

Decision Report: 30 October 2023

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, GREEN GROWTH, INVESTMENT AND ASSETS

ECONOMIC TRANSITION PLAN – 18 MONTH REVIEW

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to:
 - Note the work the Council and its partners have undertaken in relation to the Economic Transition Plan 2022-2025.
 - Approve the future priorities and associated work programme.

Background

Policy background

2. The **Nottinghamshire Plan** details the Council's ambitions for raising the national and international profile of Nottinghamshire; creating the right conditions for investment and sustainable economic growth; driving the transition to greener more sustainable ways of working; protecting the environment as we grow; and securing investment into major projects. Summarily, the Nottinghamshire Plan explicitly supports the enhancing of the county's inward investment offer.
3. Reinforcing the Nottinghamshire Plan is the **Economic Transition Plan (ETP)** which was approved by the Economic Development and Asset Management Committee in April 2022. This document was designed to be a document which could evolve and flexibly adapt to support the economic recovery post COVID-19 as required over the next 3 years. In terms of its structure, the ETP is split into various sections:
 - **Vision and Aims** – how this plan fits into the wider Corporate Plan and its main aims
 - **Current Economic Headwind** - an overview of the current economic position
 - **Strengths and Opportunities** – details of the work done to date and identifies future opportunities
 - **This is what the Council will do next** – outlines 18 objectives for the plan across the six priority areas of work and high-level actions of how these will be achieved
 - **Monitoring and governance** – how the plan will be monitored and managed in the future.
4. The ETP focuses on transforming the local economy through placing the interests of Nottinghamshire communities and businesses at its heart, whilst also driving investment and improvements across the county. The ETP assists with the Council's aims to deliver the following:

- **People** – putting “people” first to ensure they have the right skills and training so that they are ready for work, that they have the support to get into work and then to achieve and progress in their careers.
- **Business** – businesses provide employment, services and facilities which will require support in this transition plan and to be ready for change and innovate for their future success.
- **Visitor economy** – this was one of the worst affected sectors and still faces a high level of uncertainty in the future, which will require further support to ensure that visitor numbers and the jobs provided within this sector are supported.
- **Infrastructure** – this is regarded as an essential enabler to ensure the success of the economy and includes the provision of improved/new provision of physical transport infrastructure.
- **Digital connectivity** – ensuring the technology and digital connectivity provision is in place so the county is well served and best placed to maximise the potential future opportunities.
- **Place** – strategic green growth and improvement of place assets, so that funding and investment opportunities are maximised in the future.

Information

Progress – 18 months on

5. There has been considerable progress against the priorities identified in the ETP (see Appendix A) since its adoption in April 2022. In this period, there has been:
 - £81.5m of new funding secured across the county, of which £24m was awarded to the County Council (as opposed to funding awarded directly to the district and boroughs),
 - Support for the direct delivery of £49.6m funding and indirect support for schemes totalling over £700m across the county,
 - Over 1100 businesses who have received support, training or advice from the team,
 - Over 2000 learners have attended a training course or bespoke work placement,
 - 19 community buildings benefitted from support, and
 - A further £118m of funding bids awaiting determination.
6. The key achievements to note include:

People

- **Community Renewal Funding** – delivered a £3.9m programme made up of four projects which resulted in 703 businesses and organisations supported, 945 training, skills, and jobs beneficiaries, 237 young people benefiting from direct practical skills and job experience and 19 community buildings benefitted from support.
- **Multiply** – prepared an investment plan for £4.25m of funding and delivered the first year of a three year programme with three training providers who in total supported 1823 learners and undertook 302 courses.
- **Working Well East Midlands** – secured £5.35m (with two other authorities) to deliver a pilot project to support adults who have a physical or mental health disability, as defined by the Equality Act 2010, to help them to move and sustain competitive employment.
- **Festival of Science and Curiosity** – this is the fourth year supporting this event, with this year having the biggest impact so far with 30 community events being delivered attended by over 2000 participants, with primary and secondary schools also participating.

- **UKSPF** – commissioning employment and skills training programme for six district and boroughs for the next 18 months, totalling £1.3m investment.

Business

- **Business Adviser Professional advice** - Total of 261 leads across this period (April 2022 – June 2023), with more than 1200 hours of one-to-one advice and guidance to new and existing small and medium sized businesses under the Growth Hub banner. Since June 2023, the business advisors have had slightly new roles, but have provided 170 hours of support to over 120 businesses across the county¹
- **Business Investment Fund** – 108 Nottinghamshire SMEs expressed an interest in this funding, with 94 of those being supported in drafting their applications. 60 of these have now been contracted with projects totalling over £2.6m with grants in excess of £895,000.
- **Business drop in events** - 21 business surgeries have been held since November 2022 across all of the local authorities. 77 businesses attended these surgeries. Following the surgeries 50 of the businesses attending have had ongoing support.
- **Business awards sponsorship** - Six awards being sponsored until December 2023, with three completed to date. The aim is to increase the awareness to Nottinghamshire businesses of the support available.
- **UKSPF** – commissioning business support for the seven district and boroughs for the next 18 months, totalling £167,000 investment.

Visitor Economy

- **Visitor Economy Framework (VEF)** - drafted and finalised the VEF, which was unanimously supported at Full Council, which sets out the refreshed ambition and priorities of the Council for the Visitor Economy.
- **Collaborative relationships** – have been formed with the preparation and the implementation of the VEF internally and with external partners, such as the District / Borough STEAM data commissioning.
- **VEF Action Plan** - prepared and started the implementation of the year 1 action plan (which sits under the VEF).
- **Forest Corner masterplan** – working with key partners to establish a new vision for the home of Robin Hood, which will be shortly ready for consultation.
- **Business support / training programme pilot** – was launched which supported 37 businesses and organisations over 3 sessions and will help to inform future events.

Infrastructure

- **A614/A6097 major road network scheme (and Mickledale junction)** – £34m investment in five junctions, with a further £5m set aside for the Mickledale junction, with planning permission secured for all the junctions, and the CPO/SRO statement of case submitted with a decision due November 2023 and the FBC to be submitted early next year.
- **Toton Link Road** – preparation of a £36m Levelling Up Funding bid and associated delivery plans. Although unsuccessful, the plans and Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) has been prepared, ready for when funding becomes available.
- **A617 Kelham Bypass** – significant work has been undertaken to prepare a SOBC for this scheme, with various options and iterations required due to significant constraints.

¹ With the exception of Ashfield who have not provided funding for this business support provision.

- **A46/Newark Southern Link Road (NSLR)** – providing support to ensure this £500m investment around Newark, which will be delivered by National Highways, as well as the £60m investment in the NSLR being led by a private investor.
- **A52** – continued support to ensure the success of the A52 programme, with the completion of the Bingham Road and Silverdale junction and Gamston roundabout completed, with two further junctions are still to be commenced following consultation early next year.
- **Robin Hood Line extension** – SOBC has been finalised for a scheme that totals around £42m in capital costs for reinstatement with ongoing revenue costs. This has been submitted to the Department for Transport for review.
- **Local initiatives and plans** – worked with district/boroughs on their local initiatives and plans, such as Central Avenue, Forest Corner and local plan preparation.

Digital Connectivity

- **GigaHubs** – secured £1.2m from DLUHC and in the process of securing £6.8m from BDUK to connect around 300 public buildings, with three new members of the team recruited (funding for these posts was also secured) to support the delivery of this Midlands wide project.
- **Project Gigabit** - 35,000 premises within Nottinghamshire and West Lincolnshire are in scope to receive a gigabit broadband connection via lot 10 GIS contract. £58m contract to provide connectivity managed by BDUK with support from the Council for implementation.
- **Digital connectivity mapping** – received LGA funding to map the 4G and 5G mobile connectivity across the county, with 5 out of the 7 districts/boroughs mapped to date. Work to ensure that small cell technology can be rolled out in the county as and when the market is ready to deliver this.
- **5G Connected Forest Pilot closures** – a range of pilot projects were completed in this period. ‘Arrow Through Time’ Robin Hood AR experience trialled to 132 participants, currently working with stakeholders to find a commercial opportunity. ‘Ghost Walk’ AR experience trialled to 137 participants with the commercialised experience set to open at Rufford Abbey in November 2023. Digital Innovation Centre at Worksop Turbine has supported 40 businesses via delivering full fibre broadband to the site. Smart parking trial created by Blue Mesh live at the site as a showcase for the technology adoption.
- **Broadband connectivity** – 98.7% of the county are able to access a fixed line, superfast broadband service (min 30Mbps download), 81.63% of the county are now able to access a fixed line, gigabit capable broadband service.

Place

- **Fuel poverty / housing retrofit funding** - £3.9m of funding delivering improvements to 340 homes across the county, with a further £5.5m of investment secured in this period to be spent across 280 hardest to help homes over the next year.
- **Inward Investment Framework** – draft document has been prepared in consultation with key stakeholders, which details how inward investment has the potential to be a key conduit for levelling up Nottinghamshire, specifically relating to market growth, skills, and sustainability.
- **Place promotion** – significant progress has been made to promote Nottinghamshire as a place to live, work and visit. Attendance at this year’s UKREiiF is one notable achievement of this, which will be built on in future years.
- **Levelling Up Agenda and associated government funding** – work closely with the district and boroughs to deliver the town deals (totalling £146m), £6.3m of Future High Street, £270,000 of High Street Heritage Action Zones, Levelling Up Funding round 1

(totalling £20m) and the £20.85m of UKSPF, which have previously been secured across the county. Since April 2022, there has been a further £57.6m secured through the second round of Levelling Up Funding and Officers have been working closely with the two Levelling Up Partnerships in Bassetlaw and Mansfield (potential further £40m of funding available).

- **Relationships with key stakeholders** – these have been built over this period to ensure combined working. One example is the joint work with the Environment Agency on the preparation of the Adaptive Investment for Growth document.

Next Steps

7. Officers will continue to work with partners to deliver the priorities identified within the ETP, taking into account the opportunities presented by the emerging East Midlands Mayoral Combined County Authority (EMCCA), and maximising the joint working opportunities. The launch of the Nottinghamshire Observatory will ensure a data driven approach is taken to identification of future priorities and funding decisions. The main area of focus going forward include:

- **People** - work to prepare an Employment and Skills Framework with our partners will continue. This will help to shape future projects and programmes to address skills and employment dysfunctionalities in the labour market and barriers to employment, are flexed to help address changing sectoral supply-demand. There will be specific focus on identifying the opportunities to make changes to the adult education budget, skills training and employment support through the emerging EMCCA.
- **Business** – developing relationships with businesses will continue with a view to securing high sustainable, value-added investment in the county. This will focus on encouraging existing businesses (of all sizes) to start, grow, maximise the economic benefit to local people and to make sure that are businesses are ready and more resilient for the future.
- **Visitor economy** – work will continue on delivering the Visitor Economy Framework Action Plan to ensure the right support is in place to support visitor economy businesses to increase the number of hospitality jobs, as well as the number of visitors, their spend and the length of their stay.
- **Infrastructure** – ensure those infrastructure improvements to support the economy that have funding are delivered (e.g. A614, A46, A52), secured funding for those with business cases (e.g. Toton Link Road, Robin Hood Line) and developing new business cases for a pipeline of sites (such as Kelham bypass) and supporting local initiatives and local plans.
- **Digital connectivity** – continue to support the improvement of the quality and the range of digital connectivity across the county to reduce the number of premises with no access, maximising the economic opportunities that super/ultra-fast broadband can bring with the full delivery of the Gigahub and Gigabit projects. This will also be supported with the recruitment of a Joint Digital Connectivity Manager with Derbyshire.
- **Place** – continue to support the district and boroughs and regional partners to maximise opportunities for shared green growth under the Levelling Up Agenda (and associated funding) as well as supporting specific priority inward investment opportunities as they arise (including maximizing the opportunities of the Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production (STEP) fusion programme, Development Corporation, Freeport and the emerging Investment Zone designations).

Other Options Considered

8. The Council could take a 'do nothing' approach and not continue with the priorities identified in the Economic Transition Plan. However, this would mean the relevant objectives contained within the Nottinghamshire Plan could not be addressed.
9. The Council could adopt an approach which minimising the resources allocated to this area of work. However, under the current economic climate, with the cost-of-living crisis and high inflation, it is considered that this level of support for Nottinghamshire residents and businesses is appropriate. The focus of the work going forward is to maximise the economic benefits of existing opportunities, work collaboratively where appropriate and to seek other funding opportunities when they arise.

Reasons for Recommendations

10. Recommendations to note the work done since the ETP was approved in April 2022 and to approve the future priorities, as this clearly demonstrates the Council's intention to help support the local economy and maximise those opportunities under the Levelling Up Agenda.

Statutory and Policy Implications

11. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

12. The recommendations themselves have no immediate financial impact. Proposals resulting from the actions will be costed and considered and subject to the usual scrutiny and democratic process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member:

- 1) Note the work the Council and its partners have undertaken in relation to the Economic Transition Plan 2022-2025.
- 2) Approve the outline the future priorities as identified in paragraph 7.

Wayne Bexton

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Constitutional Comments (GMG 05/10/2023)

13. This report falls within the remit of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Asset Management for consideration (see Section 5, Part 2, paragraph 8 of the Council's Constitution at page 80).

Finance Comments (PAA29 05/10/2023)

14. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from the report. Any additional budget requirements will need to be subject to further approvals as necessary.

Background Papers and Published Documents

- None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All