

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Strategic Lead, Regulatory & Regeneration****Infrastructure Regeneration and Economic Development Committee:
1 November 2023**

Subject: Economic Development Strategy Action Plan 2022-2027

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide Committee with an update of work undertaken during 2022/23 to deliver the West Dunbartonshire Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027 and to obtain approval for an Economic Development Strategy Action Plan for the period 2022-2027.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** The Committee is invited to:

- (i) Note the work activity undertaken during 2022/23 to deliver the West Dunbartonshire Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027;
- (ii) Approve the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan 2022-2027 and delegate authority to the Strategic Lead Regulatory & Regeneration to deliver against this plan.

3. Background

- 3.1** The Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027 was developed to provide an economic vision and strategy for West Dunbartonshire Council for a five year period and was approved by the Infrastructure, Regeneration and Economic Development Committee on 2 November 2022.
- 3.2** The Strategy aligns with the Council's Strategic Plan, the Glasgow City Regional Economic Strategy and the Scottish Government's National Strategy for Economic Transformation, Delivering Economic Prosperity.
- 3.3** The economic climate continues to present many challenges; these include the ongoing recovery from the Covid pandemic, the implications of Brexit, rising energy costs, continuing high inflation generally, and the impact of the war in Ukraine.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** The appended action plan details the key actions and performance measures necessary to achieve our vision for 2022-27.

‘By 2027, West Dunbartonshire will have an inclusive and vibrant economy through the creation of fairer jobs, a drive towards net Zero, and the development of prosperous places in partnership with our communities and businesses’.

4.2 The action plan will also assist with the achievement of a number of key strategic priorities these are:

- 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.

4.3 A copy of the new proposed Economic Development Strategy Action Plan 2022-2027 is attached in Appendix 1 for approval. The action plan details the key actions and performance measures necessary to achieve our new vision and will build on the foundations established in our 2015-20 Economic Development Strategy.

4.4 Further detail on the work activity undertaken to deliver the Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027 during 2022/23 under each of the priority themes is provided below.

Stimulating Economic Investment and Growing the Business Base

4.5 The Council’s Business Support team provides a range of discretionary business grants to local businesses to assist them to grow and create local jobs. During 2022/23:

- 75 businesses have been supported with grant support to assist them to grow and create local jobs;
- 35 business employees have been supported with a training grant to assist with training costs;
- 41 businesses have received a start-up grant to assist them to start-up their own business.

4.6 The Business Gateway service has been successfully delivered by the Council’s Business Support team since 1 October 2015. The team provide an advisory service to our local start-up and growth businesses. In 2022/23 the Business Gateway service provided:

- 205 businesses with start-up assistance;
- 35 start-ups with growth potential were given early stage growth support;
- 41 businesses with action plans through growth advisory service support.

- 4.7** Business start-up numbers of 205 for 2022/23 have increased slightly from the previous year's figure of 201. The Scottish Local Government Benchmarking website provides information on the number of Business Gateway start-ups per 10,000 populations for each Local Authority area. The most recent data from 2022/23 shows that West Dunbartonshire supported 23.4 start-ups per 10,000 population which compares favourably with the figure of 14.3 start-ups per 10,000 population for the whole of Scotland.
- 4.8** The Business Gateway service also delivers a variety of free business webinars to provide advice to start-ups and established businesses. These webinars include areas such as business planning, marketing and financial planning. During 2022/23, 56 webinars were held with 346 clients attending.
- 4.9** A range of new business grant interventions have been funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which went live during April/May 2023. These grant interventions include a Recovery & Growth grant, Early Stage Growth grant, Working Towards Net Zero grant & Enhancing West Dunbartonshire's Tourism Events & Attractions grant.
- 4.10** The Council are working in partnership with Glasgow City Region and Strathclyde University to provide businesses with green business advice through the development of carbon baseline assessments. This support will be funded through UK Shared Prosperity Fund and is targeted to be available to businesses from October 2023.
- 4.11** A High Growth Start-Up Challenge Fund was developed in partnership with the Working4Business group to support the growth of start-up businesses that show high growth potential in West Dunbartonshire. The Challenge Fund provided a competitive grant award of up to £5,000 to high growth start-ups that could evidence the potential to grow and create employment within West Dunbartonshire. Working4Business partners have assisted with the scoring and panel interviews for the fund which supported five local businesses.

Establishing an Inclusive Economy by Improving the Skills of Our People and supporting them into Work

- 4.12** Working4U is an integrated service that supports residents in West Dunbartonshire to improve their skills, learning and financial situations, assisting their progress into work and protecting their rights to welfare benefits.
- 4.13** The learning service covers a wide range of activity, such as employability skills, youth work, family and adult learning. In 2022/23 Working4U supported:
- 1,469 people to enter education or training; and
 - 756 people to secure a nationally recognised qualification.
- 4.14** Information and Advice is designed to support the financial well-being of residents through the provision of debt counselling and welfare benefit advice.

Our focus is on households facing substantial challenges and assisting them to stabilise difficult situations. During 2022/2023 we supported residents to:

- secure £8.1 million through benefit maximisation; and
- renegotiate and manage £1.8million of debt.

4.15 Employability support in 23/24 has seen a substantial change with the transition from the European Structural funds to the 'UK Shared Prosperity Fund' (UKSPF). This fund goes beyond employability to incorporate additional priorities, across the following investment priorities:

- Communities and Place (community development);
- Supporting Local Business (local business support);
- People and Skills (employability skills); and
- Multiply (improving maths skills).

This is a major change in the employability landscape and Working4U will manage the programme of interventions for West Dunbartonshire. In addition we will ensure UKSPF aligns with the Scottish Governments No One Left Behind policy framework. We will do this by reinforcing our partnership approach through the Strategic Employability Group

4.16 The Strategic Employability Group continues to co-ordinate employability provision in an effective way. The approach is based on the principles that underpin the [partnership agreement](#) for employability between the Scottish and Local Government. The partnership brings together all the main service providers in West Dunbartonshire and encourages input to the process. In 2022/23, Working4U supported 420 residents to secure employment.

4.17 In 2022 the Council agreed to set aside an Apprenticeship Investment Fund of £1million. The fund is to be used over four years to meet the salary costs for young people taking up apprenticeships in West Dunbartonshire Council. The Team has worked with 158 people through the Modern Apprenticeship programme. Of these,

- 119 were apprentices (16–24-year-olds);
- 39 were receiving support for in-work progression (25 years+).
- The Team is also supporting 71 Foundation Apprentices.

Creating a Prosperous Place where People Choose to Live, Work, Visit and Invest

4.18 The latest draft strategic housing investment programme 2022-27 (identifies 755 homes to be developed by the Council and our Registered Social Landlord partners leveraging an estimated £55.8million of grant funding from the Scottish Government over the five years of the plan. There are high levels of housing need in West Dunbartonshire and therefore we will work closely with colleagues in other teams to deliver more housing of all tenures and ensure that our housing is the best it can be across the council area. We

will continue to work with our colleagues to review the private housing market and ensure there is an adequate supply of private housing sites. Any investment in housing reaps rewards beyond the home itself and in addition to this our procurement processes include significant community benefits including apprenticeships, school engagement and investment in community spaces such as gardens, and to improve the resilience of town centres and to create 20 minute neighbourhoods.

- 4.19** The Local Economic Development (LED) annual capital budget plays an important role in developing shovel ready projects that can attract external funding as those opportunities arise. The budget is also used as match funding to lever in external funding; LED has funded long term visioning for our towns and communities, as demonstrated in the Alexandria Masterplan and Clydebank Town Centre Development Framework and continues to fund town centre regeneration projects. Projects in the pipeline include Mitchell Way public realm improvements in support of the Mitchell Way developments. The Regeneration Fund of £12.4m was agreed at Council on 28 October 2015 to support development and regeneration projects where a return would be achieved, whether in terms of wider economic growth or financial returns. To date, Regeneration Fund has been invested in several initiatives including the further development of the innovative District Heating Centre at Queens' Quay. Regeneration Fund will also part-fund the repurposing of Glencairn House as a library, museum and community space, Connecting Dumbarton and the proposed Scottish Marine Technology Park at Carless.
- 4.20** Despite regular meetings with the owners and agent of the Queens' Quay site, there has been no substantive progress towards delivering the remainder of the 1,000 homes at Queens' Quay. The terms of the development agreement dictate that site marketing and commercial negotiations are led by the site agent, but officers have been considering different ways to stimulate development interest in the site by, for example, driving developer engagement by seeking developer views on the masterplan and housing types and forms for the site. Recently agreed connections to the District Heating Network include 46 Clydebank Housing Association flats on Dumbarton Road. Officers continue to build a financial case for connections to West College Scotland, the Health Centre and the Golden Jubilee Hospital.
- 4.21** Clydebank has just been announced as a beneficiary of £20M of UK Government's next tranche of Levelling Up Fund for "overlooked" towns, which is welcome news. Further guidance is awaited from UK Government, but the indication is that the predominantly capital funding will be available over a 10 year period and can be used to support a range of town centre measures. In 2021 the Council approved a Development Framework for Clydebank Town Centre which will be a helpful guide for decisions about investment.
- 4.22** Good progress has been made towards delivering the Levelling Up Fund programme of works for Dumbarton town centre. Connecting Dumbarton is underway and will be completed in early 2024; planning permission is secured

for Glencairn House and the construction tenders are due to be returned by the end of the year; and the emerging Masterplan for the redevelopment of the Artizan Centre has been developed to create a sustainable, diverse and thriving town centre and is the subject of a separate report on this agenda.

- 4.23** During this year, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund has enabled a pilot project offering Shop Front Improvement grants to the local businesses in Alexandria. This grant will be expanded to other town centres in 2024.
- 4.24** At its meeting on 21 June 2023, Council approved the £44.325m Final Business Case for the infrastructure proposals for the Exxon site, and agreed that the Business Case be presented to Glasgow City Region for approval. This was approved by City Region Cabinet on 8 August. Council officers will continue to liaise with the City Region on the availability of additional funding from the expected reprogramming exercise. While there is currently no certainty on securing additional funding, Council officers will focus on and promote the comparatively significant growth benefits that the development of Exxon will deliver not just for West Dunbartonshire but for the wider City Region. In September 2023, the Council has been invited to submit a Stage 2 application for Vacant and Derelict Land Improvement Programme funding to develop green network aspects of the Exxon development following a successful Stage 1 application.
- 4.25** A Project Board has been established to support Malin Group in their proposals to relocate to the former Carless site, to attract further marine-related businesses and to build out the Scottish Marine Technology Park. Using the Clyde Mission fund, Malin have this year delivered flood mitigation works to enable the first phases of development and will appoint a quay designer to establish the design and cost of new quay infrastructure. A planning application for the wider Scottish Marine Technology Park is expected during this year.

Addressing Climate Change and Supporting a Green Recovery

- 4.26** The Queen's Quay District Heating Network continues to expand with work initiating at Dumbarton road flats. To date low carbon heat from the centre is being supplied to a leisure Centre, two office buildings, a town hall, a library 145 Wheatley flats and more recently agreement to extend to 46 Clydebank Housing Association flats on Dumbarton Road. Future expansion plans extend to the West College Scotland, Health Centre and Golden Jubilee Hospital.
- 4.27** The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will continue to be reviewed by the Climate Change Action Group. Work is ongoing to provide carbon emissions data to the Scottish Government by November 2023. Initial figures suggest good progress on energy use, but increased water consumption as compared to previous year.

- 4.28** The Local Heat & Energy Efficiency Strategy is making good progress, consultants now have all necessary information to advise on current heat networks and construction information. An engagement workshop is planned in October initially with internal stakeholders to assess priorities and where we are at present. From this information the Council will develop a strategy and delivery plan for low carbon projects across West Dunbartonshire

Building Stronger Partnerships and New Approaches to Delivery

- 4.29** West Dunbartonshire Council is one of eight Member Authorities in the Glasgow City Region. In addition to progressing the Exxon City Deal project, Council officers collaborate with the City Region Programme Management Office on a range of Region-wide policies and projects which have this year included an Electric Vehicle charging strategy; Climate Clyde Forest; and more recently early development work on the emerging Investment Zone.
- 4.30** The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is the UK Government's main funding to replace European Union Structural Funds. A Glasgow City Region Investment Plan has been developed and approved by the UK Government. This fund will provide funding of £3,895,815 to support Communities & Place, Local Business and People & Skills.
- 4.31** The 'Working4business' group continues to provide a partnership approach to supporting our local businesses. Their Business Awards event was held at Clydebank Town Hall on 26th May 2023. The event was hosted by Jennifer Reoch and had over 170 attendees. The feedback received from attendees was very positive.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** There are no people implications related to this project.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** The Council budget expenditure detailed in the action plan continues to be monitored and reported regularly to ensure that performance targets are achieved, maximising private sector leverage and external funding.
- 6.2** It is acknowledged that the achievement of the outcomes of this new Strategy Action Plan is reliant on the continued commitment and funding from both public and private sector partners.
- 6.3** There are no procurement issues in relation to the Strategy Action Plan contained within this paper; however each project through its development will require an appropriate procurement process.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** The consultation process with partners and key stakeholders ensured that the content of the strategy is appropriate and relevant to economic conditions and throughout the delivery process risk will be assessed and managed.

8. Environmental Sustainability

- 8.1** A pre-screening Strategic Environmental Assessment has been completed for the Economic Development Strategy, and is available as a background paper, which determined that although this is a key strategic document it is expected that it will generate no or minimal environmental effects at this stage. Any specific plans and programmes which derive from the Strategy Action Plan will be subjected to an environmental assessment as and when required.

9 Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 9.1** The Strategy has been impact assessed and is relevant to the general equality duty. The Strategy will assist with reducing inequality and advancing equality and has potential to produce positive impacts. A range of actions in support of this are noted in the EIA which is available as Appendix 2 to this report.

10. Consultation

- 10.1** A Consultation process was undertaken to obtain feedback on the Economic Development Strategy which involved consultation with senior officers across Council services and also with our partners through the Community Planning Partnership - Flourishing Delivery & Improvement Group and the Working4Business Partnership group.
- 10.2** A feedback survey for the Economic Development Strategy was also developed and was available on the Council website for individuals/organisations to provide their comments or feedback. The feedback received through the survey was very positive.

11. Strategic Assessment

- 11.1** The new Economic Development Strategy Action Plan 2022 – 2027 provides a clear strategic approach to Economic Development for the local area and will help determine how we allocate resources to improve our economic performance. It responds to various local, regional and national policies and strategies. These include:
- West Dunbartonshire Council Strategic Plan;
 - West Dunbartonshire Plan for Place/Local Outcome Improvement Plan;
 - Glasgow City Region Economic Strategy; and
 - The Scottish Government's National Strategy for Economic Transformation, Delivering Economic Prosperity.

Alan Douglas

Strategic Lead, Regulatory & Regeneration

Date: 18/1023

Person to Contact: Gillian McNamara, Economic Development Manager,
Council Offices, Church Street, Dumbarton, G82 1QL.
T: 07815705769
Email: Gillian.mcnamara@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Economic Development Strategy Action
Plan 2022-2027
Appendix 2- EIA- New Economic Development Strategy
2022-2027

Background Papers: IRED Committee Report – New Economic Development
Strategy 2 November 2022
Strategic Environmental Assessment – New Economic
Development Strategy 2022-2027

Wards Affected: All Wards