

Civic Centre, Castle Street,
Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8AN

Main Tel: 01685 725000 www.merthyr.gov.uk



MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL

FULL COUNCIL REPORT

Date Written	21 st October
Report Author	Rhian Prosser/ Mike Parry/Chris Long
Service Area	Physical Regeneration/ Revenues / Economic Development
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	3 rd December 2014

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Non Domestic Rates - Revaluation Rate Relief (Allocation to Viable and Vibrant Places Enterprise Project)

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:

To seek approval for the use of Welsh Governments Revaluation Rate Relief towards the Vibrant and Viable Places (VVP) Enterprise Project participants.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Enterprise Project a key component of the Vibrant and Viable Places (VVP) programme and is focused on supporting new and existing business within the approved Vibrant and Viable Places boundary.
- 1.2 The project will look to develop an Enterprise Centre in partnership with Tydfil Training, Taste of Enterprise, Merthyr College and the Big Heart of Merthyr Tydfil and the brand identity of the Centre is E³MTEC. This partnership will look to ensure that there is a wide range of support available for these business to grow. This project also includes Meanwhile Uses and Retail Grants to nurture business

- 1.3 Whilst the VVP, through capital funding has given the partnership an opportunity to develop a new physical base the Enterprise Centre, there are limitations in terms of revenue to support Business, However, we have managed to secure additional revenue items from in kind donations.
- 1.4 To support the revenue component of the project St Tydfil Shopping Centre has agreed to provide a “pilot building – physical space” at rent free for one year initially to start the project, with a view to continuing this for three years should they have suitable accommodation available. It is worth noting that even though St Tydfil Shopping Centre and the landlords are very supportive of this project there is a limited number of Meanwhile projects that can be supported through the project
- 1.5 To enable the Enterprise Project to assist the Meanwhile programme and those businesses investing via grant assistance, it has been identified that business rates is a barrier. Welsh Government has provided the authority with a grant of £124,710 for financial year 14/15 to assist those businesses who will be most negatively affected by the postponement of the revaluation.
- 1.6 In practice identifying those businesses negatively impacted by the postponement of the revaluation is impractical, if not impossible. They are in effect tasking the Authority to carry their own revaluation with little or no evidence to support the findings. Officers feel that this is unsatisfactory and want to ensure that this money is allocated fairly to those who are most disadvantaged. The number of independent businesses in the town centre starting up has decreased over recent months with our current vacancy rate at 16 %, and we feel that by allocating the money to the enterprise project would ensure that new businesses that are faced with a number of initial outlays are supported, and those businesses that have invested in their property and will have faced disruption are also accommodated.
- 1.7 The VVP grant assistance is available to new and existing retail businesses within the VVP area, for all business that qualify for grant assistance through the project would also be provided with rate relief of 100% for a maximum for one year for as long as the grant is provided by Welsh Government. The criteria for grant and therefore rate relief have already been approved by Welsh Government as part of our VVP application and are determined at the monthly E³MTEC meetings by its members. State Aid declarations are also included within the grant application processes.

2.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 2.1 There are no financial implications to the authority. The grant acceptance of £124,710 from Welsh Government has been signed off by the Head of Finance, and we are requesting that these monies are allocated to offset the business rates that will be incurred by businesses participating in the scheme.

3.0 SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT SUMMARY

3.1 This project will have a positive impact on:

People in Merthyr Tydfil have the opportunity and aspiration to learn and develop their skills to maximise their potential.;

People in Merthyr Tydfil benefit from a strong, sustainable and diverse economy;

Sustainable Development - enhancing the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of people and communities, achieving a better quality of life for our own and future generations.

There are no negative impacts attributed to this project.

4.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full report is not required at this time. The screening form can be accessed on the Council's website/intranet via the 'Equality Impact Assessment' link.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION(S) that

5.1 That Cabinet adopts the Revaluation Rate Relief Scheme as outlined above in accordance with the provisions contained in Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

5.2 It is reasonable for Cabinet to make this decision having regards to the interests of persons liable to pay council tax set by the Council.

ELLIS COOPER
CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Meanwhile in Merthyr	February 2013	Regeneration Department, Unit 5.
VVP Strategic Outline Programme.	November 2013	Regeneration Department, Unit 5.

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.