

CABINET STATEMENT

CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMY – COUNCILLOR DEREK PRETTY

The Economy Team held a Business Breakfast meeting on the 8 February which was very well attended and the topics focused on environmental and simple ways to achieve energy savings. This followed a survey of businesses to ascertain the different approaches to energy saving and carbon reduction. From the replies it was clear that many are making significant effort to achieve these goals.

The Central and West Hampshire Youth Employment Hub, where we are the lead authority, was launched in November 2021. The Hub is intended to provide information and advice to young people, and others, looking for skills and employment opportunities. So far it has helped 103 beneficiaries of which 8 are in fulltime employment and 34 are in work experience.

We are confident that these initiatives will help our young people make decisions that will determine their future life skills.

The Welcome Back Fund finishes at the end of March but has achieved a great deal in the past months with work across the Borough including popular markets in Hedge End and Hamble, and a greater awareness of independent shops through our Borough Gems.

We continue to receive grant applications and to date have allocated £4,246,418 on the discretionary grants.

The application by The Solent Freeport Consortium continues to move forwards. Our Outline Business Case was submitted in November and any queries have been answered. The submission of the Full Business case is scheduled for submission at the end of March.

The Sorting Office studios have now moved from the Wells Road location to 14 Station Hill. The refurbishment of Station Hill is eye-catching with its deep blue façade and pink signwriting. The more prominent location should provide welcome visibility to the artists' work and help promote their businesses.

The Wessex House Business Centre requires some essential re-furbishment which has led to a drop in occupancy. The potential for refurbishment works to maximize occupancy are under consideration based on business case to be funded from the repairs and renewals reserve.