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| Report title: Levelling Up Essex Two Years On | |
| Report to: Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee | |
| Report author: Rebecca Gipp, Head of Levelling Up Co-ordination | |
| Date: 26 March 2024 | For: Consideration and identifying any follow-up scrutiny actions |
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| County Divisions affected: All | |

1. Introduction

This item is a Matter Arising from previous discussions when it was agreed to present the next Annual Report to the Committee. (see Background below).

2. Action required

The Committee is asked to consider the attached update; and identify any areas of further action or opportunity which should be considered in the Levelling Up Essex programme.

3. Background

- 3.1 Levelling Up Essex was launched in 2022. By Levelling Up, we mean that everyone should have the opportunity to succeed in life and fulfil their potential; and that all places and communities should be able to share in this. Levelling Up in Essex is about making sure residents have the education and skills they need to find good quality employment, take pride in where they live and make lasting improvements to their lives.
- 3.2 Essex County Council, alongside our partners, including, city, borough and district councils, the NHS, charities and businesses, have provided job opportunities, skills training and financial support. A huge range of projects are having a positive impact on communities throughout the County, underpinned by over £22million of funding, which has delivered specific initiatives, as well as enhanced existing projects and programmes.
- 3.3 On 6th March 2022 Essex County Council published a Two Years On Impact Report, 'Reaching New Heights', which sets out the progress and achievements of the past year. Over the last two years, dozens of new projects are underway throughout Essex, with almost 68,000 people affected by levelling up funding so far. The programme is on target to reach as many as 140,000 residents by 2025. Work so far has seen:

- 3.3.1 increased literacy levels – with our Everyone's Literacy Area stock seeing over 50,000 borrows since 2022
 - 3.3.2 increase in free childcare – more than 172,000 spaces available to children through the Essex ActiVate holiday activity and food programme (extended to include half term holidays too)
 - 3.3.3 more support for businesses – sector led skills work with networking and promotional events
 - 3.3.4 new support for skills - provision of free training through Adult Community Learning centres, such as the Nightingale Care Bursary, designed to encourage people in to the care sector and the newly launched, Poppins Bursary to support skills development in the early years sector.
 - 3.3.5 investment in mental wellbeing - Free workplace health and wellbeing support for over 580 organisations and training of 1,000 plus mental health first aiders. £180,000 invested in the Harlow Futures programme, supporting children and young people in the town
 - 3.3.6 launch of new community supermarkets – seven operational and a commitment to bring one to every district in Essex by summer 2024
 - 3.3.7 distributing digital devices – over 6,600 devices given to vulnerable residents, schools and community groups, along with digital inclusion support and data provision.
- 3.4 Levelling Up Essex is central to how Essex County Council will progress and deliver against Everyone's Essex.
- 3.5 The Committee is invited to make comments and observations on the Levelling Up Essex Two Years On Impact Report.

4. Next Steps

Levelling Up Essex is about generational change. The work undertaken during the first two years of the programme have laid the foundations for longer term work and approaches to support the delivery of long-term outcomes. During Spring / Summer 2024 we will launch a range of interventions designed specifically to support Levelling Up Essex priority cohorts. Work will also continue on progressing in-flight activity and developing further interventions to support aspiration, attainment and careers in 2024/25.

5. Appendices

A. [Reaching New Heights - Levelling Up Essex Two Years On Impact Report](#)

- B. Power Point Presentation - **to follow** (to be used to introduce item at the meeting)