

CABINET
13 MAY 2021

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMY AND REGENERATION

UK COMMUNITY RENEWAL FUND

Cabinet Member(s): Councillor Richard Chesterton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration, Councillor Bob Evans Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services.

Responsible Officer: Jenny Clifford, Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration

Reason for Report:

- 1. To inform Members about the UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF);**
- 2. To set out the criteria and timescales identified in the fund prospectus;**
- 3. To seek agreement as to the preferred course of action.**

RECOMMENDATION: To give delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder(s) for Planning and Economic Regeneration and Property Services to develop and submit a bid to Devon County Council as set out in sections 6.0 and 7.0 for the regeneration projects within Tiverton.

Financial Implications:

Through the UK Community Renewal Fund local organisations can apply for up to £3 million of revenue funding for projects that invest in skills, help people into employment, support local businesses grow and develop, and help local communities become more resilient and sustainable. Applications must be for a minimum bid value of £500,000. There is no requirement for match funding, but those that have identified match funding may score higher in relation to the Value for Money criteria. If the Council were to submit, a bid some identified match funding would be advisable.

There is no budget available to the Council in the current financial year for designing the projects detailed within this report in line with the feedback following the Tiverton Town Centre project liaison consultation meetings. This revenue funding opportunity would enable the Council to position itself to capitalise on future funding opportunities and for the projects to be 'shovel ready'.

Budget and Policy Framework:

The UK Community Renewal Fund will be trialling the delivery of funding support to communities and the local economy, ahead of the launch of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which will replace EU-funded programmes.

On application, projects will need to demonstrate a strong strategic fit against national, regional and local priorities for growth as set out in the CRF Prospectus and through the Team Devon Recovery Prospectus. Bidders will also need to refer to the Heart of the South West Local Industrial Strategy and Local Skills Report in preparing bids.

Legal Implications: Should bids be agreed, grant-funding agreements would be entered into.

Risk Assessment: Mid Devon is not a prioritised area for funding. Considerable time and effort will need to be invested in preparing a suitable bid in a very short time-frame. There is no guarantee of success; however, failure to develop and submit a bid would represent a missed opportunity. In assessing prospective projects suitable for inclusion within a bid, officers have considered which have the greatest chance of a successful outcome.

Any projects included in a bid will need to have its own risk assessment and demonstrate robust risk mitigation plans.

Equality Impact Assessment: Projects put forward as part of a submission will need to demonstrate how they will reduce economic and social inequalities, or promote wider growth and economic / job creation opportunities particularly as they impact on vulnerable residents or hardest hit communities.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The Community Renewal Fund could support the delivery of the Council's Economic Strategy, and links to the Community and Economic themes in the Corporate Plan.

Impact on Climate Change: The fund can support feasibility studies to deliver low carbon and renewal energy projects. In addition, any project submitted as part of this funding programme will need to demonstrate how they will contribute to carbon reduction targets.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Community Renewal Fund is a one-year pilot worth £220 million across the UK. The aim of the fund is to trial new approaches to supporting communities and the local economy ahead of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, due to launch in 2022. The programme will support pilot projects that test out innovative ideas to invest in skills, help people into employment, support local businesses grow and develop, and help local communities become more resilient and sustainable.
- 1.2 Up to £24 million could be available across Devon, with up to £3 million per local authority area. Bids are being invited from a wide range of organisations, including district councils, voluntary and community sector organisations, local education providers and umbrella business groups. There is a strong emphasis on innovation and piloting new approaches; projects will need demonstrate that they are genuinely new, and not just a continuation of current services. The minimum bid value has been set at £500,000, of which 90% should be for revenue funding. Partnership bids are welcome, as are bids that cover multiple areas. Organisations can submit multiple bids, although only £3 million is available for each local authority area. The deadline for submissions to Devon County Council (DCC) is the 19th May 2021.
- 1.3 Devon County Council has a key role in assessing, prioritising and submitting local bids to Government. Following submission Devon County Council will assess bids against the Government's gateway criteria and other local criteria before submitting those bids that most strongly meet the UK Community Renewal Fund and local priorities, to the Government, up to a maximum of £3m per local authority area. The Government will then select an appropriate range of projects from across the County to meet a reasonable geographic and typological mix, and reflect their prioritisation of places. Successful projects will be announced in late July, with all project activity and spend needing to be completed by 31st March 2022.

2.0 Funding Priorities

2.1 The Community Renewal Fund is able to fund projects that meet any of the four following priorities:

- **Investment in skills** – Through activities such as facilitating work-based training, upskilling and retraining of the workforce. This includes the promotion of digital skills and digital inclusion.
- **Investment for local business:** - Through activities supporting new entrepreneurship and growth sectors of business. This may include projects that support the taking on of new employees and promoting the development of existing staff. This may also include projects that develop new products to market and services that have an innovative design and that support local decarbonisation measures.
- **Investment in communities and place** – This includes exploration of opportunities for cultural or community led regeneration activity, improving green spaces and preserving local assets. It may also include promoting rural connectivity and enabling feasibility studies to deliver local carbon and energy projects.
- **Supporting people into employment** – Through activities that support individuals to access local services or provision into employment. This may include projects that identify and address barriers to employment amongst the hardest to reach, raising local aspiration through sustainable employment, and seeking to support additional basic skills provision.

Projects that meet more than one or even all of these priorities are especially welcomed.

2.2 In addition, projects will need to show how they target people most in need. These have been identified locally as:

- Young People aged 19-24, notably those most at risk of NEET or already NEET; those with a disability; those in care / leaving care, or those with a wider barrier to work or learning;
- Older people (i.e those over 50), particularly those lacking lower levels transferrable skills;
- Those with a disability, mental health issue or other health related barrier to work or learning;
- Rural, coastal and urban communities experiencing significant and ongoing challenges around unemployment, educational attainment, health disparity or other factors which drive local deprivation;
- Communities facing additional economic pressures from the onset of COVID 19, notably those with an over-representation of businesses / employment within the Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure sectors; and
- Business support, skills and training, and regeneration activity that promotes sustainable enterprise activity, additional business innovation, promote new job creation or enable urban renewal within harder to reach locations / hardest hit locations.

3.0 Assessment Criteria

3.1 Once submitted, DCC will assess all applications against the Government's 'gateway' criteria as set out in the prospectus alongside other local criteria. The key criteria for assessment are:

- **Deliverability** – Projects will need robust plans for delivery and be able to complete the project by 31st March 2022.
- **Strategic Fit** - Projects will need to demonstrate strong strategic fit against national, regional and local priorities for growth as set out in the CRF Prospectus and through the

Team Devon Recovery Prospectus. Bidders will also need to refer to the Heart of the South West Local Industrial Strategy and Local Skills Report in preparing bids.

- Value for Money - Match funding is not specifically requested as part of the bid, although value for money is a key test.
- Targeting people and areas most in need - Although this is an open programme, weighting will be given to projects that include delivery in the two priority areas in Devon, West Devon and Torridge. In addition Devon County Council is specifically seeking projects which will reduce economic and social inequalities across the Devon area, whether through supporting our most vulnerable residents or hardest hit communities; or promoting wider growth and economic / job creation opportunities.

4.0 Detailed Information

- 4.1 More information about the Community Renewal Fund is available at the Government's website at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus-2021-22>

or on the Devon County Council website at:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/economy/document/community-renewal-fund/>

5.0 Potential Bids

- 5.1 The minimum bid value of £500k to be spent in the current financial year, limits the scope of the available projects. The most advanced projects we have of this scale particularly given the criteria of the strategic fit and deliverability are in connection with the Tiverton Regeneration plans.
- 5.2 With reference to the report on the update on the Tiverton Town Centre Regeneration Masterplan and Investment Masterplanning Work. Members will be aware that this authority has undertaken work with regard to regeneration and investment Masterplanning for Tiverton town centre.

That report seeks to both update members on work to date and to provide feedback on consultation meetings held with Ward Members, Tiverton Town Council and Tiverton Business Partnership. This feedback was focused around the key intervention projects to be included in the masterplan and where officers request authority to explore the opportunities to bring forward the projects and initiatives identified as part of the report, and as informed by the consultation responses, aligned with the emerging masterplan and prioritised.

- 5.3 Following the consultation feedback Officers within Property Services also sought authority to progress matters associated with the Fore Street opening to undertake initial survey and costings work required revising the project in line with feedback from stakeholders.
- 5.4 This feasibility work would investigate two options.
- Option 1 would be to remove one ground floor unit with the removal of the associated upper floor accommodation that consists of one flat
 - Option 2 would be to remove two ground floor units with the removal of the associated upper floor accommodation that consists of two flats
- 5.5 Another project identified via the consultation meetings was the development of areas of Phoenix Lane and Officers to review the relocation of the Burma Star War Memorial, either

on the west side of Phoenix Lane in combination with the enhancement of the Well or at Angel Hill. Officers see an opportunity to align this project to the Fore Street / Pannier Market opening. This could see the centre space being extended towards the Phoenix Lane area.

6.0 The Fore Street Opening

- 6.1 On the 19th of December 2019, Cabinet resolved to postpone the specific scheme that came forward in advance of the forthcoming Tiverton Town Centre Masterplan, and allows the second stage of the process to be properly completed before seeking to prioritise strategic investment opportunities. That the Cabinet Members for Planning & Economic Regeneration and Property Services:
- a) consider how a Tiverton Town Centre Regeneration Fund might be established to facilitate match-funding opportunities and encourage external investment into the town, with proposals to be brought back to the Cabinet.
 - b) work with Tiverton Town Council, market traders, the Town Centre Partnership and others businesses in the town to identify a programme of works that will make a significant improvement to the Town Centre in the short term.
- 6.2 This regeneration project would encourage footfall through to the Pannier Market and Market Walk and then onto Bampton Street to create the circular shopping route that would assist all traders on its path. This would be backed up by additional signage that would be funded partly from s106 monies secured from future Tiverton Town developments. The site itself consists of a retail premises (30 and 34 Fore Street) with a pedestrian walkway running adjacent to this providing access to the Pannier Market from Fore Street. The existing boundary wall to the walkway that bounds 36-38 Fore Street (Card Factory and Crusty Cob). The rear service yard to 36 Fore Street also forms part of this development along with some parking spaces directly northwards which form part of a larger open area immediately adjacent to the Pannier Market.
- 6.3 The various aspects to the development site have been identified as important drivers to improve the relationship between the pedestrianised retail area of Fore Street and the Pannier Market. This would not only provide an improved access but also visual improvements and additional retail offerings to entice visitors to move between the two areas of town.
- 6.4 The Pannier Market forms an important part of the town centre in terms of its heritage and varied retail offering compared to the more usual high street shops found on Fore Street and Gold Street. However, to the passing visitor, the Pannier Market may well be elusive aside from a restricted passageway with subtle signage adjacent to 34 Fore Street. Providing an improved gateway to the market from Fore Street is important to create an enhanced connection.
- 6.5 It is the intention that the existing/newly constructed flats would be retained by the Council for encouraging those who rent a commercial asset, can also rent accommodation. In addition to this we intend to include with the bid works to improve the unused space above the Card Factory and Crusty Cob to create flats that would be retained by the Council to replace those flats that would be lost as part of the widening project.
- 6.6 This project would consist of the following aspects:
- Demolition of the ground floor retail shop at 34, including the potential of 30 Fore Street to create a widened pedestrian access to the Pannier Market.
 - New cladding, canopy and signage.

- Part demolition of the rear boundary wall to 36-38 Fore Street to create a new mixed-use building comprising three ground floor retail units and three two-bedroom apartments above.
- Quality footpath paving for the entrance from Fore Street and through the alleyway would also be important to enhance the scheme.
- Upgrade of the surrounding street furniture.
- Works to create two flats above the Card Factory and Crusty Cob.

7.0 Phoenix Lane

- 7.1 The development of areas of Phoenix Lane and Officers to review the relocation of the Burma Star War Memorial, either on the west side of Phoenix Lane in combination with the enhancement of the Well or at Angel Hill. Officers see an opportunity to align this project to the Fore Street / Pannier Market opening. This could see the centre space being extended towards the Phoenix Lane area.

8.0 Community Bids

- 8.1 This revenue-funding programme with a minimum of £500k makes it extremely difficult for local groups to prepare a successful bid in time; however, we have advised other organisations within the district of this opportunity should they wish to apply.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 The Tiverton Regeneration scheme resulting in the proposed widened entrance to 34 Fore Street would provide improved physical and visual access to the Pannier Market and the feedback from the consultation process has identified that the opening would need to be open to the sky, with no structure above it. This revenue funding opportunity will enable the development of the plans further, so the Council are in a position to capitalise on future funding for project delivery.
- 9.2 There is no budget available to the Council in the current financial year for designing the projects detailed within this report in line with the feedback following the Tiverton Town Centre project liaison consultation meetings. This revenue funding opportunity would enable the Council to position itself to capitalise on future funding opportunities and for the projects to be 'shovel ready'.
- 9.3 Officer time is required to submit the bid and subject to the outcome of the bid process, a future decision will be required to procure external support for project delivery.

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Circulation of the Report: Cabinet Members

List of Background Papers:

UK Community Renewal Fund Prospectus

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus-2021-22>

Cabinet Report – Tiverton Regeneration Project –Tender Outcome 19.12.2021

<https://democracy.middevon.gov.uk/documents/g1108/Public%20reports%20pack%2019th-Dec-2019%2018.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>