



CABINET REPORT

Date Written	9 th February 2021
Report Author	Zoe Thomas / Chris Long
Service Area	Community Regeneration
Committee Division	Cabinet
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	24 th February 2021

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Valleys Taskforce Covid Recovery for Smaller Town Centres

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 In July 2020 the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government announced the repurposing of up to £5.3m from the Transforming Towns Programme, to support adaptations in town centres which could facilitate trading and public safety in response to Covid-19.
- 1.2 As part of that announcement the Valleys Taskforce committed £3.7 million to support the Transforming Towns agenda.
- 1.3 £3 million of that funding has been made available to Valleys Taskforce local authorities in addition to the repurposed Transforming Towns Programme allocation, specifically to support smaller town centres within the Valleys Taskforce boundary, with the recovery of Covid-19.
- 1.4 In November 2020, Welsh Government issued the application form and guidance to local authorities within the Taskforce area to submit applications to support smaller town centres.
- 1.5 A total of £375k was requested from the Valleys Taskforce Covid Recovery for Smaller Town Centres and this was approved in December 2020.
- 1.6 There was a significant response to the grant programme with over 120 business applying for the funding.

1.7 An additional funding request was made to Welsh Government which has been approved.

1.8 There are no financial implications for the local authority as there is no intervention rate - the grant is 100% funded.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that

2.1 The award of additional funding for the Valleys Taskforce Covid Recovery for Smaller Town Centres is approved.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

3.1 In July 2020 the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government announced the repurposing of up to £5.3m from the Transforming Towns Programme, to support adaptations in town centres which could facilitate trading and public safety in response to Covid-19.

3.2 As part of that announcement the Valleys Taskforce committed £3.7 million to support the Transforming Towns agenda.

3.3 £3 million of that funding has been made available to Valleys Taskforce local authorities in addition to the repurposed Transforming Towns Programme allocation, specifically to support smaller town centres within the Valleys Taskforce boundary, with the recovery of Covid-19.

3.4 As well as adaptations to directly respond to Covid-19 and adhere to social distancing guidelines, Welsh Government announced that funding WiFi within smaller town centres would be considered.

3.5 Welsh Government also included funding for internal work to facilitate social distancing and other Covid specific support measures for businesses in larger town centres. The purpose of this is to boost the available funding from the wider Welsh Government Transforming Towns support package which covers outdoor works only.

3.6 In September 2020, Cabinet approved the award of £365k from the Transforming Towns Thematic Covid-19 Response for a targeted focus in Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre.

3.7 In November 2020, Welsh Government issued the application form and guidance to local authorities within the Taskforce area to submit applications to support smaller town centres.

4.0 VALLEYS TASKFORCE APPLICATION

4.1 A total of £375k was requested from the Valleys Taskforce Covid Recovery for Smaller Town Centres and this was approved by Welsh Government in December 2020.

- 4.2 A report was taken to Cabinet in January with the recommendation that the award of funding for the Valleys Taskforce Covid Recovery for Smaller Town Centres is approved and this recommendation was agreed.
- 4.3 Merthyr Tydfil CBC identified two key projects that could be successfully delivered through the Valleys Taskforce Grant:
- A grant scheme for businesses which will support with enhancements both internally and externally to aid business trading in response to Covid-19.
 - To deliver digital solutions in the Town Centre linked to wider village areas to gather information on these locations to further enhance Town Centres and the Council's understanding of these areas.
- 4.4 All funding is to be defrayed and claimed before 31st March 2021.
- 4.5 Support for funding through the grant scheme was available for both Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre businesses and businesses within the smaller Town Centre and village areas. The grant scheme is 'borough wide'.
- 4.6 Grants of up to £20k were available. The Enterprise Team are leading on the delivery of the grant scheme and the scheme was marketed widely. Request for applications closed in January 2021 and all applications received have been assessed.

5.0 ADDITIONAL FUNDING REQUEST

- 5.1 There was a significant response to the grant programme with over 120 business applying for the funding. £325k was available from the approved allocation of £375k (£50k for the digital solutions) which resulted in grant awards to only 27 businesses. The remainder of eligible businesses were placed on a reserve list.
- 5.2 The reserve list consisted of 6 businesses in a position to spend their grant immediately and a further 40 plus businesses, that with additional time and support, would be in a position to spend this financial year.
- 5.3 A request was submitted to Welsh Government for an additional £66,549.90 for the additional 6 businesses to spend before the end of March and a further £443k for the additional 40 plus businesses requiring further development / support.
- 5.4 Welsh Government approved the additional award and confirmed that the timescale could be extended to 30th June 2021, providing each project had commenced and claimed part funding prior to the end of the financial year.
- 5.5 The Enterprise Team are currently processing grant agreements and payments for all successful, eligible businesses.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

6.1 There are no financial implications for the local authority as there is no intervention rate - the grant is 100% funded.

7.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Not Applicable
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	3 of 4	0 of 4	1 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>	2 of 10	0 of 10	8 of 10
4. Biodiversity	1 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1

Summary:

The main positive impacts are that this grant scheme delivered in response to the Pandemic will meet the Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives and Sustainable Development Principles through targeting economic growth and ensuring people feel safe within their communities. The project will have a positive effect on the economy, socially and Borough Wide.

No negative impacts have been identified.

ALYN OWEN
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

COUNCILLOR GERAINT THOMAS
CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND
REGENERATION

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.