



Report by the Chief Officer - Housing and Employability

Management Group – September 2022

Subject: Flourishing DIG Update

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to update members on the development and delivery of activity being undertaken under the auspices of the Flourishing Delivery and Improvement Group (DIG).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** The Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Management Group is asked to note the work undertaken.

3. Background

- 3.1** The Flourishing DIG action plan supports the local outcomes ensuring:
- Our economy is flourishing diverse and dynamic, creating opportunities for everyone
 - Our local communities are sustainable and attractive
 - Increased and better quality learning & employment opportunities
 - Enhanced quality and availability of affordable housing options
- 3.2** This report provides members with an update on the key activity undertaken during the operational year to date.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** The COVID Pandemic recovery and Cost of Living Crisis has been the focus of the Flourishing Delivery and Improvement Group (DIG) partners over the last period and will continue to be a

priority as we support our communities and businesses in returning the local economy back into a growth phase.

- 4.2** The Flourishing DIG fully recognises the challenge of the climate emergency and will ensure a clear focus on green jobs and a green economic recovery to the COVID pandemic. The Council's Climate Change Action Plan can provide a foundation for discussion and development of ideas amongst DIG partners in the coming period.
- 4.3** The CPWD Executive Group agreed the key underpinning themes that will inform our future work. The three themes are Sustainability, Wellbeing and community empowerment. The Flourishing DIG will ensure that its action plan explicitly or implicitly reflects these themes and ensure that all partners play their role.

5. Employability

- 5.1** Working4U and partners have been developing a new approach to the delivery of local employability service called 'No One Left Behind' (NOLB). This has seen the development of the strategic employability partnership that includes representation from key agencies such as SDS and DWP, who are now working alongside Working 4U and local employability service providers to co-ordinate efforts for the benefit of local residents.
- 5.2** The local employability partnership has produced a plan to develop and manage employability services. The approach is based on a Scottish Approach to Service design and incorporates measures to ensure that service providers, staff, and service users can feed their views into the process of service design.
- 5.3** The strategic employability group is focused on the most effective use of grant funding for employability and has established a procurement framework to acquire services. We have complemented this with a competitive grant process that has allowed us to draw on a broader range of specialist service provision. The grant process generated interest from 17 organisations and of that group we have supported 14 with grants to deliver employability services and access to training in sectors where opportunities exist (care, hospitality, tourism, driving).
- 5.4** Over the last quarter emphasis has been placed on developing our contribution to the Regional Investment plan for the UK Shared Prosperity fund (UKSPF). The fund has a potential value of £3.8million for West Dunbartonshire and is centred on core investment principles. The core investment principles are:
- **Communities and Place** - to enable places to invest to restore their community spaces and relationships and create the foundations for

economic development and build resilient and safe neighbourhoods through targeted investment and crime prevention.

- **Supporting Local Business** – to enable places to fund interventions that support local businesses to thrive, innovate and grow. This includes visible improvements to local retail, hospitality and leisure sector facilities and targeted support for small and medium sized businesses to undertake new to firm innovation, adopt productivity enhancing energy efficient and low carbon technologies and techniques.
- **People and Skills** – to reduce the barriers some people face to employment and support them to move towards employment; reduce levels of economic inactivity through investment in bespoke intensive life and employment support tailored to local need; and provide skills development through a wider range of routes.

5.5 In West Dunbartonshire we have aimed to develop interventions in all three investment priority areas. We have established a sequential approach for identifying the appropriate mix of priorities that are consistent with the outputs and outcomes set out by the UKSPF guidelines. This approach prioritises and builds on existing commitments. This includes:

- Reviewing existing activity where continuity beyond European Structural fund end dates is an issue and identify what can be supported through UKSPF. For example the current employability service is delivered with European Structural Funds that end in June 2023;
- Review existing plan priorities and consulting with stakeholders and partners to identify eligible activity from those plan priorities that could be delivered within the budget constraints.

5.5 The funding in West Dunbartonshire will focus on all priorities with approximately £950,000 being invested in communities and place; 500,000 investment in business and 1.7m investment in people and skills. In addition, 672,000 will be focussed on improving numeracy rates in West Dunbartonshire.

5.6 The next step in the development of the UKSPF following UK Government endorsement of the plan will be to establish the methods for using the funds and establishing an appropriate monitoring framework

5.7 Meanwhile, in the first quarter of 2022/2023 we have supported 649 people to access employability services, with 100 securing employment. During that period 143 people have secured a qualification and 191 have entered education or training. In addition, we have assisted people to maximise income through benefits with approximately £2m of additional income being secured by people using our benefits advice service.

6. Business Support

- 6.1** Over the last couple of years COVID-19, Brexit, rising inflation and the energy crisis have all had and continue to have a significant impact on the economic climate and as a result the policy context at national and local level has had to change in order to address these economic challenges. This has led to an increased requirement for the development of a new Economic Development Strategy for the local area. A new Economic Development Strategy has therefore been developed which provides an updated economic vision and strategic priorities for West Dunbartonshire for a five year period from 2022-2027. This will replace the previous Economic Development Strategy 2015-2020 and will align with the Glasgow City Regional Economic Strategy and Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation. A copy of the draft strategy and the feedback survey can be found at the following link:

[Economic Development Strategy | West Dunbartonshire Council \(west-dunbarton.gov.uk\)](https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/economic-development-strategy)

- 6.2** A local Investment Plan has been developed for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which has been submitted to the UK Government for their approval as part of a wider Glasgow City Region Investment Plan. UK Government have advised that we should hear in October/November whether the Investment Plan has been approved. The business support proposals within the Investment Plan include a Business Recovery & Growth fund, Early Stage Growth grants, Towards Net Zero Grant, Enhancing Tourism Events & Attractions Fund, Business Gateway Expert Help and Shopfront & Small Business Improvement Grants.
- 6.3** Since April 2022, the Business Support team have provided advice through Business Gateway to support approx. 100 new start-up businesses. Business Growth Advisers have also continued to work with established businesses to provide continued advice and grant support to help them to recover and grow. A Business Survey has been developed and sent out to local businesses that received grant support last year to provide additional information on the number of jobs created or sustained and also to provide an opportunity for businesses to provide feedback on what business support they think their business would benefit from in the future.
- 6.4** A High Growth Start-Up Challenge Fund has been developed in partnership with Working4Business partners and will provide funding of up to £5,000 to assist early stage businesses with growth potential to increase their turnover and create local jobs. This competitive fund will launch during September and Working4Business partners will assist with the approval process which will include the scoring of the applications and panel interviews.

- 6.5** The Scottish Government have confirmed additional funding to continue the delivery of the national Digital Boost Programme. The Digital Boost programme delivers Information and Communications Technology (ICT) advice to businesses across the country. A quick quote tender specification has been developed by West Dunbartonshire Council for both East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire Council areas for Phase 7 Digital Boost activity. Once the tender submissions have been scored the successful contractor will be appointed to work with local businesses by the end of September 2022.
- 6.6** The Working4Business group have agreed that the next Business Awards event will be held in May 2023. Dunbartonshire Chamber have indicated that they would like to be considered by the group to lead on the organisation of the event and are going to submit a formal proposal to the W4B group for their consideration by mid-September 2022.

7. Regeneration

- 7.1** Regeneration works across our towns continue with support from partners, in particular with the Chamber of Commerce as we promote the 'shop local' campaign. The Council signed up to the Shop Local Gift Card concordat, which, thanks to financial assistance from Scotlands' Towns Partnership (STP), was promoted and managed locally by the Chamber of Commerce, and discussions are ongoing on how this continues to be resourced as STP funding comes to an end.
- 7.2** As well as delivering projects that bring additional footfall to our town centres, we have taken a strategic approach to town centre regeneration. Alexandria Masterplan and Clydebank Town Centre Development Framework, together with the ambitious Dumbarton town centre proposals contained within our Levelling Up Fund programme, provide a long term vision for the reimagining our town centres against a backdrop of declining High Street retail. We continue to support and develop projects that improve and bring vibrancy to our town centres, including for example the new Canal-side Activities Centre in Clydebank town centre which will be delivered in 2023, and the now underway public realm and lighting enhancements to the Smollett Fountain in Alexandria to improve the setting and pedestrian activity around this important town centre feature. In Alexandria, this will be closely followed by the development of further Masterplan projects using Scottish Government's Place Based Investment Programme fund.
- 7.3** The West Dunbartonshire Energy centre has been operational since November 2020 delivering heat to The Leisure centre, Care Home, Titan Enterprise, and Aurora House. The District Heating network is performing well and the newly established West Dunbartonshire Energy LLP is overseeing its growth. The 147

Social Housing units on Titan Boulevard are connected and will be commissioned as flats are completed in August 2022. Clydebank Housing Association has also agreed to connect 45 flat units on Dumbarton Road. Plans continue to secure funding to connect West College Scotland, and the Golden Jubilee University Hospital, and agreement to connect the Clydebank Health Centre. The Council are also pursuing funding from the Scottish Government Green Growth Accelerator and Heat Network funds to enable expansion and connection to the Dalmuir multi story flats and officers continue to work with the Queens Quay landowners to bring in 1,000 new homes.

- 7.4** Good placemaking will continue to underpin the regeneration, development and improvement work in the town centres as we aim to align funding and resources, with Council, DIG partners and external funding, to achieve our ambitions. The improvements we have delivered in the town centres over the past five years have been guided by placemaking and more recently, the move to creating 20 minute neighbourhoods - where people have their day to day needs provided within easy walking or cycling distance. For environmental and health & wellbeing reasons active and sustainable transport is now one of the regeneration priorities; Connecting Clydebank, Connecting Dumbarton and the proposed network of safe walking and cycle routes in Alexandria Masterplan will contribute to this ambition. Scottish Government's Place Based Improvement Programme funding will help us realise these ambitions over the next five years

- 7.5** Council secured £19.9m Levelling-Up Funding from UK government for an ambitious programme of regeneration of Dumbarton Town centre including the acquisition and remodelling of the Artizan shopping centre, the refurbishment and reuse of Glencairn House as central library and museum, and Connecting Dumbarton, which will see pedestrian and cycle links improved between train station and town centre. Connecting Dumbarton works will be delivered in 2023, Artizan Centre remodelling will be phased over a number of years. Planning Application for Glencairn House is expected to be submitted in September 2022. The City Deal Exxon project is progressing as planned as are the plans to convert the brownfield Carless site into a Scottish Marine Technology Park in co-operation with the Malin Group.

8. People Implications

- 8.1** There are no personnel issues.

9. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 9.1** There are no specific financial implications arising as a consequence of this report.

10. Risk Analysis

10.1 There are no specific unassessed risks relating to this report

11. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

11.1 Equalities Impact Assessments are carried out in all key action areas as required.

12. Consultation

12.1 Ongoing consultation activity with both providers and service recipients is undertaken allowing for flexibility of approach as needs throughout period of pandemic and as we recover.

13. Strategic Assessment

13.1 The contents of this report could impact on all community planning strategic priority areas.

13.2 The activity being developed and supported by the Flourishing DIG will continue to contribute and reinforce our efforts to develop a strong economy that provides access to opportunity for all in West Dunbartonshire.

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Background Papers:

Wards Affected: All