

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL**CABINET 14th March 2019****PRIDE IN OUR HIGH STREETS – SUPPORTING BUSINESS****REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: BUSINESS, DEVELOPMENT & EMPLOYMENT****LEAD CABINET MEMBER – CLLR LEE CARTER****PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT****1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the success of the Council's Pride in Our High Streets Programme, which since the original programme launched in 2015 will see more than £1.5m invested into supporting businesses in the Borough's high streets in recognition of their value to local communities and economies.
- 1.2 Phase 2 of PIOHS is investing £700,000 directly in our High Streets, providing grant funding to bring empty properties back into use, improving shop fronts and facades and working with Parish and Town Councils to market and promote their High Streets. The investment reflects the findings of national studies into best practice in high street regeneration and it is complemented by the wider Community Pride programme which is delivering investment across all our high streets and local centres.
- 1.3 PIOHS will operate through to the end of March 2020 but is already celebrating some notable successes. The Empty Unit Incentive Grant has received more than 80 enquiries. The winners of the Young High Street Challenge will shortly take possession of a retail unit to launch their business idea with the help of their £20k award and the property façade improvement programme has reached the detailed design stage with work to the first group of 30 properties starting in early spring and more than 60 property owners signed up to the programme.
- 1.4 Such is the success of the Programme and the strength of interest in delivering more new business opportunities in the High Street, the Council has announced a further £1m for PIOHS. This will continue the work to date, particularly the direct engagement of young people in the High Street – an innovative approach that this Council has been recognised for. It will also ensure that as many of our key High Streets benefit from investment alongside the limited number we are able to put forward for the new Future High Street Fund announced by Government.
- 1.5 The PIOHS programme has influenced the Government's consultation on the £675m Future High Street Fund, following a visit to Wellington in September 2018 by the Head of the Thriving Towns and High Streets Team. This included meeting young people who had participated in YHSC which was recognised by the Team to be key to transforming the future of High Streets.
- 1.6 In December Government announced the Future High Streets Fund. This is open to Local authorities to submit expressions of interest, with each submission covering one high street or Town Centre. Based on the size of population, the Council is permitted by Government guidelines to submit two separate expressions of interest in the first

bidding round and is now developing proposals based on those areas that most closely fit the rigorous eligibility criteria.

- 1.7 Following discussions with Fund advisors Wellington and Oakengates are the closest match to the eligibility criteria and will be submitted as two expressions of interest in the first round, closing date 22nd March. A second funding round is anticipated to open in 2020 (date to be confirmed) when proposals will be considered for Madeley and Dawley. Following the initial submissions, successful first round bidders will be notified in the Summer before progressing to a second round with final decisions due later in 2019/20.
- 1.8 A second High Street fund will be launched by Government later this year which is set to allocate £55m to support the regeneration of Heritage High Streets. The details and bidding process for this fund have yet to be confirmed, but the outline guidance suggests that Ironbridge and Newport will be the High Streets with the closest fit to the objectives of the Heritage High Street fund.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the success of the Pride in Our High Street Programme
- 2.2 Cabinet approves the submission of bids to the first round Future High Streets fund for Wellington and Oakengates to be led by the Assistant Director for Business, Development and Employment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery
- 2.3 Cabinet approves the receipt of any funding that may be secured through the Future High Streets Fund
- 2.4 Cabinet approves the submission of bids to the Heritage High Street Fund to be led by the Assistant Director for Business, Development and Employment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery

3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-Operative Council priority objective(s)?	
	Yes	The programme will contribute directly to the following priorities: -Protect and create jobs as a business supporting and business winning Council -Ensure that neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well-maintained -Regenerate those neighbourhoods in need
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	No	By contributing to high street regeneration the programme has the potential to have a positive impact on a wide cross section of the community.

TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE	<p>The Phase 2 programme will deliver through to March 2020 with the additional funding anticipated to extend the Programme to 2021.</p> <p>Expressions of interest for the Future High Street Fund need to be submitted by 22nd March with a response identifying those to progress to the second round due in the Summer and a final response on selected projects by late 2019/20. No timetable has yet been released for the Heritage High Street Fund.</p>	
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	Yes/No	<p>The Financial Management Report approved by Council on 28th February 2019 transferred £1m to the Pride in Our High Street reserve.</p> <p>Finance will continue to support the Service Delivery Team as funding allocations are determined and have advised on assessments and their terms as appropriate.</p> <p>DR 12/2/19</p>
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	<p>Any decision made by the Authority can be subject to challenge in respect of its reasonableness or lawfulness. Therefore a robust and transparent assessment procedure was developed so as to avoid challenge of either the process followed or recommendations made by Officers and the Assessment Panel.</p> <p>The assessment and award process also sought to ensure that a breach of the State Aid Rules does not arise either directly or indirectly by the award of grant funding to individual organisations or joint ventures which could distort competition and affect trade by favouring certain undertakings. Be mindful of the level of funding provided and the amount of any additional funding to undertakings. Make sure a clear record of this is kept. The risk however of breach of the rules is still very low but should there be any doubts refer back to legal for more detailed advice.</p> <p>Legal Services have developed a standard form of grant agreement that will be used in each award of funding</p>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	No	

IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	Yes	The project will focus on 6 borough town high streets with the greatest potential to benefit from investment.
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PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. INFORMATION

Empty Unit Incentive Package

- 4.1 The Empty Unit Incentive Package provides a start-up grant which is available in high streets where levels of empty retail properties are equal to or above national levels (around 11%). These are Wellington, Oakengates and Dawley and as of October 2018 Ironbridge, which saw an increase in vacant premises last year, taking it above the national average.
- 4.2 The Empty Unit Retail Grant has attracted over 80 initial enquiries, an encouraging sign that the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in Telford. Grant awards range from £2k to £10k and applications are first assessed against the results of the 2017 retail survey to ensure that there is no duplication or displacement of existing retail or service activity. Applicants have to provide a business plan to demonstrate that they have thoroughly researched the need and demand for their product or service and also provide evidence of need for financial assistance.
- 4.3 Since the launch of the programme, 6 grants to the value of £56,500 have been awarded and there are a further 3 applications currently being processed with others in earlier stage of consideration. Each applicant has received business support through the Council's team at the Growth Hub and will receive on-going support where needed. The high quality of the successful applications is reflected in the success that these businesses have been enjoying since opening:
- 4.4 **Coffee Aroma café** opened at Oakengates Theatre in October 2018 and has gone from strength to strength. Since opening with 3 employees, they are now employing 4 with healthy sales growth achieved by maximising the opportunities created by its location at the front of the Theatre. The business is having a follow on benefit to other local producers who are providing stock to the busy café.

Cllr Stephen Reynolds, Mayor of Oakengates Town Council said: We have welcomed Coffee Aroma to The Place Theatre and this has proved to be a great success in footfall, not just to Limes Walk and The Wakes but importantly to the Theatre and Library. We have also welcomed Gems, who have relocated to Market Street ensuring that the future of this family business is embedded into the high street for future generations.



4.5 **Nathan Rous PR** have relocated to The Court Wellington, with the benefit of a grant, allowing them to take on new clients and two new staff. They are not only bringing the benefits of a growing business to Wellington, they are also keen to support the rest of the high street and will bring their expertise to bear in the promotion of Wellington to new visitors and shoppers. Within two months of opening in Wellington they have developed a new hospitality consultancy offer called Mr Greenside, which will give businesses in the hospitality sector a series of free clinics to help with everything from recruitment to social media and videography.

Quote: "We are indebted to the Council's Pride in Our High Street project team for the support they have given us in recent weeks," he explained.

"Our business has expanded significantly in the last two years to such a degree that we have outgrown our existing premises in Much Wenlock. Wellington offers us the opportunity to breathe new life into a stunning building while continuing the next stage of our development."



4.6 **The Cavern Sports Bar** were awarded their grant in November and January saw the opening of their Sports Bar, a business that has brought something new to the food and drink offerings of Ironbridge and which is already attracting a lot of publicity. The owners of the new Bar have both worked in the hospitality industry in Ironbridge for several years and so know the local market well.

Quote: “After months of hard work renovating it was great to open our Sports Bar early in 2019. The grant from Pride in Your High Street has meant we can realise our dreams. Every customer has been so positive and Ironbridge high street is such a fantastic location for our business. We couldn’t have accomplished this without the grant from Telford & Wrekin Council and it gives budding entrepreneurs such an opportunity.”



- 4.7 **Gems Haberdashers** were awarded a grant that allowed them to relocate to Oakengates and expand. They opened the haberdashers on 5th December 2018. A new business range of workshops will commence in Spring 2019.



- 4.8 **CoCo's Desserts** opens in March, bringing affordable luxury treats to Wellington in the form of desserts catering for all dietary needs. This is a proven franchise operation and fills a demonstrable gap in the local market. Open daily from 3pm-10pm the shop will add value to Wellington's evening food and drink economy and the business will employ a full time and some part time positions.



- 4.9 **Clifton Arts-The Orbit.** The Orbit will bring a completely new offer to Wellington including a cinema, café/bar on the ground floor and creative space for meetings, music and hire on the upper floors. They will be opening in April, with sections of the building opening on a phased basis. This sort of community led development is exactly the type of development that is being recommended by the latest high street studies.



Young High Street Challenge

- 4.10 The winners of the Young High Street Challenge, a PIOHS competition for young people to engage them in high street regeneration, took to the streets of Wellington in November 2019 to showcase their winning projects. The students received an enthusiastic reception from local residents and positive feedback that gave them further confidence in their ideas.



- 4.11 **Wrekin College** whose team won a grant of £20,000 to launch their Retro Shack retail concept in Wellington have now found premises in the centre of town, ideal for their business. They are refining their business plan and operating budgets in preparation for taking over the premises by late Spring, and are already building their

stock of retro-products from clothing to vinyl.



- 4.12 **Burton Borough's** team have taken their entrance feature design to the Tile Works at Craven Dunhill in Jackfield and it is now being developed into a tile mural to decorate the entrance to Wellington Market. Students from **Haberdashers Adams** consulted with Wellington residents on their new branding design for the market and ideas for pop up markets and live music and will now be working with the Wellington Market Company to take their ideas forward.



Property Façade Improvement Scheme

- 4.13 High Street regeneration schemes across the UK show that solutions such as the use of colour in the high street and of green space create an impression of safe and open streets and can have a significant impact on economic performance. The appearance of high streets can be radically improved by simple solutions.
- 4.14 The Property Façade Improvement scheme is open to all 6 key borough town high streets of Newport, Ironbridge, Madeley, Wellington, Dawley and Oakengates. Eligible

properties lie within a defined area which encompasses the primary shopping areas as defined in the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan and agreed with the Town/Parish Councils.

- 4.16 The design, contracting and delivery of facade improvements is being overseen by the Council's biT architecture and design service and a simple form of agreement needs to be signed by the property owner and/or tenant to confirm participation in the scheme.
- 4.17 Property owners and/or tenants have been written to in all of the eligible areas. It has proven difficult to contact many of whom are absent landlords, but letters are now being followed up by visits, supported by Town or Parish Council officers.
- 4.18 To date 56 businesses have agreed to be included in the scheme. A range of façade styles have been designed in keeping with the style of the local high street and taking into account any special status such as a conservation zone. Facade designs are also being tailored to allow for any specific business branding.
- 4.19 Wellington, Oakengates and Ironbridge will be the pilot areas, with work starting on facades in Spring 2019. Images of some of the designs that will be delivered in the pilot areas are shown in Appendix 1, alongside 'before' images. A palette of heritage colours is being used by the design team with owners/tenants given an opportunity to approve the designs.

Future High Streets Fund

- 4.20 The £675m Future High Street Fund was launched in December 2018 and will have two rounds; the first closes on the 22nd March 2019 and the second round is anticipated to open in 2020 (timescales yet to be confirmed).
- 4.21 The Fund has a two phase application process with Expressions of Interest to be submitted by 22nd March 2019. Successful applications will be invited to proceed to Phase 2 in the Summer of 2019.
- 4.22 The Fund has rigorous eligibility criteria. It is open to Local Authorities who can put forward a set number of expressions of interest in the first round, dependant on the population of the authority area. Telford & Wrekin with a 2017 mid-year population of almost 176,000 is able to submit a maximum of 2 expressions of interest. Each submission must cover one high street or town centre in their area.
- 4.23 Eligible town centres must be facing significant challenges, must be important centres serving a wide population, have the potential to support extensive economic and social activity and have strong transport links. Government has made it clear that Local Authorities must be realistic about their bids given the level of competition that there will be for the fund. Any project put forward must make a transformational change to the use of a project area, rather than just a difference to its appearance and projects should be able to demonstrate a link to the delivery of national and emerging Local Industrial Strategies.
- 4.24 Given the above and having had discussions with Government advisors on the Fund, the Council has determined to submit two first round expressions of interest to the fund based on the town centres of Wellington and Oakengates. These town centres are of a scale and have a range of challenges that most closely meet the eligibility criteria. They also have opportunities to deliver the transformative change required

by the Fund and so will provide an excellent learning opportunity for our other High Streets.

- 4.25 Wellington is well placed geographically with strong rail links and direct motorway access. It has a substantial catchment area and it already supports a broad range of economic and social activity, including a strong cultural offer. It has a strategic masterplan in place and there are partnerships and groups active in the Town that will provide strong proof of engagement and support, some of which can supply public and private sector co-funding, another important criteria for Fund eligibility. These groups include the Town Council, Wrekin College, Wellington Market Company and a range of businesses with a strong commitment to the regeneration of the town. The Town Council has also recruited a high street marketing specialist who will play a key role in supporting masterplan delivery and bringing together partners.
- 4.26 The vision for the town, led by the Town Council and other partners, includes a number of key physical interventions that aim to: change the balance of retail and residential property; build on the introduction of new non retail commercial and leisure uses in the Centre; introduce new enterprise to the town through the acquisition and regeneration of key properties; transform existing enterprise to attract new markets and; improve the public realm to link together the business, retail and community elements of the town centre. The opportunity for enterprise in the Town is underpinned by the Town's strong rail and road links.
- 4.27 Oakengates is also well placed geographically with strong rail links and it has a cultural asset in the form of the theatre that presents significant opportunity for transformation but requires investment. This needs to be linked to a level of property clearance and the redevelopment of transport infrastructure and the town centre's public realm in order that the theatre can attract the new markets that we know are there. Like Wellington, Oakengates also presents opportunities to change the balance of retail and residential property and to introduce new enterprise to the town through the acquisition and regeneration of key properties, particularly where there is an opportunity for leisure use.
- 4.28 Round 2 of the Future High Streets Fund will open in 2020. The opening date and bidding process are still to be confirmed but it is proposed that Madeley and Dawley should be the focus of future expressions of interest. Consideration will need to be given to a masterplan for transformative change for both areas, but both have large catchment areas, can demonstrate significant challenges but also have assets and partnerships that can be exploited to drive social and economic improvement.
- 4.29 Government has indicated that they will launch a second round of the Future High Streets Fund in 2020. The Council has identified Madeley and Dawley as potential applicants for the second round.
- 4.30 A further £55m has been allocated to DCMS (Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) to support the regeneration of Heritage High Streets. Details and timescales for the roll out of this fund have yet to be released but based on the information released to date it is anticipated that the focus will be on restoration and/or re-purposing of historic assets which will provide funding opportunities for our key heritage town centres of Ironbridge and Newport.

- 4.31 Given the success of PIOHS and in order to ensure that all of the Borough's key High Streets benefit from investment over the next 2 years, the Council has also set aside £1m for further high street regeneration activity. The application of this funding will take into account any success that the Council achieves in applications for the Future High Street Fund. In the meantime the Council is reviewing the success of the current programme and is considering options for the investment of this additional funding but is committed to continuing the engagement of young people in the Programme.

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

NONE

6. PREVIOUS MINUTES

Cabinet 18th October 2018
Cabinet 18th October 2017
Cabinet 17th November 2016
Cabinet 28th January 2016

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

NONE

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