

EXECUTIVE BOARD

21ST JUNE 2021

FUTURE REGENERATION GRANT FUNDING

Purpose:

To note the funding available to assist in the delivery of Carmarthenshire County Council's Economic Recovery Plan and agree the proposed methodology for delivery.

Recommendations / key decisions required:

To support the proposed methodology for the administration of future regeneration grant funding including:

- Carmarthenshire Transformational Commercial Property Development Fund
- Carmarthenshire Rural Enterprise Fund
- Business Start - up Fund
- Business Growth Fund
- Business Renewable Energy Fund
- Business Skills Support Fund
- 10 Towns Funding
- Welsh Government Transforming Towns Programme (Previously Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme (TRI))

Reasons:

- To aid the delivery of Carmarthenshire County Council's Economic Recovery Plan.
- To simplify the process of administering the regeneration funds for applicants seeking to access grant funding.

Relevant scrutiny committee to be consulted: NO

Exec. Board Decision Required YES

Council Decision Required NO

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:-

Cllr. Emlyn Dole, LEADER

Directorate: Chief Executives

Name of Head:
Jason Jones

Report Author:
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Designations:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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21st JUNE 2021

FUTURE REGENERATION GRANT FUNDING

1. BRIEF SUMMARY OF PURPOSE OF REPORT

Background

On the 3rd March 2021 Carmarthenshire County Council's Full Council approved the five-year Capital Programme which included the following schemes considered to be important for the recovery of the County in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- **Carmarthenshire Transformational Commercial Property Development Fund - £1 million funding** - A budget has been allocated to provide financial assistance for the construction of buildings for industrial and commercial use with the primary aim of creating capacity for employment in Carmarthenshire. Developers can apply for a maximum of £750,000 to support their project to a maximum of 45% of the total build cost, whichever is the greatest.
- **Carmarthenshire Rural Enterprise Fund £500,000** - A budget has been allocated to aid enterprises and sole traders for the development of new and existing business premises, aligned to job creation. The grant will be based on £20,000 per job created to a maximum grant of £100,000.
- **Ten Towns Funding - £1 million** – Draft plans have been developed for 8 of the respective towns to date. Work is ongoing on plans for the 2 remaining towns; namely Cross Hands and Kidwelly. It is intended that the town fora will prioritise which projects are brought forward for consideration. This budget has been allocated to stimulate the ten market towns in the County. Eligible applicants will be able to apply for grant support to develop and deliver projects which have been highlighted through the Ten Towns Growth Plans. The respective towns will prioritise their own preferred projects and submit to Carmarthenshire County Council for consideration. Following which projects will be presented to grants panel and then to the Executive Board Member for approval.
- **Transforming Towns Programme (Previously Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme (TRI))- £1.2 million** – Funding allocated as match funding for direct delivery projects towards Welsh Governments TRI / Transforming Towns programme. The Transforming Towns funding programme will concentrate on bringing vacant commercial space back into use within eligible town centres. This will be delivered alongside deliverable projects through the Transforming Towns funding detailed below. Projects will be prioritised to those that fit the recovery plan aspirations.

- **Business Renewable Energy Fund- £500,000** – Support to assist businesses with renewable energy initiatives and carbon reduction. Applicants can apply for up to 50% of the project cost to a maximum of £10,000. Businesses supported will need to demonstrate their project will improve their carbon footprint.

Further to the above, revenue funding has been earmarked to fund the following;

- **Business Start-up and Growth Grants - £500,000** - A budget of £500,000 has been allocated to the fund, to support job creation and safeguard jobs. Grants are up to a maximum of £10,000. Each grant award will be based on 50% of eligible costs or a maximum of £5,000 per job created and/or £1,000 per job safeguarded, whichever is the lesser, with at least one new job created and/or one full time equivalent (FTE) job safeguarded, in order to access the fund. The minimum grant award is £1,000, based on at least 1 FTE job being safeguarded. The maximum grant award per business is £10,000, based on at least 2 FTE jobs being created or 10 FTE jobs being safeguarded or a mix of both jobs being created and safeguarded as a result of the project being supported by the fund.
- **Business Skills Support Fund - £200,000** has been set aside to support businesses to develop their skill sets to make them more competitive and increase their ability to secure contracts. The recovery report outlines the skills challenges businesses will face due to the pandemic. The funds will be allocated through third party training and skills support. The training opportunities will be available to businesses who have engaged with the local authority to identify and establish skills requirements with a supporting action plan. The key project aims will be to safeguard jobs within the County, assist businesses to diversify and develop innovative approaches.

In addition to the County Council funded programmes detailed above, Welsh Government has recently launched a Transforming Towns Programme that replaces the former Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme. The new Transforming Towns Programme has been adapted to create a wider focus on town centres. The funding is able to cover projects such as:

- Commercial Property Improvements
- Green Infrastructure
- Public Realm
- Strategic Acquisitions
- Town Centre Markets
- Town Centre Meanwhile uses
- Town Centre External Trading
- Shop Frontage Enveloping schemes
- Digital Towns

The previous Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme specifically targeted Llanelli and Ammanford Town Centres. The new Transforming Towns Programme offers more flexibility in its coverage. It is therefore recommended that the new WG funding cover the following towns; Llanelli, Ammanford, Carmarthen, Burry Port, Kidwelly, Cwmamman, Crosshands, Whitland, Laugharne, St Clears, Newcastle Emlyn, Llanybydder, Llandeilo and Llandovery.

Proposed Methodology for Release of Regeneration Funding

It is intended the regeneration funding streams detailed above will have 2 separate processes.

- a) **Business Support Funds** – Firstly, we are looking to have one process to capture the business support elements including, business start-up, business growth, business renewable energy fund and the business skills support fund. These lower value funds would be assessed by the Regeneration Business Team, and then be presented and considered by a panel of Regeneration officers to make a recommendation to the Executive Board Member for Regeneration for final decision.

- b) **Regeneration Support Funds** – This second process will be for higher value awards and will include grants under the Carmarthenshire Transformational Commercial Property Development Fund, Carmarthenshire Rural Enterprise Fund, Ten Towns Funding and Transforming Towns Programme. These interests will be assessed, and eligible applicants will be advised which fund they should pursue based upon the most fitting funding stream available. Applications received will subsequently be assessed by officers and presented to the grants panel. The panel is made up of officers from regeneration, property, finance, legal and consultancy. Recommendations from the grants panel are then made to the Executive Board Member for consideration and final decision.

2. OTHER OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND THEIR PROS AND CONS

Deliver the various grant programmes separately. This method could provide confusion to third party applicants as there are many funding routes available. This approach would also provide greater flexibility and creativity in the allocation of the funds.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?	NO
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IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:

Signed: Jason Jones

Head of Regeneration

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	YES	YES	NONE	YES	NONE	YES

1) Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

These funds will enable the County Council to deliver the County Council’s Economic Recovery Plan and are aligned to the Regeneration Transformations Plan.

The funds will give consideration to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and synergise with the five ways of working by ensuring:

- We have considered the **long term** so that we do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- Elements of the funding will **prevent** vacant and underutilised buildings from deteriorating while giving them a longer-term purpose.
- We take an **integrated** approach so that we look at all well- being goals and objectives of other services and partners to ensure that we can meet the needs of the stakeholders of the County.
- All developments and projects involve **collaboration** between regeneration and stakeholders to provide sustainable developments within the County.
- The community benefits provided by the developments and projects will include **Involvement** from the population around the County. Formal consultation will be carried out as required by planning processes.

2) Legal

As a condition of grant, legal charges will need to be registered with the land registry on all buildings that are supported under the programme.

3) Finance

In relation to other county council programmes, on 3rd March 2021 Full Council approved the five-year Capital Programme which included budget allocation of the following schemes considered to be important for the recovery of the County in response to the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Carmarthenshire Transformational Commercial Property Development Fund - £1million.
- Carmarthenshire Rural Enterprise Fund £500,000.
- Ten Towns - £1million
- Transforming Towns (TRI) circa £1.25m is available through the region for Carmarthenshire from Welsh Government, an element of which will be used to provide to third party applicants. Large scale projects supported under this programme will be referred to Welsh Government for consideration.
- Business Renewable Energy Fund - £500K

The funds will attract private sector match funding as part of the application process.

Further Revenue funding has been allocated for the following:

- Business Start up and Growth Grants - £500K
- Business Skills Support Fund - £200k

4) Risk Management Issues

When dealing with third party grants risk management issues will be dealt with by officers adhering to the grants manual and third party procurement rules. The grants panel is also made up of several disciplines from across the authority including regeneration, finance, property, legal and consultancy. Each department brings their own expertise and these different perspectives assists in managing project risks.

5) Physical Assets

As a condition of grant, legal charges will need to be registered with the land registry on all buildings that are supported under the programme.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: Jason Jones

Head of Regeneration

1. Scrutiny Committee - n/a

2. Local Member(s) - n/a

3. Community / Town Council - n/a

4. Relevant Partners - n/a

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations - n/a

EXECUTIVE BOARD PORTFOLIO
HOLDER AWARE/CONSULTED

Yes

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THERE ARE NONE