

Recovering High Streets Safely Fund

Birmingham has been allocated £1,016,937 of funding from the Government to assist in the safe recovery of high streets in the city.

The resources are to be provided as ERDF funding and any work will need to be appropriately delivered and procured to comply with necessary processes and procedures relating to European grant. Expenditure will be claimed quarterly in arrears and therefore any ineligible spend would fall directly on the Council. **It is therefore essential that officers within Inclusive Growth's European and International Team are mobilised to manage the ERDF process, with Command and Control Governance provided via the Economic Recovery Group chaired by the Interim Director of Inclusive Growth, with close alignment with the Environment Cell.** Details are set out in Appendix 1.

The funding can be used for projects from 1 June and early spend is encouraged in the guidance, although the Government does not expect the detailed funding agreement with the Council to be in place until the end of June. **Although spend prior to the detailed funding agreement being signed has risks around non-compliant spend, it is felt that spend in the month of June is important due to the wider retail offer re-opening from 15 June.**

The grant resources can only be used to fund the following four activities, but it cannot fund current posts, current initiatives, capital or business grants (operating costs, PPE etc).

1.Support to develop an action plan for how the local authority may begin to safely reopen their local economies.

It is not essential that a local authority develops these plans but in considering how to use this funding, all local authorities are encouraged to consider and consult relevant stakeholders i.e. businesses, business organisations, parish councils etc.

2. Communications and public information activity to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely:

The local authority will need to evidence that this is additional activity beyond work already underway. There is scope to pay the salaries of staff or consultants to develop this work. The work should be targeted to support small and medium sized enterprises but it is recognised that larger organisations will benefit.

3. Business-facing awareness raising activities to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely.

The principle of this activity is the same as for communications to citizens, but it is recognised that the messaging needs to be different and as such part of a separate campaign. For example, the local authority may want to communicate to retail businesses on how to make temporary adjustments to their business premises and good practice for social distancing.

The campaigns should be focussed on supporting SMEs.

4. Temporary public realm changes to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely.

To ensure that public spaces that are next to businesses are as safe as possible, temporary changes will need to be made to the physical environment. Local authorities will already be undertaking these changes in line with HMG's Safer Public Places – Urban Centres and Green Spaces guidance. This funding can be used to enhance that existing offer to increase the level of safety measures, improve their attractiveness and ensure consistency of approach across individual and multiple public spaces including high streets.

Progress to date;

A meeting of officers from across Directorates met to discuss the utilisation of this resource and put forward the following ideas:

- i. Recovery planning is already initiated by BIDS, BCC and other partners and expenditure from this fund is not required for this item;
- ii. The bulk of the resource should be utilised on communication/public information and on temporary public realm changes;
- iii. A small amount of funding may be needed to supplement the role city centre operations staff and BIDs have in advising businesses, by extending that offer to suburban High Streets. The network of BIDs is a strength in that it is already facilitating advice to businesses;
- iv. Although a significant resource is set out in the first phase, the funding allocations should be phased to enable responses to emerging circumstances to be addressed and plans adapted accordingly i.e. issues in particular locations, issues that emerge when the hospitality sectors reopen;
- v. We need to act promptly to allow action to be taken as High Streets and City-centre shopping starts to re-open more widely;
- vi. We need to be mindful of the diverse range and scale of High Streets in Birmingham combining a universal offer with bespoke initiatives;
- vii. Need to be clear on the extent of these interventions e.g. scale and scope of what is appropriate in city centre will be different to smaller centres – widening footways and perhaps some marked queueing areas are likely to be more suitable than complex pedestrian markings and one-way systems;
- viii. Funded initiatives need to be able to demonstrate they meet the criteria and achieve the ERDF required outcomes; and
- ix. The immediate locations for communications support should be the 12 Bid areas and the 7 other areas in the UCF where there is no Bid (a total of 19 high streets)
 - BIDs in UCF: Sutton Coldfield, Erdington, Northfield,
 - BIDs not in UCF: Westside, Retail, Southside, Colmore, Jewellery Quarter, Soho Rd, Harborne, Kingsheath, Acocks Green
 - UCF locations where no BIDs: Perry Barr, Bordesley Green, Coventry Road – Small Heath, Stechford, Meadway, Stirchley, Alum Rock Road

However resources need to be earmarked for other locations in the city where business communities/forums come forward, seeking support.

Proposed Expenditure Framework

	Phase 1 June/July	Phase 2 Aug/Sept	Phase 3 Oct/Nov/Dec	total
SCOPE 1	RECOVERY PLANNING			
Recovery Planning	£0k			£0k
SCOPE 2	COMMUNICATIONS			
Communications – city wide campaign & high street toolkit	£70k development of city wide comms tool applicable to all 10 centres in UCF and all Bids not areas not in UCF (19 locations)			
Communications – city wide campaign platform (extended toolkit)	£24k held back to aid up to 10 other areas to city wide where business groups come forward to lead			
Communications – support fund for media costs for generic or bespoke local campaign	£84k @ £7k per BID to opt to fund media costs for the generic campaign or deliver a bespoke local solution			
Communications – support fund for media costs for generic or bespoke local campaign (to extended areas)	£30k held back to allocate flexibly to other areas to fund media costs for the generic campaign or deliver a bespoke local solution	£50k held back to allocate flexibly indicatively on comms	£50k help back to allocate flexibly indicatively on comms	
	£208k max	£50k max	£50k max	TOTAL £308k
SCOPE 3	SMALL BUSINESS RE-OPENING ADVICE			
Advising Businesses	Additional temporary post to roll out city centre learning to other areas £8k	£10k	£10k	TOTAL £28k
Advising businesses	Procuring specialist advice to support businesses struggling to re-open to prepare accordingly £30k	Procuring specialist advice to support businesses struggling to re-open to prepare accordingly £20k		£50k
SCOPE 4	TEMPORARY CHANGES TO PUBLIC REALM			
Temporary changes to public space	£50k city centre			
	£280k for centres in UCF and suburban BID area			
	£100k to allocate to issues emerging in other high street locations			
Spill Out for Hospitality sector		£154k		
	Total £430k	Total £154k		Total £584k
	OTHER			
ERDF Admin				Total £23k
Project officer				Total £23k

Communications and public information activity to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely:

The model and above costings seek to build upon the proposal put forward by Retail Bid to run a campaign that could be adopted by other areas of the city. The basic cost of £154k (£70k plus £84k) would deliver a campaign across all UCF and BID areas with the ability to add further to this in other areas that wanted to bolt on. Should other areas not wish to adopt the scheme but develop something different then further discussions would be needed on how this could be achieved within ERDF requirements.

The thrust of this campaign is supported, however the final detail of the added value secured through ERDF would need sign off through the Assistant Director of Communications via the Delivery Plan. The areas of particular interest when finalising a Delivery Plan would be;

- using data/intelligence to ensure hardest hit sectors are supported through the campaign
- key messages such as promoting safety measures are covered
- branding aligns with other linked campaigns i.e. Birmingham is back (economy recovery) Be Together (community recovery) etc

The proposal holds back a further £54k in phase 1 for other areas of the city. The project officer role would assist in the co-ordination/securing the needs of other areas. Separate to the BIDs proposal a further £100k can be potentially allocated to further communications in phases 2 and 3. This has been held back to allow flexibility to the approach as it is likely that there will unforeseen needs emerging.

Due to the need to engage with wider areas of the city part of the project officers role will be to undertake this activity especially around the 'Birmingham is Back' campaign and any locally focused initiatives.

If the decision is to progress with the BIDs a procurement exercise under the emergency processes will be required.

Temporary public realm changes to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely.

It is proposed that Temporary Changes to the Public Realm is coordinated by Transport & Connectivity (Inclusive Growth Directorate) to enable coordination with other related activity on or adjacent to the public highway. The Emergency Birmingham Transport Plan, sets out plans for a wide range of emergency measures to support walking, cycling and public transport throughout the city, in light of the impact of COVID-19. The plan sets out a series of key actions around the transport network and public spaces, both to respond to the changing situation and to maximise opportunities resulting from recovery including transforming the transport network and influence travel behaviour towards more sustainable modes.

The Government has made available funding via the Emergency Active Travel Fund to bring forward measures to support cycling and walking, particularly for local journeys. This has included some early development work on high streets/retail areas both in terms of how the space is managed and also promoting active travel to these locations. Coordinating active travel proposals with High Streets funding will maximise the delivery potential of these different funding sources. **All recovery plans submitted by BIDs will be considered initially to assist in shaping the temporary public realm changes, with BIDs being engaged on the interventions proposed.** Additionally, it will be necessary to coordinate with management of other kerbside uses such as parking, servicing/loading and public transport, the latter in partnership with Transport for West Midlands.

Whilst the Head of Transport Planning and Network Strategy will coordinate these workstreams, resources to develop and deliver individual schemes will be provided via the Local Engineering Service in Highways, Project Delivery staff within Transport and Connectivity and external consultants where required. It is proposed to create a dedicated resource to deliver these projects alongside other Emergency Transport Plan elements which may require staff to be seconded or workload reprioritised to deliver on this priority activity. Some business as usual activity may need to be paused or rephased as necessary.

Governance and project management

It should also be noted that the proposed actions must demonstrate that the ERDF investment is providing additionality to existing plans. For example, in developing the proposal to MHCLG we must ensure that there is clarity with regards to how ERDF will supplement existing activities currently driven via BIDS or other activities supported under the Emergency Transport Plan or Emergency Active Travel Fund.

The European and International Team has identified staffing that can support on the technical aspects of the ERDF project and make sure all conditions are met. This will involve the completion of delivery plans to agree with MHCLG

A Project Management post is required in order to coordinate and communicate activity across the various stakeholders and ensure that areas of the city that do not have BIDs are engaged- It is feasible that an existing post at risk (currently seconded to Retail Bid) can be re-directed for this purpose.

Appendix 1 proposes a steering group structure to ensure oversight on the initiative and support officers in delivering a compliant spend.

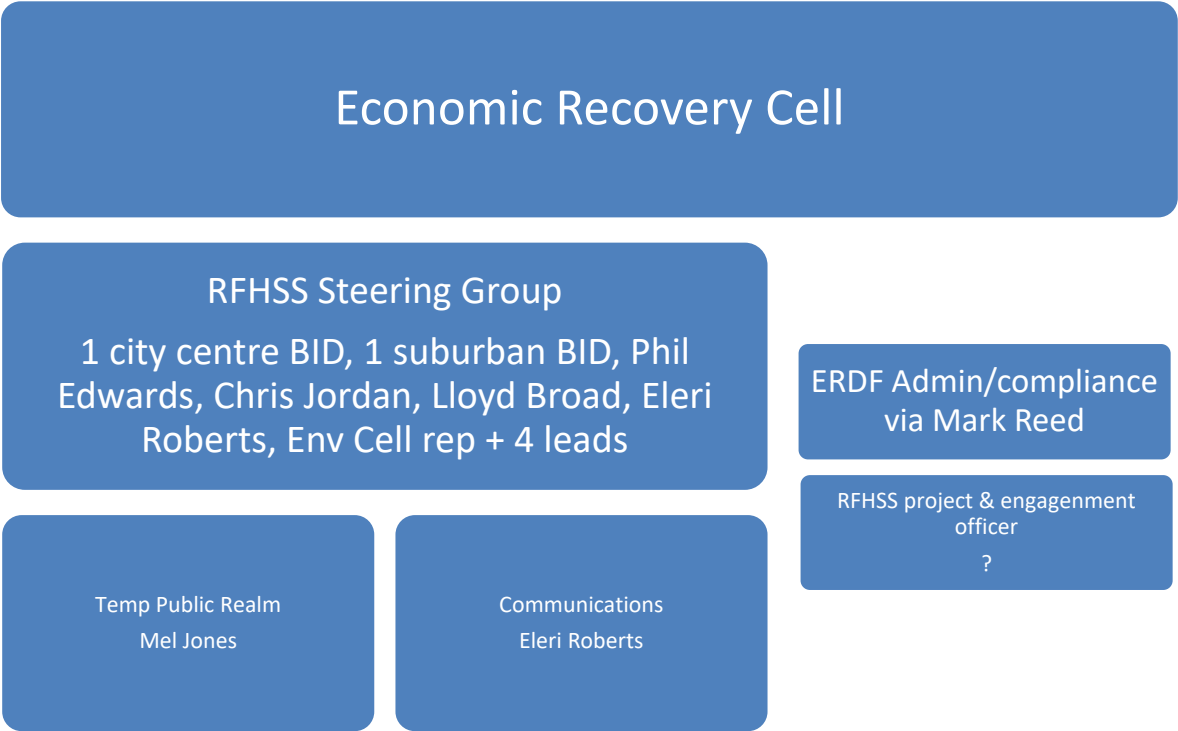
Recommendations to Strategic Cell

1. Approve fund governance via the Economy Recovery Group, with alignment with the Environmental Cell and the governance model set out in Appendix 1
2. Approve principles i-ix above
3. Subject to engagement with stakeholders, support the general split in the table – recognising that flexibility may be required in phases 2 and 3
4. Sanction progressing the detail in phase 1
5. Subject to procurement guidance, and sign off of a Delivery Plan through the AD Communications, procure a marketing campaign through retail bid to deliver phase

1 city wide campaign at £70k (with option to extend to other areas at £24k) and a media budget of up to £114k (£84k + £30k) depending upon how many other areas of the city adopt the campaign

6. Sanction transport planning to deliver phase 1 of temporary public realm improvements at a value up to £430k
7. Sanction the AD Neighbourhoods to delivery phase 1 of Business advice at a value up to £38k

Appendix 1 Governance



Roles

Economic	Recovery Cell: Decision making
RFHSS:	Ensuring work is undertaken within the decisions made.
	Ensuring co-ordination across other interventions and partners
	Developing further direction on the fund
ERDF Admin	Advising leads to ensuring projects that are developed are compliant
	Monitoring spend / returns, Claiming of Grant from MHCLG and detailed record keeping
	Supporting action/delivery plan development
Project role	Ensuring mechanism to engage in 19+ high streets
	Providing particular support around communications requirements of non-BID areas
	Supporting the leads for public realm and communications
Public Realm	Developing compliant plans and delivering schemes

All expenditure agreed with ERDF Admin

Communications Communications sign off will be internal however the lead for delivery is anticipated to be through the BIDs

Developing compliant plans and delivering activity

All expenditure agreed with ERDF Admin