

Communities, Homes & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Date: 19th December 2022

Subject: Update on the Ten Towns Initiative

Purpose: To provide Communities, Homes & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee with an update on progress regarding the delivery of the Ten Towns initiative.

THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IS ASKED TO:-

To review the information in the report and provide any comments and / or recommendations to inform the delivery of the Ten Towns initiative

Reason(s)

To support the delivery of the Ten Towns initiative

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:- Councillor Ann Davies, Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs and Planning Policy

Directorate: Chief Executives

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Update on the Ten Towns Initiative

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the work of the Ten Towns initiative and to outline the support which has been secured to progress initiatives at a local level.

Background

The Ten Towns initiative was established as a direct response to the County's [Moving Rural Carmarthenshire Forward Plan](#), which identified a need to increase the resilience and future growth of Carmarthenshire's rural market towns and their surrounding areas. The Ten Towns initiative has subsequently been identified as a key priority within the County's Economic Recovery Plan.

The scheme was officially launched in October 2019. A key part of the programme was the development of Economic growth plans to drive forward an agenda for change for Ten rural towns across the County. The Authority secured funding via the Rural Development Plan to commission external consultants, Owain Davies Consulting and The Means, to develop plans in each of the respective areas namely: Cwmaman, Cross Hands, Kidwelly, Llandeilo, Llandovery, Llanybydder, St Clears, Whitland, Laugharne and Newcastle Emlyn.

Growth Plan Teams have been established in the respective areas to take forward some of the key aspirations identified. The Growth Plan Teams are chaired by the local Member and include representation from Town and community councils, local businesses and third sector. Their role is to oversee the delivery of the ideas which have been identified within the growth plans and to identify how they can collectively take these ideas forward. To support the Teams, 3 Rural Market Town officers have been appointed to help progress the ideas identified by the communities.

The Authority has committed £1m capital funding to support the Growth Plan teams to take forward some of the capital aspirations identified within the plans. Each of the growth plan teams were invited to collectively bring forward their priority projects for consideration. Initial Expressions of Interest (EOI) were submitted by the end of February 2022, the total value of which equates to £1.24m. These EOIs have been assessed by the Authority's Grants funding panel and an 'in principle' approval granted. Each of the Growth Plan teams have been invited to submit their second stage applications for consideration which will be presented to Cabinet for final approval.

As part of the Leader programme, £10k per town was secured to support smaller scale revenue projects that aligned with the Growth Plans. Applications have been approved and are currently being delivered in the respective areas. Details are included in Annex 1.

In addition, further support has been secured to deliver against other ideas identified within the respective growth plans. Further detail can be found in the main report at Annex 1.

Conclusion

A great deal of progress has been made over recent months in taking forward some of the aspirations identified within the Economic Growth Plans in conjunction with the community. A key success factor of the Ten Towns initiative will be the continued involvement of local businesses and communities at a grass roots level in identifying and developing ideas to support the growth of the towns. The Rural Market Towns Officers will continue to work with them to develop and take forward these additional aspirations.

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 | NONE |

1. Policy

The Ten Towns initiative supports the County's existing strategies in particular the Carmarthenshire Economic Recovery Plan and wider Corporate Strategy in supporting the sustainability and economic growth of rural areas across the County.

The initiative also aligns with the 7 goals of the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act for Wales by improving the social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of our rural communities.

2. Legal

All grants awarded will be delivered via a legal funding agreement between the Authority and the third party in the respective towns. As the Growth Plan teams are not constituted bodies, in the majority of cases, the relevant Town Council has agreed to act as the accountable body on behalf of the Growth Plan team.

Grant offer letters have been developed in conjunction with CCC legal team in relation to the Authority's capital investment fund. Welsh Government approved funding agreements will be utilised for the Leader funding

3. Finance

The total value of the Expressions of Interest (EOIs) that have been submitted by the Ten towns is over and above the £1m capital funding allocated by the Authority. The Rural Market Town officers are working with the respective Growth plan teams to seek additional match funding from other external sources.

Due to the scale and value of the capital projects, some of the Town Councils will be seeking an advance payment. Initial discussions have been held with the Section 151 Officer in order to put the necessary arrangements in place.

£100k revenue funding has been secured via the Leader programme at a maximum of 80% of total project costs. Match funding of 20% has also been secured.

4. Risk Management Issues

The Rural Market Town officers are working closely with the Growth Plan Teams to ensure that all risks are considered and mitigated as part of the development of the 2nd stage funding applications for both capital and revenue funding streams.

All grants awarded will be delivered via a legal funding agreement between the Authority and the third party which will outline appropriate measures to mitigate risk.

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S) AWARE/CONSULTED

YES

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

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW

| Title of Document | File Ref No. | Locations that the papers are available for public inspection |
|------------------------|--------------|---|
| Ten Towns Growth Plans | | https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/business/development-and-investment/ten-towns/ |