



Report by the Chief Officer - Housing and Employability

West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership Management Group – 3 February 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 sustainability activity undertaken during the operational year to date.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** The COVID Pandemic recovery 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. 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 are complementing this with a competitive grant process that that will allow us to draw on a broader range of specialist service provision. The grant process is currently being scrutinised by the Housing and Communities Committee and we expect to launch the grant in time for the introduction of the next phase of No One Left Behind.

5.4 Working 4U is also taking the lead in developing a three year plan to guide the work of the local employability partnership. This will follow guidelines set by the Scottish Government, but will reflect on local needs and opportunities and will allow us to focus our efforts on local priorities. This plan will be drafted by April and will cover the period from April 2022 to March 2025.

5.5 In addition we have established links between employability and HSCP service providers to ensure that these service providers have clearer access to mainstream and specialist services. This work will be managed by the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership 'Employability' sub group. Our aim is to improve the integration and alignment of employability and health related service support.

5.6 In the first three quarters of this year (2021/2022) period Working4U, despite delivering a remote service, has provided youth and adult employability support to 636 people. Furthermore, through the provision of access to learning and training, 830 people have entered education and training and 488 have secured a qualification. To date 345 have secured employment.

6. Business Support

- 6.1** Since March 2020, the Business Support team have successfully administered a range of Coronavirus Business Support Grant funds on behalf of the Scottish Government. The team have provided over £31 million to local businesses/individuals to provide them with critical financial support throughout the pandemic. Into 2022 there are a number of additional targeted support grants being provided by Scottish Government and distributed by the Council including the hospitality and leisure sector with further support for Taxi drivers anticipated.
- 6.2** A new Social Enterprise Challenge Fund has been developed in partnership with First Port and Working4Business partners to assist local social enterprises to grow and diversify. This fund is competitive and will provide up to £5,000 grant funding to social enterprises that have growth potential. The deadline for applications was 31 December 2021. Working4Business partners have agreed to assist with the competitive scoring and award process.
- 6.3** The Business Support team are administering the Business Ventilation fund on behalf of the Scottish Government which went live on Tuesday 23 November 2021. Training has been provided on the new on-line application process. The fund has been promoted the fund through social media and we have included information on the fund along with a link to the application process on the business support pages of the Council website. To date, we have only received two applications. Feedback we have received through other local authorities has confirmed that applications across the country have been relatively low.
- 6.4** The Working4Business group have agreed to begin organising the next Business Awards event for May 2023. The previous two annual award events have unfortunately had to be postponed due to the on-going COVID pandemic.

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. Together with place based regeneration, recently approved Alexandria masterplan and support to our local businesses as they recover from the Pandemic. WDC signed up to the Shop Local Gift Card concordat, which, thanks to financial assistance from Scotlands' Towns Partnership, is being promoted and managed locally by the Chamber of Commerce. We continue to support and develop projects that will bring additional footfall to our town centres, including for example the new Canal-side Activities Centre in Clydebank town centre being delivered in 2022, and the public realm and lighting enhancements to Smollett Fountain in Alexandria to improve the setting and pedestrian activity around this important town centre feature.

- 7.2** The West Dunbartonshire Energy centre has been operational for over a year 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, 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 multi story flats and officers continue to work with the Queens Quay landowners to bring in 1,000 new homes.
- 7.3** 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 Green Corridors project 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
- 7.4** 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. 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 at present. The introduction of Pandemic specific funding has assisted delivery during the 2020-21 financial year, however as the interruption and subsequent restrictions continue into the 2021/22 financial year, financial implications may come into focus.

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 the pandemic progress change.

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: Flourishing DIG Action Plan 2020-22

Wards Affected: All