

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Officer, Regulatory & Regeneration****Infrastructure Regeneration and Economic Development Committee:
2 November 2022**

Subject: New Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide Committee with an update of work undertaken during 2021/22 to deliver the previous West Dunbartonshire Economic Development Strategy 2015-2020 and to obtain approval for a new Economic Development Strategy for the period 2022-2027.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** The Committee is invited to:

- (i) Note the work activity undertaken during 2021/22 to deliver the previous West Dunbartonshire Economic Development Strategy 2015-2020;
- (ii) Approve the new Economic Development Strategy for the period 2022-2027.

3. Background

- 3.1** Over the last couple of years COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the economic climate and as a result officers have had to prioritise the delivery and distribution of Scottish Government Covid grants to support the community and local businesses. This has in turn led to a delay in the development of a new Economic Development Strategy for the local area.
- 3.2** The economic climate continues to face many challenges, these include the ongoing recovery from the Covid pandemic, the implications of Brexit, rising energy costs, rising inflation generally, and the impact of the war in Ukraine.
- 3.3** A new Economic Development Strategy has been developed which will provide an updated economic vision and strategic priorities for West Dunbartonshire for a further five year period from 2022-2027. The new Strategy aligns with the Council's proposed new Strategic Plan, the Glasgow City Regional Economic Strategy and the Scottish Government's National Strategy for Economic Transformation, Delivering Economic Prosperity.
- 3.4** This report also provides committee with an update on the work activity undertaken during 2021/22 to deliver the previous Economic Development

Strategy 2015-2020 which was approved by the Infrastructure, Regeneration & Economic Development Committee in September 2015.

4. Main Issues

4.1 An updated economic vision has been developed for the new Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027 which is:

‘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 A number of key strategic priorities have also been updated to assist us to achieve this vision, 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 2022-2027 is attached in Appendix 1 for approval. Once the new strategy has been approved an action plan will be developed and brought to a future Committee for approval. The action plan will detail 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 2020-2025 during 2021/22 under each of the priority themes is provided in sections 5-9 of this report.

4.5 Our previous strategic approach focused on the four key themes listed below:

- Stimulating economic investment and growing the business base;
- Improving the skills of all our people and supporting them into work;
- Creating an inclusive and prosperous place where people choose to live, work and invest; and
- Building stronger partnerships and innovative approaches to delivery.

5. Stimulating economic investment and growing the business base

5.1 During 2021/22, the Business Support team successfully administered a range of Coronavirus Business Support Grant funds on behalf of the Scottish Government. Last year in total, the team provided 1,716 grants totalling over £3.2 million to local businesses/individuals to provide them with critical

financial support to assist with Covid restrictions. The grants provided businesses with financial support through the following funds:

- Discretionary Fund;
- Hospitality Fund;
- Nightclub and Brewery Fund;
- Public House Table Service Fund;
- Route map Extension Fund;
- Self-Catering Exclusive Use Fund;
- Strategic Framework Top Up Fund;
- Taxi and Operator Fund;
- Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Driver & Operator Support Fund; and
- Ventilation Fund.

5.2 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 2021/22:

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

5.4 The Business Gateway service has been successfully delivered by the Council's Business Support team since 1 October 2015. Although the team had a continuing focus over the last year on the administration and delivery of essential Covid grant support to local businesses, the team also continued to provide an advisory service to our local start-up and growth businesses. In 2021/22 the Business Gateway service provided:

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

5.5 Business start-up numbers of 201 for 2021/22 have remained broadly consistent with the previous year's figure of 200. 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 2020/21 shows West Dunbartonshire are ranked 5th out of the 32 Local Authorities. During 2020/21, West Dunbartonshire supported 22.3 start-ups per 10,000 population which compares favourably with the figure of 11.2 start-ups per 10,000 population for the whole of Scotland.

5.6 The Business Gateway service also delivers a variety of free business workshops to provide advice to start-ups and established businesses. These

workshops include areas such as business planning, marketing and financial planning. During 2021/22, 33 workshops were held with 185 clients attending.

- 5.7** The Business Support team are responsible for the management and delivery of the Digital Boost Programme which aims to deliver Information and Communications Technology advice to businesses in the form of workshops and one-to-one expert advice. This is a Scottish Government Nationally funded project which from July 2017 has been managed and procured by West Dunbartonshire Council for both West and East Dunbartonshire Council areas. During 2021/22, there were 9 one-to-one specialist sessions delivered in the West Dunbartonshire Council area and 10 within the East Dunbartonshire Council area. Further funding for Phase 7 has been secured from Scottish Government to deliver similar activity for the year 2022/23.
- 5.8** A Business survey has recently been undertaken with the businesses that received a business growth grant during 2021/22 to evaluate the effectiveness of the Council's Business Growth Grants. 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.
- 5.9** A High Growth Start-Up Challenge Fund has been 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 will provide a competitive grant award of up to £5,000 to high growth start-ups that can evidence the potential to grow and create employment within West Dunbartonshire. The fund is open for applications and will close on 28th October 2022. Working4Business partners have agreed to assist with the scoring and panel interviews for the fund.

6. Improving the skills of all our people and supporting them into work

6.1 Working4U is an integrated service that supports clients and communities in West Dunbartonshire to improve their skills, learning and financial situations, assisting all on their progress into work and protecting the rights of our citizens. During the period April 2021 to March 2022 we continued to deliver services that were subject to compliance with health restrictions due to COVID-19. As such, while our services were reduced. We nevertheless continued to support people through our 'Virtual Hubs'. We complemented this with face to face services where this was appropriate and risks were properly managed. Our activities continued to centre on:

- the provision of information, guidance, and support to help residents to make informed choices about debt and money, learning and employment opportunities and enjoy improved life chances;

- the provision of good quality advice and learning assisting them to make positive and sustained contributions to their community; and
- Improving the employability and resilience of local residents and making a positive contribution towards increasing employment rates within our community to close the gap with Scotland employment rates.

6.2 The specialist components of Working4U's services include the Learning service which primarily supports disadvantaged or vulnerable groups and individuals of all ages to engage in learning. Our aim is to bring about positive change in their lives and communities. The learning and employability service are key components of the Employability Pathway. This covers a wide range of activity, such as employability skills, youth work, family and adult learning. It also includes adult literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) as well as individual capacity building to develop confidence and self-esteem. Despite the impact of COVID-19 restrictions in 2021/22 we supported:

- 993 people to enter education or training; and
- 498 people to secure a nationally recognised qualification.

6.3 Information and Advice is set within the policy context that is designed to support a flourishing Scottish economy. Working4U contributes to this aim through the provision of debt counselling and welfare benefit advice. During 2021/2022 we supported local residents to:

- secure £7.2million through benefit maximisation by the provision of advice and support; and
- renegotiate and manage £2.49million of debt.

6.4 Employability encompasses aspects that enable people to increase their chances of getting a job, staying in a job, and progressing further in work. The Council is responsive to those people in our communities with the greatest need and our drive to real jobs is pursued in partnership with organisations, agencies and employers that share our values. In 2021/22, despite the constraints placed on us by COVID-19 health controls, Working4U supported 294 residents to secure employment.

6.5 West Dunbartonshire Council has created a £1m Apprenticeship Investment Fund to support apprenticeships over a four years period from 2018 to 2022. The fund will see £0.250m spent in each of the four years to recruit apprentices across a range of Council services and positions within the Private sector. In addition to traditional apprenticeships, we will contribute to workforce development in West Dunbartonshire Council. In 2021/22, 288 Apprenticeship opportunities were supported.

7. Creating an inclusive and prosperous place where people choose to live, work and invest

- 7.1** Availability of good quality homes and a choice of tenures is a fundamental component of placemaking. 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. We have 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.
- 7.2** The Local Economic Development annual Capital Budget of £1m 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; recent examples of which include the Scottish Government/European Green Infrastructure funded Melfort Park at the former St Eunan's primary school site and Regeneration Capital Grant Funded Clydebank Can on the Canal Activities Centre. LED has funded long term visioning for our towns and communities, as demonstrated in the Alexandria Masterplan and Clydebank Town Centre Development Framework. 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.
- 7.3** The Council's investment of £15.62m in Queens Quay over the past five years has helped fund the infrastructure needed to prepare the site for redevelopment. In collaboration with the development partners, good progress has been made on key developments, including the completion of the energy centre, new Care home, Wheatley developed flats and the new NHS Clydebank health centre as well as the Titan Boulevard. Housing development plots are being marketed to fulfil the ambition of delivering 1,000 new homes on Queens Quay. The redevelopment of this site will be transformational for all our communities in Clydebank and through implementation of Clydebank Town Centre Development Framework stronger links with the town centre and public transport will follow.
- 7.4** The West Dunbartonshire Energy centre started delivering heat in November 2020. The Leisure centre, Care Home, Titan Enterprise, and Aurora House

were the first four customers connected. The District Heating network is performing well and the newly established West Dunbartonshire Energy LLP is overseeing its growth. The 147 Wheatley flatted units on Titan Boulevard are currently connected as the development nears its completion and we are progressing with Clydebank Housing Association for flats on Dumbarton road seeking to connect. Positive discussions continue to secure funding to connect West College Scotland, the Golden Jubilee Hospital, and agreement to connect the Clydebank Health centre. The Council are also pursuing funding from the Scottish Government Green Growth Accelerator fund to enable expansion and connection to the Dalmuir flats. Officers continue to work with the Queens Quay landowners to bring in 1,100 new homes at the former John Brown Shipyard. The Energy centre was showcased globally during COP26. It has won a European Heat Pump award 2021 as well as COSLA Excellence Awards in 2022. It was also in the final of Local Government Chronicle Awards and Association for Public Service Excellence Awards.

- 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, both Council and external funding, to achieve our ambitions. Building on the successes of previous charrettes in Clydebank and Dumbarton, our collaboration with local community groups, citizens and stakeholders has been instrumental in the production of Alexandria Masterplan and Clydebank Town Centre Framework. 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 Green Corridors project in Alexandria Masterplan will contribute to this ambition.
- 7.6** Scottish Government's Town Centre Fund has funded a range of exciting projects including Dumbarton Waterfront Path Gateway, Sylvania Way public realm in Clydebank and enhancements to Smollett Fountain in Alexandria. A new community-led Activities Centre in Clydebank funded by Regeneration Capital Grant Fund is being developed and will be delivered in 2024. The award of £19.9m from the Levelling Up Fund will help deliver ambitious plans to regenerate Dumbarton Town Centre including the repurposing of Glencairn House as a library, museum and community space, purchase and partial redevelopment of the Artizan Centre, and delivery of the Connecting Dumbarton project to enhance active travel connections between Dumbarton Central railway station and the Town Centre. The Place Based Investment Fund provides opportunities to deliver on our vision for the town centres in partnership with community organisations, other public sector bodies, landowners and developers. It contributed towards the Titan Boulevard in Clydebank, and will fund a number of placemaking and active travel projects identified in the Alexandria Masterplan. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will

enable us to offer Shop Front Improvement grants to the local businesses in the town centres.

- 7.7** As the trend in online shopping continues, town centres everywhere are having to change and adapt to a much reduced demand for high street shopping. Alternative scenarios for obsolete town centre property and land include housing development, more restaurant and food outlets that help create a night-time economy and encouraging community uses for vacant property. In 2022 the Council purchased the ailing Artizan Centre in Dumbarton to facilitate redevelopment of the parts of the Centre where vacancy rates are high. This Levelling Up Fund project will help to increase footfall and bring vibrancy back into the town centre. Phase 1 of the works was approved by the IRED Committee in September 2022. In Clydebank, the focus is to create the heart of the town by taking a proactive approach to the future uses of land and buildings south of the Canal. Public realm works around the Smollet Fountain in Alexandria will enhance the town centre and make it more attractive for people to visit.
- 7.8** We continue to work with town centre businesses to mitigate the impacts of the current cost of living crisis and the pandemic on our already struggling high streets. In partnership with the Chamber of Commerce funding was secured to promote and support Loves Local, a Shop Local and Think Local First to drive footfall into our town centres. Grants for shop front improvements will be made available to small businesses in town centres. Covid-19 has had an impact on the value and marketability of town centre premises, and so we continue to maintain a dialogue with town centre property owners to discuss their future plans.
- 7.9** The Council has agreed terms to acquire the City Deal funded redevelopment of the former Esso site at Bowling. A contractor has been appointed and progress is being made with the delivery of the infrastructure. These are significant milestones in the future re-use of the site for employment generating uses. The site forms part of a much larger regeneration opportunity along North Clyde Riverbank, and improved connections as well re-use of riverfront vacant and derelict land will be a priority for the Council in the coming years to create an attractive and vibrant riverfront. The Council applied for Vacant and Derelict Land Improvement Programme funding to develop green network aspects of the Exxon development.
- 7.10** Many of the projects are delivered in partnership with other organisations. The Council continues to support Scottish Canals in their transformation of Bowling, most recently in the creation of the Bowline, an elevated walkway/linear park on the former swing bridge at Bowling Basin, to create an important new connection for pedestrians and cyclists. Scottish Canals have refurbished the B listed Custom House to provide boutique self-catering accommodation. Together these improvements have transformed the offer at Bowling and consolidated its role as a compelling destination. The Council will continue to work with Scottish Canals, other nearby landowners and Clyde

Mission on a vision for North Clyde Riverbank that will regenerate the river frontage and improve connections between Bowling and the former Esso site.

7.10 In partnership with Historic Environment Scotland and Scottish Maritime Museum, the Council is delivering the vision set out in Dumbarton Visitor Gateway Study. With the partially complete Waterfront Path being a key connection between the Dumbarton town centre and the Rock and Castle, the partnership is implementing an action plan that will strengthen the combined offer of the Arc of Attraction incorporating the Rock and Castle, Denny Tank Museum and Glencairn House when it is repurposed and open to the public. This includes looking into options for delivering improved parking and access for buses to the Castle, and the eastern end of the Waterfront Path. The first phases of Dumbarton Waterfront Path are finished and open, and talks continue with the landowners of the later phases, Turnberry Homes and Dumbarton FC, to determine their timescales for delivering their sections of the Path.

8. Building stronger partnerships and innovative approaches to delivery.

8.1 The Council continues to work in partnership with the Glasgow City Region to implement the new Regional Economic Strategy which outlines the vision and three grand challenges for the City Region until 2030.

'By 2030, Glasgow City Region will have the most Innovative, Inclusive and Resilient Economy in the UK'

- Creating an Inclusive Economy
- Enhancing Productivity
- Addressing the Climate Emergency

8.2 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 submitted to the UK Government for their consideration. The anticipated timeline for the investment plans to be approved is October 2023. If approved this fund will provide additional funding of £3,895,815 to support Communities & Place, Local Business and People & Skills.

8.3 Officers continue to work in partnership to explore opportunities for external funding and have a strong track record of attracting external funding for Economic Development, Regeneration, Infrastructure and Employability projects. Recent examples include £2m of funding from the Scottish Government's Clyde Mission Fund to enable construction of the Scottish Marine Technology Park, £20m from the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund for our Town Centres regeneration projects and various grants from the Scottish Government's Regeneration Capital Grant Fund. We are a partner to the Glasgow City Region and are developing a multi-million pound project to create new industrial premises and associated infrastructure at the former Exxon site near Dumbarton.

8.4 The 'Working4business' group continues to provide a partnership approach to supporting our local businesses. The priority over the last year for partners and the Council in relation to supporting our local business during 2021/22 has continued to be related to the Pandemic and supporting business recovery.

8.5 In order to deliver the regeneration programmes, Council's Regeneration Team has partnerships with a diverse range of external stakeholders such as Glasgow City Region, Scottish Enterprise, Strathleven Regeneration Cic, Scottish Government, NHS, Golden Jubilee Hospital, Scottish Canals, Historic Environment Scotland, Scottish Maritime Museum, Sustrans, Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority, Event Scotland, Dumbarton Castle Society, Ysortit, Network Rail, Dumbarton Stations Improvement Trust and Dunbartonshire Chamber of Commerce

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 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 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, 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 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 has been undertaken to obtain feedback on the New 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 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 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.

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Date: 6.10.22

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 – New Economic Development Strategy
2022-2027
Appendix 2- EIA- New Economic Development Strategy
2022-2027

Background Papers: IRED Committee Report – West Dunbartonshire
Economic Development Strategy Update November 2021
Strategic Environmental Assessment – New Economic
Development Strategy 2022-2027

Wards Affected: All Wards