

Update to Leader's Report – Council Meeting 11 October 2023.

Firstly, I'd like to congratulate our officers who were instrumental in organising the inaugural Louth Food and Drink Festival. Working with local businesses and community volunteers, the event was a great success. I was able to visit in the morning and it was fantastic to see so many people enjoying the delicacies that were on offer. I understand that many stands had sold out in record time with one Louth company saying they had sold more of their product during our Festival than when they attend the two-day Lincolnshire show.

The event is part of a project to promote Louth's unique food and drink offer. We have also launched a new digital food and drink map for the town which showcases the amazing variety of niche food businesses that are offered in Louth. This will be promoted nationally to encourage visitors to the town. Working with businesses we look to making Louth a must visit destination for foodies.

I also want to make comment on the award of £60 million for three towns in the partnership. Our interest is obviously with the grant for Skegness. This is another huge success for the South and East Lincolnshire Partnership and is very much aimed at dealing with issues that face our town centres. The funding is made available over 10 years, and we will work with local partners to ensure this makes a real difference to the quality of life for those living in Skegness. Government has indicated that the model of the Towns Board will be mirrored to deliver the funding. As we receive more detail from government, we will share that to progress this worthwhile opportunity.

While we have been fortunate to receive circa £180 million across the partnership area, we need to look to having a sub-regional economic strategy based on Growth and Prosperity for all our populations and communities. The government has recognised our challenges in dealing with deprivation that's mostly connected with our coastal towns and communities. That has been the basis of the Levelling up agenda.

Town centres across the country are under threat. Changing shopping habits and the demise of large town centre stores are taking their toll on the viability of town centres. We have seen that in our locality too.

And it is quite understandable that residents and businesses in our market towns and large villages see the focus of government levelling up initiatives on our coastal towns and make the plea "what about us?"

While we have driven investment in two of our market towns via cultural and heritage funds.....we know we can do more to add to the work of our ED teams who have delivered with such initiatives Vital and Viable and I hope you've taken the time to read the SELCP six monthly performance update and all the growth and prosperity initiatives that we have engaged with.....we know that the valuable business intelligence gained when our ED officers were tasked with distributing government support grants and business rate relief can be put to good use driving future initiatives.

As already stated, we are producing a sub-regional economic strategy, we now also have opportunity to restructure our own economic team to deal with the challenges we face across the district and specifically dealing with our market towns.

With this in mind, and after discussions with Executive colleagues and officers, I am proposing that we have an umbrella sub regional strategy that enables us to focus on the challenges we face across our market towns. We should aim to revitalise and regenerate our town centres, continue the work to

promote the area as a destination for visitors, support business to grow and develop while supporting skills and employment opportunities.

To enable community and business engagement we will create a mirror of the Towns Fund methodology with my town websites where ideas can be discussed and development.

This will not happen without significant prime funding. As a council, we will look to provide the necessary resource to progress this. We will also look to other partners to join in this endeavour. In the same way engagement was encouraged through the Connected Coast Board we will do the same for our inland communities. Timing is everything we now have a unique opportunity to make sure we have a golden thread through all this council's endeavours.