesses in Babergh and is no longer just operating in Sudbury and Hadleigh but now has businesses from Long Melford, Lavenham, Hintlesham, Kersey Mill, Little Waldingfield, Glemsford, Boxford, Acton, Great Cornard and Little Cornard, with more areas on the list to reach. The platform is now national with Queue Technology selling licences for Bury Greater Manchester and South Staffordshire, which Babergh have received a small return on investment which is being put back into marketing and promotion such as our Christmas Campaign encouraging public to support their local businesses and using the VHS for festive experiences and last minute gifts.
- 4.17 The Innovate Local Market Stall scheme which started in Hadleigh in 2021 but now has reached into Sudbury market for 2022 and has currently supported 13 businesses across the two towns, ranging from plants, sustainable clothes, and homemade candles. The scheme offered new businesses a free place at a regular town market with free support and equipment. Businesses have gone from testing their business to public on a market stall from just online sales as part of Innovate Local to investing in equipment and resources to attend further markets in the region and wider.

- 4.18 Innovation Labs Sudbury soft-launched in June and opened for members in September and in spite of some initial infrastructure challenges is now growing its membership. The team at Innovation Labs are also working with local partners and schools to offer cost effective enterprise and collaboration spaces.
- 4.19 The Sudbury What's Next public exhibition was held in June and organised by the Sudbury Vision group and showcased a range of projects under the Vision Programme for public feedback. These included Market Hill, St Peter's redevelopment, Sudbury Culture Group, Hamilton Road Quarter, Innovation Labs and Gainsborough House redevelopment. The three-day event was attended by 442 people with 60 survey responses post event plus 78 taking part in the Hamilton Road Quarter online consultation. The feedback from the event and survey will be fed into current and future project developments, and the direction of the Vision programme.

## **5. Future Key Activities**

- 5.1 Work started on tendering packs for changing place facilities at Flatford Mill after securing funding of £45,000 from Government.
- 5.2 Final sign off for the proposed new workspace units in Hadleigh due in December 2022. This scheme will provide new smaller units for growing businesses and responds to a demand study carried out before and after the pandemic which identified that there is a lack of workspace in the District. It will also generate a longer-term rental income stream for the Council from the initial capital investment.
- 5.3 The Council will continue to work hard to drive investment into the district and support owners of key employment and stalled town centre sites to bring this land back into economic use e.g. Delphi, Vanners and Brantham.
- 5.4 Will continue to develop an Inward Investment website to ensure the District is promoted to investors as a place to locate, grow and explore. Additionally work to produce content for Visit Suffolk and to promote additional locations for Screen Suffolk locations database will continue. Babergh has been very sought after over the last year as a filming location with some notable high-profile film and TV content being produced in areas such as Lavenham, Kersey and Long Melford as well as filming for an Ed Sheeran production in Pin Mill.
- 5.5 The Council will continue to develop the 'Love Explore' platform to include walks in Shotley Peninsula and as part of delivery of the adopted Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan, will seek to expand walking and cycling routes across the district to ensure such routes can support residents and tourists alike.
- 5.6 The portfolio will be undertaking a three-year programme of central government grant funded activities through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Rural Prosperity Fund. Bringing in £1,00,2015 and £621,369 respectively, the programmes will deliver against key govt and Babergh economic and community/wellbeing priorities such as business support, skills development and town centre interventions.