



## Report by the Flourishing DIG Chair

Management Group: 17 November 2022

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**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 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 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 two quarters of 2022/2023 we have supported 893 people to access employability services, with 200 securing employment. During the same period 280 people have secured a qualification and 726 have entered education or training. In addition, we have assisted people to maximise income through benefits with approximately £3.82m 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. The Strategy, which is being presented to the Infrastructure, Regeneration

and Economic Development Committee on 2 November, has five objectives:

- Stimulating economic investment and growing the business base;
- Establishing an inclusive economy by improving the skills of our people and supporting them into work;
- Creating a prosperous place where people choose to live, work, visit and invest;
- Addressing climate change and supporting a green recovery;
- Building stronger partnerships and new approaches to delivery.

- 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 that was sent out to local businesses that received grant support last year has shown encouraging results. So far, the survey has had a response rate of 57% (16 responses) and feedback received shows that the Council's business growth grants have assisted with the creation of 27 jobs and helped to safeguard 90 jobs within the local area. 100% of businesses that have responded also advised that the grant support has helped them to increase their turnover making them more sustainable. During 21/22, £56,258 of business growth grant support was provided to 28 local businesses which levered an additional £251,068 of private investment into the local area.
- 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 launched 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 exercise has been undertaken by West Dunbartonshire Council for both East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire Council areas for Phase 7

Digital Boost activity. The successful supplier was NS Design Ltd and they will continue to work with businesses until the end of March 2023.

- 6.6** The Working4Business group have agreed that the next Business Awards event will be held in May 2023, and invitations to tender to run the event will close shortly.

## **7. Regeneration**

- 7.1** 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.

- 7.2** 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. The Regeneration team is working closely with the Alexandria Traders Group to quickly address any concerns arising from roadworks, and Business Support team will offer grant assistance to the traders for a Christmas market event following this phase of public realm works. Further funding from Scottish Government's Place Based Improvement Programme will be invested in Alexandria Masterplan projects.

- 7.3** Council has 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, and the Artizan Centre remodelling will be phased over a number of years. The planning application for Glencairn House is now expected to be submitted by November 2022. At September's Infrastructure Regeneration & Economic Development Committee, approval was given to invest in short-term improvements to the Artizan Centre in Dumbarton town centre including demolition of vacant blocks, introduction of meanwhile uses in temporary spaces, and property and landscaping improvements. Committee also agreed that additional work on the next phases of the regeneration of the Centre including feasibility work on developments that bring footfall to the town centre will be undertaken.

- 7.4** The West Dunbartonshire Energy Centre and Heat Network have 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. Clydebank Housing Association has also agreed to connect 45 flats on Dumbarton Road. Since the last report to CPWD, talks have progressed with the Golden Jubilee Hospital and West College Scotland, and subject to the agreement of funding, timescales for connection have been developed. Discussions are also advanced with Clydebank Health Centre. The Council are pursuing funding from the Scottish Government Green Growth Accelerator and Heat Network funds to enable expansion and connection from the Golden Jubilee to the Dalmuir multi story flats and officers continue to work with the Queens Quay landowners to bring in 1,000 new homes.

**7.5** 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

**7.6** 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. A Stage 1 Vacant and Derelict Land Grant Fund application to deliver greenspace and access improvements on the Exxon site to realise the wider ambitions of the masterplan has been approved and Stage 2 will be submitted shortly.

## **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.

**Name** Peter Barry, Chief Officer Housing & Employability

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**Person to Contact:** Gillian McNamara  
[Gillian.mcnamara@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:Gillian.mcnamara@west-dunbarton.gov.uk)  
07815 705769

**Background Papers:**

**Wards Affected:** All