

# Birmingham City Council

## Report to Cabinet – ERDF Welcome Back Fund

27 May 2021



**Subject:** ERDF Welcome Back Fund  
**Report of:** Managing Director – City Operations  
**Relevant Cabinet Member:** Councillor Ian Ward, Leader  
**Relevant O &S Chair(s):** Councillor Shabrana Hussain, Economy & Skills  
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|--|---|---|
| Are specific wards affected?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected |
| If yes, name(s) of ward(s):  |   |   |
| Is this a key decision?  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No                                 |
| If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference:   |   |   |
| Is the decision eligible for call-in?  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No                                 |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No                      |
| If relevant, provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential : |   |   |

### 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Birmingham has been allocated a further £1,016,937 in the second round of funding from the Government to assist in the re-opening of high streets. The previous fund 'Reopening High Streets Safely' is now called the 'Welcome Back' Fund.
- 1.2 Resources are to be provided as 100% European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grant funding and any work will need to be appropriately delivered and procured in compliance with the rules and regulations of European grants.
- 1.3 It is proposed that the governance remains the same as under the first round of funding with officers within Inclusive Growth's European and International Team providing support/direction and the Reopening High Streets Safely Steering

Group (involving city centre and suburban BID representatives) co-ordinating activity and reporting into the Economic Recovery Group as required.

- 1.4 Funding can be used for projects from the date of the release of the formal guidance, which was 16 April 2021 and must be spent by 31 March 2022.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Approve the proposed expenditure framework set out in Table One: Proposed Expenditure Framework.
- 2.2 Accept the Welcome Back Fund ERDF Grant provided by MHCLG, delegate the Assistant Director Neighbourhoods to accept the grant agreement in conjunction with finance and legal.
- 2.3 Delegate authority to spend grant funds in line with 2.1, to the Assistant Director Neighbourhoods and Assistant Director Transport and Connectivity (temporary public realm works).

## **3 Background**

- 3.1 Under the Withdrawal Agreement, the UK will continue to participate in programmes funded under the current 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) until their closure. This means that the vast majority of programmes will continue to receive EU funding across the programme's lifetime. In many cases, funding will continue until after 2020 and the end of the transition period. In addition, UK organisations can continue to bid for new grant funding under the current MFF.
- 3.2 The Welcome Back Fund is a continuation of the ERDF Reopening High Streets Safely Fund (RHSSF). RHSSF was introduced in June 2020 by MHCLG to allow local authorities in England to put in place additional measures to establish a safe trading environment for businesses and customers, particularly in high streets during the covid-19 restrictions
- 3.3 The Welcome Back Funding can be spent across six categories. One through four were originally included in the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund, while five and six are new categories added to the Welcome Back Fund:
- 1) Support to develop an action plan for safe reopening of local economies;
  - 2) Communications and public information;
  - 3) Business-facing awareness raising activities;
  - 4) Temporary public realm changes to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely;
  - 5) Support to promote a safe public environment for a local area's visitor economy; and
  - 6) Support local authorities to develop plans for responding to the medium-term impact of Covid-19 including trialling new ideas particularly where these relate to the High Street.

3.4 Eligible activity under these two new strands could include:

- Placed based marketing or events (such as safe celebration events)
- Marshals
- Public space maintenance
- Maintenance of public conveniences (toilets) including provision of new temporary facilities (toilets)
- Beautification activities including graffiti removal
- Non-permanent public realm adaptations
- Activities that future proof the high street
- Improvement of green spaces and provision of outdoor seating areas

## 4 Options considered and Recommended Proposal

4.1 In the first round of funding (the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund) the majority of funds were allocated to temporary changes to the public realm (£584k) followed by safety communications (£286k) and then smaller amounts on footfall counters, staffing etc.

4.2 The guidance is more flexible with the Welcome Back Fund enabling a broader approach, supporting areas to drive footfall whilst allowing for planting, graffiti removal, deep cleaning etc. It is felt that this time the majority of grant funding should be targeted at beautification of areas to support the visitor economy, and particularly encouraging seating/café culture to improve footfall and dwell time in the city centre and urban centre locations.

4.3 It is also proposed that smaller sums of money are allocated to a strategic visioning review of a new future for high streets in Birmingham as well as some minor public realm i.e. maintenance and subsequent removal of temporary pavement widening measures.

4.4 In line with the first-round funding approach, it is proposed that all BID areas and all areas in the Urban Centre Framework are targeted for support. There are 12 BID areas and the 7 other areas in the UCF where there is no BID (a total of 19 high streets). Resources also need to be earmarked for other locations in the city where business communities/forums come forward, seeking support. Engagement with these areas will be through Ward Councillors and existing contacts through colleagues within BCC.

- BIDs in UCF: Erdington, Northfield, Sutton Coldfield
- BIDs not in UCF: Acocks Green, Colmore Business District, Harborne, Jewellery Quarter, Kings Heath, Retail Birmingham, Soho Road, Southside, Westside
- UCF locations with no BID: Alum Rock Road, Bordesley Green, Coventry Road, Meadway, Perry Barr, Small Heath, Stechford, Stirchley

4.5 Having engaged with BIDs, other local groups and key internal stakeholders, a proposed expenditure framework for the Welcome Back Fund is shown in Table One. Ideas proposed include:

- Beautification of areas to support the visitor economy through graffiti removal and additional deep cleaning
- Improving spaces through planting, seating, wardens etc to encourage people to come into high streets
- Events to drive footfall
- Temporary public realm changes which include maintenance and removal of the barriers/bollards installed to aid social distancing
- A strategic/visioning review of a new future for high streets in Birmingham

| Table One: Proposed Expenditure Framework   |  |                                 |                                  |       |
|---|--|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------|
| Activity  | Phase 1<br><i>June-August 2021</i>   | Phase 2<br><i>Sept-Dec 2021</i> | Phase 3<br><i>Jan-March 2022</i> | Total |
| SCOPE 1: ACTION PLAN  |  |                                 |                                  |       |
| Monitoring  |  |                                 |                                  | £10k  |
| SCOPE 2: COMMUNICATIONS   |  |                                 |                                  |       |
| Communications  |  |                                 |                                  | £0    |
| SCOPE 3: SMALL BUSINESS RE-OPENING ADVICE   |  |                                 |                                  |       |
| Advising Businesses   |  |                                 |                                  | £0    |
| SCOPE 4: TEMPORARY CHANGES TO PUBLIC REALM  |  |                                 |                                  |       |
| Temporary changes to public space, including maintenance, removal and seating   | £150k  | £50k                            |                                  | £200k |
| SCOPE 5: SUPPORT AND PROMOTE A SAFE PUBLIC ENVIRONMENT FOR A LOCAL AREA'S VISITOR ECONOMY   |  |                                 |                                  |       |
| 5.1 Graffiti removal, deep cleaning, flytipping   | Procured by BCC as city wide activity up to March 2022   |                                 |                                  | £276k |
| 5.2 Additional outdoor seating, wardens, planting etc.  | To cover twelve BID areas and delivered across phases  |                                 |                                  | £120k |
| 5.3 Additional outdoor seating, planting plus any other activities identified.  | To cover areas within UCF with no BID (seven areas) and others that may come forward for support across phases |                                 |                                  | £50k  |
| 5.4 Events  | To cover event activity currently being considered by BID, UCF and other areas across the city                 |                                 |                                  | £248k |
| SCOPE 6: SUPPORT LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO DEVELOP PLANS FOR RESPONDING TO THE MEDIUM-TERM IMPACT OF COVID-19 INCLUDING TRIALLING NEW IDEAS PARTICULARLY WHERE THESE RELATE TO THE HIGH STREET |  |                                 |                                  |       |
| Strategic visioning review of the future of High Streets  | £10k   | £10k                            | £10k                             | £30k  |
| OTHER   |  |                                 |                                  |       |
| ERDF Admin  |  |                                 |                                  | £41k  |
| Project Officer   |  |                                 |                                  | £41k  |

4.6 As with first round funding, a phased approach has been built in to allow the proposals to be adapted in response to changing circumstances due to Covid.

- 4.7 It is envisaged that there will be some early work to increase cleanliness, followed by summer activity to encourage footfall and again around the festive period.
- 4.8 It should be noted that proposed actions must demonstrate that ERDF investment is providing additionality to existing plans. The European and International Team has identified staffing support on the technical aspects of the ERDF project and will make sure all grant conditions are met and claims are submitted accurately and the required project audit trail is compiled. This will include the completion of a new delivery plan to be agreed with MHCLG.
- 4.9 A Project Management post is required to coordinate and communicate activity across the various stakeholders, assist on procurement compliance, coordinate publicity and ensure that areas of the city that do not have BIDs are engaged.
- 4.10 It is recommended that the proposed expenditure framework in Table One is approved; that the Welcome Back Fund grant is accepted; and authority to spend grant funds in line with this paper is delegated to the Assistant Director Neighbourhoods.

## **5 Consultation**

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with all 12 Business Improvement Districts through the Steering Group to identify key priorities and also internal stakeholders.
- 5.2 Business and community groups from Stirchley, Digbeth and Sparkhill
- 5.3 The working group has engaged with all BIDs and also key internal services as to which categories should be prioritised. It has also presented the information to the Economic Recovery Cell on 18 May 2021 who supported the approach.

## **6 Risk Management**

- 6.1 The grant funds are provided to the Council under the terms of ERDF funding. Failure to comply with these terms, which cover eligible activity, procurement rules etc, would result in the Council being unable to recover defrayed costs. The Inclusive Growth European and International Team has identified technical staffing support to help ensure all grant conditions are met and claims are submitted accurately. This will involve the completion of a new delivery plan to be agreed with MHCLG.

## **7 Compliance Issues:**

### **7.1 How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?**

- 7.1.1 Investing in additional deep cleaning, graffiti removal, planting and outdoor seating across the city will assist with Outcome 4 ('Birmingham is a great city to live in'), specifically Priority 1 ('We will work with our residents and businesses to improve the cleanliness of our city') through enhanced cleaning regimes across the city centre and local centres, and Priority 8 ('We will

enhance our status as a city of culture, sports and events') by increasing the number of events in shared spaces and communities.

## **7.2 Legal Implications**

7.2.1 None

## **7.3 Financial Implications**

7.3.1 The resources are to be provided as 100% ERDF grant funding, any work will need to be appropriately delivered and procured to comply with necessary processes and procedures relating to European grant.

7.3.2 All spend must be in the 21/22 financial year and must comply and be eligible within the grant conditions.

## **7.4 Procurement Implications (if required)**

7.4.1 ERDF Procurement Guidelines will be followed.

## **7.5 Human Resources Implications (if required)**

7.5.1 A Project Management role is required which can be fulfilled by an existing post created for the ERDF Reopening High Streets Safely Fund. Budget for this is identified in Table One.

## **7.6 Public Sector Equality Duty**

7.6.1 This fund will enhance high streets across the city and will have a positive impact. Money has been allocated in table 1 to cover areas of the city beyond those formally recognised in the Urban Centre Framework or those areas with a BID and in doing so provides an opportunity to address any wider issues as they emerge.

## **8 Background Documents**

8.1 None.

**List of appendices accompanying this report:**

**None**