

Report To:	Cabinet	Date:	1st December 2020
Heading:	BUSINESS SUPPORT AND TOWNS FUNDING UPDATE		
Portfolio Holder:	CLLR M. RELF, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PLACE, PLANNING AND REGENERATION		
Ward/s:	ALL WARDS		
Key Decision:	No		
Subject to Call-In:	Yes		

Purpose of Report

To note the updates regarding support to businesses during the pandemic and progress on the Towns Fund Accelerated Projects.

To agree the principle of utilising Compulsory Purchase Powers where required for projects being developed through the Towns Fund or other funding sources.

Recommendation(s)

1. To note the contents of the report.
2. To note the principle of utilising Compulsory Purchase Powers if required for projects being developed through the Towns Fund or other funding sources.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

To ensure that Cabinet is updated on the measures being taken to support businesses through the pandemic and progress on the Towns Fund Accelerated projects.

To ensure that the Council is able to utilise all available powers to ensure that projects can be taken forward and to support discussion and negotiations with landowners and developers, as well as strengthening funding bids.

Alternative Options Considered

Not to agree to utilise Compulsory Purchase Orders – **Not recommended** as this would reduce the Council's options and weaken its negotiating position.

Detailed Information

1. Support to businesses during the pandemic

Grant funding

Businesses affected by the pandemic can now access the Local Restrictions Support Grant and the Discretionary Local Business Support Grant Schemes. The Schemes seek to support those in the non-essential retail, hospitality, leisure, entertainment, personal care and accommodation sectors and those who directly supply these sectors where they have been significantly impacted by the trading restrictions. Businesses can access the grant application on the Council's website and payments are usually made within a few days. 471 applications have been received to date and by 19th November 95 applicants had been paid to a value of £317k. Details of each grant available are provided below:

Local Restrictions Support Grant

Support for businesses in hospitality, hotel, bed & breakfast and leisure sectors that have remained open under Tier-2 and Tier 3 restrictions, funding of up to £2,100 for 4-weeks. (Time Period: 16th Oct to 4th Nov, 2020)

Local Restrictions Support Grant

Support for businesses in the hospitality, accommodation, beauty and leisure sectors that have legally been forced to close under Tier-3 restrictions, funding of up to £3,000 for 4-weeks. (Time Period: 30th Oct to 4th Nov, 2020)

Local Restrictions Support Grant National Lockdown

Support for businesses that have legally been forced to close under the conditions of the national lockdown, funding of up to £3,000 for 4-weeks. (Time Period: 5th Nov to 2nd Dec, 2020)

Local Restrictions Support Grant (Sector)

Support for businesses that were required to close in March and which have never been able to re-open (for example nightclubs), funding of up to £3,000 for 4-weeks payable from 1st Nov (not backdated).

Additional Restrictions Grant

This is also known as the Local Business Support Grant and it supports businesses affected by closed or reduced trading conditions experienced during national lockdown. This is for businesses that operate in hospitality, accommodation, beauty and leisure sectors, non-essential retail and their direct supply chains. (Time Period: from 5th Nov and ongoing).

High Street support

Four Covid Information Officers and one senior officer have been appointed on temporary contracts until March next year. The posts are funded through the Government's Reopening High Streets Safely and Surge Funding. The officers are visiting businesses and providing information and support to ensure that all high street retailers who have not been forced to close under the national lockdown restrictions are operating in a Covid-secure way. Officers are visiting all premises in the three town centres and shopping areas in local neighbourhoods.

Two temporary Environmental Health Officer posts have also been created to support the team due to the significant increase in workload, during the pandemic.

Hand sanitiser stations and signage are due to be installed in all Council owned pay and display car parks over the next four weeks and the PayByPhone parking app. is also available to pay for parking.

2. Towns Fund

Towns Fund Accelerated Projects

The Council was successful in securing the full **£1.5m** provisionally allocated to Kirkby and Sutton to support delivery of a number of key projects by the end of March next year:

Sutton

The Council will purchase vacant property on Low Street, and renovate and re-purpose it for potential new uses including residential, education and a youth employment hub, working with DWP. The market assessment, condition surveys and valuation estimates are completed and governance is being put in place to commence the negotiation and purchase.

At Portland College the New Start building is being refurbished to create a Centre of Excellence for disabled people in Sport and Theatre. This will provide a community hub with sports facilities available free of charge to local schools and community groups.

The £1.6m project will provide a regional leading, multi-use facility for sports, performance & teaching. Funding from the accelerated Towns Fund helped to meet the funding gap so that the project could start on site in October, with the new facility due to open in spring 2021

Kirkby

Kirkby indoor market – a number of vacant units on the pedestrianised area of Lowmoor Road are being converted to create a small indoor market in the heart of the town centre, attracting more shoppers to the area. The design team are currently drawing up plans for the new market.

Cycling and Walking routes – an initial phase of upgrading off-road walking and cycle routes will be undertaken with design and costings being progressed. We are also developing plans for the main Towns Fund submission which will create a network of safe, accessible routes across the area, connecting residential areas with places of work and visitor destinations.

Sorrel Drive play area – a company has been appointed to supply and install a new play area, with the works due to start on site in early 2021. Following public consultation over the summer, this will create an exciting play experience for children in the local area.

Development sites - a number of sites are currently being considered for purchase, to contribute towards the overall Towns Fund strategy.

Towns Fund - Compulsory Purchase Order

Work has been ongoing during 2020 to develop the plans for the Towns Fund, with the application being submitted in January next year. More than 20 projects are being developed which will support the transformation of Kirkby and Sutton town centres to create thriving towns with high quality housing, leisure and visitor attractions.

As part of our ambitious plans we are working with landowners and developers to support delivery of a number of projects and are considering all options to secure appropriate future uses of sites which will support the town centre. Discussions with developers and landowners have stalled on some of these sites due to differing aspirations. The Council's ambition through the adopted town centre masterplans is to increase residential provision within our town centres, as part of the strategy to increase town centre living and diversify the offer within town centres.

Residential development may not always provide the best economic return for developers and landowners. The Council will negotiate with the developers and landowners so far as possible however there is the possibility that, if negotiations stall, the Council may need to utilise its powers of compulsory purchase. This would be a last resort option.

If the Compulsory Purchase Order process did need to be utilised for a specific site or property this would be reported to Cabinet at each step of the process.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

COVID-19 Impact and Recovery - Open up our town centres safely in response to the recovery from Covid-19 implementing appropriate measures. Ensure that eligible businesses receive COVID-19 grant support funding to help their future sustainability. Ensuring transport is safe (social distancing). Permitting processes and safe practices

Economic Place and Growth - Business Support: Ensure eligible businesses access COVID-19 grants and support.

Strategic Planning and Town Centres - Re-invigorate and re-purpose town centres by bringing empty buildings back into use, enhancing our town teams and diversifying the town centre economy; Capitalise on external funding opportunities, e.g; Future High Streets and Towns Fund, to improve our town centres

Legal:

The Report is for update and noting. The Shared Legal Service will provide assistance throughout the projects to ensure compliance and assist the Council in achieving its objectives.

Finance:

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	No implications. The revenue grants awarded to businesses are fully funded by the Government’s Local Restrictions Support Grants and the Additional Restrictions Grant.
General Fund – Capital Programme	The Accelerated Towns Fund grant of £1.5m has been received from Government and will fully meet the costs of these projects.
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	No implications
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	No implications

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Project delivery risks including delivery timescales	Risks managed through individual risk assessments for each project.

Compulsory Purchase Order Powers	No risks identified as this is to improve the Council's negotiating position – not to enter into any specific CPOs.
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Human Resources:

No HR issues identified.

Environmental/Sustainability

The Towns Fund Accelerated Projects will contribute to the Council's aim of carbon reduction by providing new and improving existing cycling and walking routes encouraging residents and visitors to reduce car usage and by ensuring that the refurbishment of existing buildings includes renewable energy solutions.

Equalities:

Building and route improvements will be fully accessible. The Newstart building at Portland College will provide state of the art facilities for disabled people to access cultural and sporting opportunities.

Other Implications:

None identified.

Reason(s) for Urgency

Not applicable.

Reason(s) for Exemption

Not applicable.

Background Papers

Not applicable.

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