

Item: 7

Policy and Resources Committee: 29 November 2021.

Economic Recovery Steering Group.

ASPIRE Orkney – Progress Update.

Report by Interim Executive Director of Finance, Regulatory, Marine and Transportation Services.

1. Purpose of Report

To provide an update in relation to ASPIRE Orkney's activity in the period up to 31 October 2021.

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 to the Policy and Resources Committee on 23 February, 20 April and 22 June 2021.

2.3.

That ASPIRE Orkney Limited was incorporated, as a private company limited by guarantee without share capital, on 26 April 2021, to support the activities described by the ASPIRE Orkney vision and programme plan.

2.4.

The main activities undertaken by ASPIRE Orkney Limited between June and October 2021 as detailed in section 4 of this report.

It is recommended:

2.5.

That future progress updates in relation to the ASPIRE Orkney programme of activity be provided in the form of regular Briefing Notes to Elected Members.

2.6.

That the Interim Executive Director of Finance, Regulatory, Marine and Transportation Services should submit a report, to the meeting of the Committee to be held on 21 June 2022, providing a progress update on ASPIRE Orkney Limited's Business Plan and the ASPIRE Orkney Action Plan.

3. Background

3.1.

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 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.

3.2.

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

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 concluded, 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.

A Members' Seminar with the Board of ASPIRE Orkney Limited and the Programme Manager was held on 24 August 2021. The presentation to elected members provided an overview of the ASPIRE Orkney vision and an introduction to ASPIRE Orkney Limited; their vision of Orkney as an Innovation and Enterprise Hub; the mechanisms to achieve, and gaps in capacity, in regard to realising the vision; and finally, what ASPIRE Orkney Limited can contribute as a facilitating organisation.

4.4.

Housing matters have featured highly in discussions at recent meetings of the Economic Recovery Steering Group focussing on the demand for, and lack of availability of, housing in Orkney. In recognition of the need to understand the appropriate interaction between the Economic Recovery Steering Group Vision and Action Plan and approved Council plans and programmes, the need to avoid duplication and risk of any conflict in relation to approved Council policy, a meeting was held between senior Council Housing officers and the ASPIRE Orkney Limited Chair and the Programme Manager in August 2021. It was agreed that ASPIRE Orkney Limited would progress a housing consultation to collect data to get a better picture of what is happening in the local housing market.

4.5.

In order to assist with community consultation, including the housing survey referred to above, ASPIRE Orkney Limited is currently in the process of purchasing an online engagement platform called EngagementHQ. This platform will enable more comprehensive engagement with the business sector and the general public to be undertaken on-line. The platform will also be made available to the Council, business sector groups, the Orkney Partnership, isles development trusts and other partner bodies for their public consultation activities, with the hope of creating a central consultation hub for Orkney.

4.6.

ASPIRE Orkney Limited has offered to assist the Council with development of Orkney's bid(s) to the UK Government's Levelling-Up Fund.

4.7.

Finally, ASPIRE Orkney Limited is currently preparing a Business Plan which will support the ASPIRE Vision and Action Plan. An update on both the Business Plan and Action Plan will be presented to the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee in June 2022.

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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