

## **NORTH DEVON COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL: 13 JANUARY 2021**

### **ITEM 9 (A): REPLIES TO ANY QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL BY MEMBERS SUBMITTED UNDER PART 4, COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES, PARAGRAPH 10 OF THE CONSTITUTION**

**To receive the following question from Councillor Henderson:**

“Can we urge this administration to use their time in power productively for the benefit of all the people of North Devon.

The recent announcement of £6.5m for Barnstaple is of course welcomed, but other key North Devon towns such as Ilfracombe and South Molton must be included on the radar for a slice of the recently announced £20m made available by the Chancellors Levelling Up fund for 'local areas' to help their struggling economies.

Can the current administration please detail any specific plans for towns other than Barnstaple which they have in the pipeline. If none at present, will the current administration commit to working with the Town Councils of other North Devon towns alongside our MP to - in the words of the Chancellor, 'improve “the infrastructure of everyday life” (which can include projects such as funding for a new bypass, upgraded railway station, roadworks to cut traffic, more libraries, museums and galleries, or town centre improvements.)”

**Councillor Worden’s response:**

Firstly, I would agree that the funding from the Future High Streets Fund is very welcome and I am very appreciative of the work that officers and Councillors within this administration and the last have put into achieving this and for the assistance from the current and past MP in lobbying on behalf of the area.

The levelling up fund that has been announced by government amounting to £200million is also very welcomed. We are waiting to see further details but in the meantime, I agree that it is very important for the District to ready itself to take advantage of that funding or any other funding opportunities that present themselves.

The Council will be refreshing the work that was started through the Futures group with the aim of creating an overall Vision for the area that the council and all partner bodies can align to. This will give an overall framework for projects and programmes to fit within.

In the meantime, because it is accepted that we need to move at pace, officers will be working with all relevant bodies and organisations to bring forward projects that we think will fit within the overall Vision or strategic priorities. At present, these will be linked to the Council’s Strategic Plan and delivery plan adopted by Council and could be included within the individual service plans that have recently been approved by Policy Development Committee.

Specific projects that are being progressed by the Council outside of Barnstaple include the Watersports Centre in Ilfracombe for which almost £3million of external funding has been obtained for investment into Ilfracombe. It should be noted though that significant projects and investment such as these will undoubtedly benefit other parts of the District and should be seen as North Devon benefitting not the individual location. The Council has also provided much support to the North Devon Link Road improvement proposals to enable better road access within the area, as well as for traffic coming into the district.

Officers and members are working with Ilfracombe Town Council and other partners to develop a plan for the town, building on work around the harbour and seafront and to look at a variety of issues including highways to the town centre, housing and employment and skills.

Barnstaple is the regional centre for our area and so naturally some projects will be concentrated here. The status of Barnstaple is likely to have played a key role in the, hopefully, successful Future High Streets Fund bid. Other very good examples include the Leisure Centre, which will serve the whole District not just Barnstaple, and the development of the Enterprise Centre at Roundswell which will have a sub-regional role in supporting new and growing businesses.

Work is also being commenced to see what specific projects can be brought forward to assist with the recovery of the area, especially in areas highlighted as being of particular concern. The council is also working with other agencies such as the Biosphere to bring forward projects that align with our own environmental corporate priorities. It is recognised that with limited resources and dealing with the response to C19 it is only through partnership that we will achieve the best outcomes for our communities.

This is not a one off piece of work but has to be an ongoing theme within the council and I hope that further reports will be coming to Members in the coming months. I will ask officers to consider holding a workshop or briefing with all Members so that these issues can be discussed outside of the formal arena of a Full Council meeting”.