

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	2 June 2021
Subject:	Welcome Back Fund
Report of:	Head of Development Services
Corporate Lead:	Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Lead Member for Economic Development/Promotion
Number of Appendices:	None

Executive Summary:

This report outlines the purposes of the Welcome Back Fund. This funding builds on the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund announced in May 2020. The Welcome Back Fund provides Councils across England a share of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to support the safe and continued return to high streets.

Recommendation:

- 1. To NOTE the government criteria for the use of the Welcome Back Fund.**
- 2. To delegate authority to the Head of Development Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the decisions needed to develop and implement the action plan arising from the Welcome Back Fund. or subsequent funds, or vary it in response to circumstances which may arise as a consequence of the need to re-open the local economy safely, support social distancing or respond to business intelligence, including authority to enter into agreements, notices and other legal documents as necessary.**

Reasons for Recommendation:

- To support the business community and the local economy.
- To enable residents and visitors to utilise the High Streets within the Borough safely.
- To establish a swift and clear decision pathway so that decisions necessary to support this work can be made immediately, should the need arise.

Resource Implications:

Tewkesbury Borough has been awarded funding of £84,931 from the Welcome Back Fund as part of the £56m national scheme.

Local authorities will be able to spend money on eligible activities from 16 April and claim it back from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in arrears. The default position is that claims will be paid quarterly following submission of the standard claims template provided.

Costs associated with administering the grant will also be eligible for reimbursement up to 4% of the total grant value.

Legal Implications:

The scheme is detailed in the related government guidance and care must be taken to ensure that all of the requirements of the scheme are complied with and actioned accordingly to reduce and mitigate risks.

Risk Management Implications:

The Fund specifically deals with reducing the risk within the Borough's town centres, by implementing measures that will welcome back residents and visitors safely.

Unspent funds will be returned to MCLG.

Performance Management Follow-up:

Reporting will be through the Council performance tracker.

Environmental Implications:

Some measures may influence on the High street environment, and include environmental improvements.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 In July 2020, the Executive Committee resolved to agree an action plan regarding the Re-opening the High Streets Safety Fund (RHSSF). The Council was awarded £84,931 to take this work forward. This work has, and will include a number of measures: environmental and public realm changes, business and public facing promotional, digital and communication campaigns, footfall cameras and an accessibility audit. These items are included within the RHSSF financial allocation.

1.2 In April 2021, the government announced an extension to the RHSSF entitled the 'Welcome Back Fund' and has allocated Tewkesbury Borough Council a further £84,931. This fund has more flexibility and allows for work around support to promote a safe public environment for a local area's visitor economy, as well as to develop plans for responding to the medium term impact of COVID-19 including trialling new ideas where these relate to the High Street.

2.0 WELCOME BACK FUND

2.1 The Welcome Back fund will allow the Council to put in place additional measures to create and promote a safe environment for local trade and tourism, particularly in High Streets as the local economy continues to reopen. These measures will form part of a revised Grant Action Plan. The existing RHSSF Grant Funding Agreement will be varied to take into account the new Welcome Back funding. The agreement will initially run until March 2022.

2.2 The fund can be used by local authorities to:

- Boost the look and feel of their High Streets by investing in street planting, parks, green spaces, and seating areas to make High Streets welcoming.
- Run publicity campaigns and prepare to hold events that will boost footfall and encourage people back into the High Streets and thereby supporting local businesses.
- Install and refresh signage and floor markings to encourage social distancing and safety.
- Improve green spaces on High Streets and town centres by planting flowers or removing graffiti.

2.3 As part of drawing up plans for the next stage there will be engagement with the Parish/Town Councils in Bishop's Cleeve, Tewkesbury and Winchcombe. There will also be engagement with other key stakeholders such as the business community and Gloucestershire County Council. This engagement will involve creating and discussing various measures that could be introduced within the High Streets. Following this engagement, a revised Grant Action Plan will be produced outlining the measures planned. To enable the Council to implement measures quickly, it is then recommended that the Head of Development Services work with the Leader of the Council to finalise and implement the measures within the action plan.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 None.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 Engagement is being carried out with Gloucestershire County Council, the relevant Parish/Town Councils and the business community.

5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

5.1 This work specifically links into the Council's Recovery Plan.

6.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

6.1 This government fund has been launched with a specific purpose in direct response to the need to support the local economy to re-open safely and welcome back residents and visitors.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

7.1 As outlined within the report.

- 8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)**
- 8.1** The Fund will impact upon the local economy and bringing residents/visitors safely back into the borough's retail centres.
- 9.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)**
- 9.1** None.
- 10.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS**
- 10.1** Re-Opening High Streets Safely Fund, Executive Committee 8 July 2020.

Background Papers: Re-Opening High Streets Safely Fund 8 July 2020.

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Appendices: None.