

Council – 19 February 2020

Public Questions

1. From Mrs Lawes to Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities

Following a briefing to district councillors in 2016/17 about Community Led Local Developments (CLLD). Now known as Folkestone Community works.

Councillors from the deprived wards of Harbour, East Folkestone and Central were assured that jobs would be created for long term unemployed. With the amount of funding so far distributed from Folkestone Community fund of £2.9 million to a number of New businesses.

Could you let me know how many long term unemployed have gained employment if any, and what type of employment ie: part time, full time or seasonal, zero hours minimum wage?

ANSWER:

Folkestone & Hythe District Council was successful in its bid to the England European Structural and Investment Funds Growth programme 2014 – 2020 to implement Folkestone Community Works (FCW) CLLD Programme and was awarded £2.49 million. This funding is and will be invested through open call projects during the lifetime of Folkestone Community Works. The programme is scheduled to run until December 2022. The Government has confirmed that ‘under the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement the UK will continue to participate in the 2014-2020 ERDF Programme in England and other EU programmes until their closure’.

Folkestone Community Works aims to improve social and economic community cohesion in Broadmead, East Folkestone, Central Folkestone and Folkestone Harbour wards by funding projects that:

- Support unemployed and economically inactive residents of these wards on their journey back into the workforce
- Encourage residents to be entrepreneurial
- Support local businesses and start-ups to grow
- Strengthen the local economic base to provide new job opportunities

The programme has currently allocated £519,853 ESF funds to two projects which are currently running in the area. These projects are engaging with over 60 residents and the results so far up to Dec 2019 are that 2 long-term unemployed have moved into employment - 1 person found employment on a zero hour contract (permanent and above minimum wage) though the feedback is they have since been employed by Tesco's on a permanent contract, and 1 person is working regular shifts (above minimum wage) on a zero hour contract. In addition, a further 2 unemployed participants have

moved into employment and 9 onto training or education courses. We are expecting that to the end of 2022, these two projects will have supported over 111 residents into employment. We are planning to have another call for ESF projects to support residents in March 2020 as we have a further £455,147 ESF to allocate to employability projects in the programme.

The local business base is being supported through the several initiatives:

- A local SME Business Grant Scheme has awarded £168,000 of ERDF funding to 13 businesses of which one is classified as a new business i.e. operating for less than a year. A further call for applications is scheduled for the autumn 2020 as we have £281,901 ERDF funding still available for grants.
- Business support is now available to local businesses and start-ups through a project allocated £50,000 ERDF funding. This project is scheduled to support 66 businesses of which 33 will be classified as new. Each business will receive a minimum of 12 hours of free advice, in addition the project will assist 39 local residents who want to be entrepreneurs on to more enterprise ready. We are planning to have another Call for ERDF projects to support business and potential entrepreneurs in March 2020 as we have a further £174,22 ERDF to allocate to business support and entrepreneurial skills.
- A new business centre in the centre of Folkestone has been allocated £420,000 of ERDF funding which will increase the amount of modern office space in Folkestone by over 800sqm. A further £250,000 ERDF funding is to be allocated to support a Community Hub for Enterprise and Employability, once a project has been identified.

The delivery of Folkestone Community Works is overseen by the Folkestone Local Action Group (LAG), which is made up of representatives from the local private, voluntary, community and public sectors. This role includes reviewing applications and making recommendations to the Council on which applications to fund and monitoring the delivery of the programme. At each LAG meeting, members receive a presentation from the Programme Management Team on the delivery of the programme and individual projects.

The progress of funded projects is monitored through visits to them and a project claim process. The project claim process requires the project to report on the project progress, expenditure, and delivery of targets. Under the England European Structural and Investment Funds Growth programme 2014 – 2020 Regulations, projects are reimbursed for expenditure and are required to provide detailed evidence of the participants engaging with the projects and the outcomes. All expenditure is listed on a transaction list line by line with supporting evidence including invoices and bank statements showing defrayal. The Programme Management Team continually supports the funded projects to ensure they are collating the appropriate evidence and their project claims are correct. All project claims are checked and rechecked by the Programme Management Team prior to payment.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Is it possible to break down which wards have had some of the employment, and where they are?

ANSWER:

I'll certainly take this question back to officers.