



CABINET REPORT

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Report Author	Ryan Barry & Chris Long
Service Area	Community Regeneration
Committee Division	Cabinet
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	25 th March 2020

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

FORMAL APPROVAL OF A NEW FOUNDATION ECONOMY CHALLENGE FUND COMMUNITY MEANWHILE PROJECT

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Community Meanwhile Project is funded by Welsh Government's Foundational Economy Challenge Fund initiative.
- 1.2 This report seeks to gain Cabinet's agreement to formally approve and accept a grant of £98,500 from the programme.
- 1.3 The ethos of the project is for the Council to work with vacant building owners within specific communities in order to bring those facilities back into economic life via capital grants with the caveat being that the owner gives a new business start-up free rent over a certain period.
- 1.4 The report focusses on the outputs and results of the project, noting the number of buildings that the Council wish to refurbish, number of jobs hopefully being created as well as volunteering opportunities advertised.
- 1.5 From a financial perspective, the report covers the total project cost and references that the match will come from capital finance secured to develop a new coffee shop in Gurnos with the facility becoming one of our Community Meanwhile businesses.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that

- 2.1 The £98,500 grant offer from Welsh Government be approved.
- 2.2 The £100,000 match funding profile aligned to the project be approved.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Over the last four years the Community Regeneration Department has successfully implemented a Meanwhile / Pop-up Scheme within Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre where over that period 21 businesses were successfully established amounting in 52 jobs being created.
- 3.2 The principles of Meanwhile / Pop-up relate to making use of empty or vacant buildings within specific areas where Community Regeneration staff work with building owners in order to offer an opportunity to finance the refurbishment of their building (bringing it back into economic use) with a caveat being that the owner gives an agreed period of time as free rent (usually between 3-6 months).
- 3.3 The Community Regeneration Department has always envisaged rolling-out the Meanwhile scheme into the wider communities of Merthyr Tydfil if funding became available. Fortunately, in May 2019, Welsh Government announced a call for organisations to apply for innovative projects under its Foundational Economy Challenge Fund programme to which the department submitted a £198,500 application in July of that year.
- 3.4 Subsequently, in October 2019 the Council were made aware that our Community Meanwhile application was successful and was later informed that the fund in itself was extremely competitive with over 300 applications submitted with only 53 projects obtaining formal approval.

4.0 THE COMMUNITY MEANWHILE PROJECT SPECIFICS

- 4.1 The successful Community Meanwhile Project consists of three specific pieces of work. These are as follows:
 - 1. Research and analysis of the current businesses and empty buildings within each of the chosen community areas in order to ascertain current provision as well as potential opportunities.
 - 2. Roll-out 'Meanwhile' opportunities within those chosen community areas liaising with building owners, support agencies / stakeholders, community organisations and business (including social).
 - 3. Encourage 'business to business' (B2B) local supply chain development between those businesses that reside at MTEC, Orbit and Crownford House.

4.2 Initially, only six communities or zones were specified as part of the original application, however, the department have expanded the geographical remit of the project so that the following areas can now access the funding:

- Gurnos;
- High Street, Cefn Coed;
- Bridge Street, Troedyrhiw;
- Fox Street, Treharris;
- Spring Street, Dowlais;
- Aberfan;
- Trefechan;
- Bedlinog; and
- Gellideg.

4.3 The Community Meanwhile Project will see the Council working closely with Tydfil Training Consortium Ltd, Business in Focus and the Merthyr Tydfil Economic Growth Partnership which is made-up of key organisations such as the Job Centre, Merthyr Tydfil College and Careers Wales.

4.4 As part of the £198,500 total finance allocated to the project there is an expectation that the Council will achieve the following results over the course of the next 15 months:

Output:	No:
New Community Meanwhile Businesses Developed	6-8
New Community Meanwhile Jobs Created	8-16
Empty Buildings Brought Back into Economic Use	4-6
New Volunteering Opportunities Developed	6-8
Community Meanwhile Evaluation Report Produced	1

4.5 As part of the funding secured from Welsh Government the Council will also develop a Community Meanwhile 'Toolkit' which other Local Authorities can use and learn from in order to replicate the principles of the project in their own respective areas.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 In total, the Community Meanwhile Project is worth £198,500 which is made-up of a £98,500 grant from Welsh Government and £100,000 match funding that the Council has secured to develop a coffee shop in Gurnos.

5.2 From the £98,500 grant allocation £63,500 has been allocated for revenue to run the project with the finance mainly being used for professional fees as well as pump-priming enterprise start-ups in terms of financing business rates and potential staff costs. The remaining £35,000 will be used for capital purposes in order to refurbish the actual buildings, making them more economically viable.

6.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Not Applicable
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	4 of 4	0 of 4	0 of 4
2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term • Prevention • Integration • Collaboration • Involvement 	5 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 5
3. Protected Characteristics <i>(including Welsh Language)</i>	10 of 10	0 of 10	0 of 10
4. Biodiversity	1 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1
<p><u>Summary:</u></p> <p>The main positive impact of the Community Meanwhile Project is that community buildings will come back into economic use with opportunities given to local residents in terms of self-employment opportunities.</p> <p>No negative impacts have been identified.</p>			

ALYN OWEN
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

COUNCILLOR GERAINT THOMAS
CABINET MEMBER FOR
REGENERATION & PUBLIC
PROTECTION

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No

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