



**REPORT FROM: PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATORY SERVICES MANAGER**

**TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**DATE: 27<sup>th</sup> MAY, 2021**

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**WELCOME BACK FUND (RE-OPENING HIGH STREETS)  
AND TASK FORCE**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- (1) To report to the committee on the Welcome Back Fund (WBF) and the High Streets Task Force (HSTF)
- (2) To seek approval for a basic plan for spending for WBF including rolling over the underspend from the RHSSF into the additional funding.
- (3) To seek approval for the choice of town in Pendle for the assistance given to us by the High Street Task Force.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) That the Chief Executive and Planning, Economic Development & Regulatory Services Manager be given delegated authority to submit the draft WBF action plan.
- (2) That the WBF has a single action plan produced which Area Committees will agree to the content of relating to the towns in their area.
- (3) That the allocations be as set out at Table 1.
- (4) To approve Barnoldswick as the town of choice for HSTF assistance.

## REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) In order that the Committee remains apprised of the eligibility of spending for WBF and of the help available through HSTF.
- (2) To ensure the spending through the WBF programme is done in an eligible and co-ordinated way.
- (3) To ensure that the help given by HSTF is given to an appropriate town within Pendle.

## Background and Issues

### 1. RHSSF and WBF Funding

1.1 In 2020 the government allocated funding to all local authorities for the safe re-opening of each area's towns, known as the Re-opening of the High Streets Safely Fund (RHSSF). £81,195 was allocated to Pendle. This is 100% grant funding from the European Regional Development Fund.

1.2 There were four basic strands of eligibility for spending for RHSS which basically are:

- a) An Action Plan
- b) Communicating safety messages to the public
- c) Communicating safety messages to businesses
- d) Adapting high streets to be safer

1.3 The funding was allocated to our town centres proportionate to their size. Funding has, and is, being spent on a number of items including 28 hand sanitisers stations and safety banners, masks, videos, a website and a campaign/quiz for Nelson.

1.4 The final claim date for the RHSSF is in June 2021. On top of this funding the government has given Pendle a further grant of £81,195 toward re-opening our high streets safely. This grant is called the Welcome Back Fund (WBF). The final claim date for this is in March of 2022. Any underspend on the RHSSF can be rolled over into the WBF.

1.5 The RHSSF criteria has been very restrictive and the new WBF fund has recognised that in introducing two new strands of spend relating to marketing and the ability to purchase street furniture. The new strands of spend therefore give greater flexibility in what the grant can be spent on. As we can roll over the underspend from the RHSSF into the new WBF it would be prudent to do so in order that we can better utilise the available finding to help the town centres recover from the pandemic.

1.6 ERDF rules are stringent in terms of how procurement takes place. As a result RHSSF procurement has been difficult. Each town has had its own individual action plan and this has caused some difficulty in the procurement process and is time consuming. It is proposed to simplify the process by having a more overall co-ordinated approach for this second round WBF funding, whereby individual area plans feed into an overall Action Plan for Pendle. Area Committees will still have an allocation and be responsible for approving

spend but that would be administered via a central overall Action Plan as opposed to individual action plans.

1.7 The WBF requires us to agree a basic form of this Grant Action Plan (GAP) and the deadline for this is the end of May 2021. We will not have area committees in place by then. In the circumstances it is requested that plan be drawn up and agreed by the PEDRS Manager and the Chief Executive/Director. This does not need to be a detailed plan and is a holding document for a far more detailed GAP. It is recommended that this holding plan concentrate on the elements that have been expanded on in the WBF (Appendix 1), namely street furniture and adaptations that allow for safer useable spaces, as well as wider marketing of those towns.

1.8 It is suggested that all the relevant committees and towns feed into a more detailed Grant Action Plan for Pendle at the earliest convenience, as planning and procurement take time.

1.9 The split of funding will needs to be agreed after the new area Committee structure is in turn agreed.

## **2. High Streets Task Force (HSTF)**

2.1 Alongside this grant assistance the Government is providing a non-financial mentoring service, the High Streets Task Force, which is designed to assist one town centre within a local authority area. The deadline for requesting this assistance is the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021 when we must nominate one town from our area if we want to benefit from this help.

2.2 Colne is represented with Colne BID and Nelson has the Town New Deal bid. It is recommended that Barnoldswick is the Pendle town that is put forward to receive this assistance.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

**Policy:** None arising directly from this report

**Financial:** Total allocation for helping town centre businesses in Pendle was is £81,195 under the RHSSF and will be the same under WB.

**Legal:** None arising directly from this report

**Risk Management:** None arising directly from this report

**Health and Safety:** None arising directly from this report

**Sustainability:** None arising directly from this report

**Community Safety:** None arising directly from this report

**Equality and Diversity:** None arising directly from this report

**APPENDICES** None

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS** Appendix 1 – WBF document