

## **Item: 8**

**Policy and Resources Committee: 22 February 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 January 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 to the Policy and Resources Committee on 23 February, 20 April, 22 June and 29 November 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 Ltd between November 2021 and January 2022 as detailed in section 4 of this report.

## **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, 22 June and 29 November 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 ASPIRE Orkney Limited Board 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.**

During the last 3 months the Economic Recovery Steering Group has met on two occasions – 25 November 2021 and 13 January 2022. At the November meeting, Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise officers provided the Steering Group with presentations on the Scottish Government R100 programme to extend superfast broadband to rural communities together with an update on marketing activity across Orkney including Orkney Food and Drink, Creative Orkney and tourism. Other items covered at the most recent meetings included the UK Government Levelling-Up Fund Round 2 and Engage Orkney.

#### **4.5.**

The key development for ASPIRE Orkney during the period has been the launch of Engage Orkney as a central consultation hub shop for undertaking public engagement exercises in Orkney. Following a recommendation from the Economic Recovery Steering Group the Council provided funding from the budget established to support the ASPIRE programme to enable ASPIRE Orkney to purchase the software required to set up Engage Orkney.

#### **4.6.**

The aim of the new on-line community engagement tool is to provide an improved digital platform which will actively encourage more public participation, make consultation a better experience for consultees as well as a more effective tool for those doing the consultation. The platform is available to be used by organisations from both inside and outside Orkney who want to gauge public opinion on a particular subject. Data sharing agreements will require to be established between Aspire Orkney and potential partner organisations.

#### **4.7.**

The first two consultation exercises being undertaken on the platform are housing related. The first survey aims to develop an accurate picture of the demand for housing in Orkney both from people living here and those intending to move to the County. The results of this survey will feed into longer terms strategies, including the Council's Local Housing Strategy and Local Development Plan. The second survey is on behalf of the Highlands and Islands Students Association and is aimed at obtaining information from current and previous students about their experiences with student accommodation in Orkney. The results of this consultation will be presented to the appropriate committee.

#### **4.8.**

Finally, ASPIRE Orkney Limited is currently preparing a Business Plan which will support the ASPIRE Vision and Action Plan. In addition, it is proposed to undertake an update and refresh of the Action Plan. An update on both the Business Plan and Action Plan will be presented to the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee to be held on 21 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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