

Item: 18

Policy and Resources Committee: 20 September 2022.

Economic Recovery Steering Group.

ASPIRE Orkney – Progress Update.

Report by Corporate Director for Enterprise and Sustainable Regeneration.

1. Purpose of Report

To provide an update in relation to ASPIRE Orkney's activity in the period up to 31 August 2022.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That, on 25 November 2020, the Council resolved that the detail of the ASPIRE Orkney programme be subject to further consideration, in the context of the Council's corporate plan, by the Policy and Resources Committee, with effect from January 2021, and thereafter as a standing item for the Policy and Resources Committee.

2.2.

That progress updates in relation to the ASPIRE Orkney programme of activity have been presented regularly to the Policy and Resources Committee, with the latest update presented on 21 June 2022.

2.3.

The main activities undertaken by ASPIRE Orkney Ltd between June and August 2022, including an update on the Business Plan and Action Plan, as detailed in section 4 of this report.

3. Background

3.1.

The Economic Recovery Steering Group was established to develop a strategy for Orkney's economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and adopted as a Short Life Working Group within the Orkney Partnership structure at a meeting of The Orkney Partnership Board on 10 June 2020.

3.2.

On 25 November 2020, when considering the proposed allocation of funding towards establishment of dedicated programme management resources to support the ongoing work of the Economic Recovery Steering Group, the Council resolved inter alia that the detail of the ASPIRE Orkney programme be subject to further consideration, in the context of the Council's corporate plan, by the Policy and Resources Committee, with effect from January 2021, and thereafter as a standing item for the Policy and Resources Committee.

3.3.

Progress updates have been submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee on 23 February 2021, 20 April 2021, 22 June 2021, 29 November 2021, 22 February 2022 and 21 June 2022.

3.4.

On 22 February 2022, the Policy and Resources Committee was advised that ASPIRE Orkney Limited was currently preparing a Business Plan which would support the ASPIRE Vision and Action Plan. In addition, it was proposed to undertake an update and refresh of the Action Plan. It was anticipated that an update on both the Business Plan and Action Plan would be presented to the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee to be held on 21 June 2022.

3.5.

On 21 June 2022, the Policy and Resources Committee was advised as follows:

- ASPIRE Orkney Limited is still considering a Business Plan which will support the ASPIRE Vision and an Action Plan, with no further details available.
- ASPIRE is considering what the future direction of the organisation could be.
- Any further update on both the Business Plan and Action Plan, or proposed direction of the organisation, will be presented to the next meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, scheduled for 20 September 2022.

4. Progress to date

4.1.

The establishment of a private company, limited by guarantee without share capital, to act as a mechanism to direct Council approved funding to support the work of the Economic Recovery Steering Group has been undertaken, with ASPIRE Orkney Limited incorporated on 26 April 2021.

4.2.

The ASPIRE Orkney Programme Manager commenced in post on 7 June 2021. The post has been established for a fixed two-year period to provide core executive and operational support to the Economic Recovery Steering Group to deliver Orkney's COVID-19 economic recovery plan.

4.3.

Since the last report to this Committee on 21 June 2022, the Economic Recovery Steering Group (ERSG) has not met, on account of difficulty in finding suitable availability due to a combination of the Council induction period following the election, annual leave and the Council recess period. The last meeting was held on 31 March 2022. No update can therefore be provided from ERSG meetings.

4.4.

The Aspire Orkney Programme Manager has however been very active over the period, working closely with the Orkney Partnership on items such as Community Wealth Building and liaising with numerous public and private sector partners on items related to the work of the ERSG.

4.5.

Discussions on the future direction of the ERSG and Aspire Ltd have been a key focus over the period with a recognition by all parties that there is the need to reconsider the function of the group. It is expected that significant progress will be made in that regard before the next meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on 22 November 2022. Work on a Business Plan which will support the ASPIRE Vision and an Action Plan will depend on the outcome of those discussions.

5. Corporate Governance

This report relates to the Council's response to the economic challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Efforts to support the Orkney economy through the pandemic are considered in line with the Council Plan priorities.

6. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

7. Legal Aspects

There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

8. Contact Officers

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