



North Devon Council

Report To: **STRATEGY AND RESOURCES**

Report Date: **2 August 2021**

Topic: **Northern Devon Economic Recovery Plan**

Report by: **Chief Executive**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. North Devon Council has had a published Northern Devon Economic Strategy for the past 5 years (2014 – 2020). This has set out the vision for economic growth in terms of both business infrastructure and improving skills and job opportunities in the area.
- 1.2. In early 2020, working in partnership with Torridge District Council and North Devon +, we were in the final stages of consulting on a refreshed Economic Strategy. This work was halted in March 2020 when the pandemic hit.
- 1.3. Due to the unprecedented impact the pandemic has had on our economy in northern Devon, a short-term agile response is required, in the form of a 'recovery plan', that recognises the impacts and economic shocks created over the past 18 months and helps to re-set the economy of northern Devon.
- 1.4. Northern Devon's Economic Recovery Plan has referenced and will be complementary to the Devon Economic Recovery Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That members approve the content of the northern Devon Economic Recovery Plan (appended). Some of the formatting and graphics are still being updated – including the correct 'Plan' boundary on the map shown at Page 6, which will include the Exmoor National Park (North Devon) area.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. Recognising the immediate impact and aftermath of the pandemic on northern Devon's economy will require a bespoke set of interventions to re-start the economy and build it back to beyond where it was in 2020. The Economic Recovery Plan allows for a three year period of flux and re-setting before a longer term Economic Strategy can be set for northern Devon.

4. REPORT

- 4.1. This Plan takes the place of our Economic Strategy (which expired in 2020) recognising the need for a period of recovery following one of the most acute

economic shocks of the Century. We have set out our intended interventions for the recovery period and our ambitions for the longer term re-setting and re-growth of our economy.

- 4.2. As a region with tourism, hospitality and agriculture at the heart of the economy, our businesses and our communities have been particularly impacted through the pandemic. The acceleration in the decline of economic activity in our town centres and the high numbers of furloughed workers across the region create ongoing risks that the growing Universal Credit claimant rate will increase further as businesses continue to re-model their operations. Our recovery document therefore sets out how our two District Councils will work together with partners and communities over the next three years in developing a stronger and more sustainable Northern Devon economy. This plan meshes with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership's Build Back Better plan and the Team Devon Covid 19 Economy and Business Recovery Prospectus. We have an associated 'Action Plan' that sets out strategic projects that are either in development, delivery or discussion to help us complete our Recovery in northern Devon.
- 4.3. The prospectus sets out 4 key threads to create the essential conditions for a productive and sustainable economy:

- Economy and innovation
- Skills and aspirations
- Business environment
- Connected communities

There are also two important crosscutting themes:

- Clean growth
- Inclusive growth

- 4.4. An associated Action Plan is being developed which captures strategic projects that are in either development, delivery or discussion, to help realise these aspirations and create the change and growth that are required. The Action Plan will be a 'living document' that develops as the economy changes over the next couple of years and new opportunities may arise. Some of the actions have already been successfully implemented – such as delivery of the Covid-19 business grants and other financial instruments designed to support businesses through the critical restriction/lockdown periods.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. There are no direct resource implications to the Council associated with this Economic Recovery Plan.



6. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

6.1. There are no negative equalities impacts associated with this Economic Recovery Plan. The Plan sets out a vision to support all aspects of northern Devon's diverse economy. The key driver will be to ensure that we 'level-up' our economy and provide equal opportunity across the geographical area.

7. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

7.1. Article of Part 3 Annex 1.1 (f)

7.2. Referred or delegated power?: Delegated

8. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

8.1. This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1. The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:
N/A

10. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

10.1. The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers: Dominie Dunbrook, Senior Economic Development Officer