

**CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS MEETING FOR RURAL AFFAIRS,
COMMUNITY COHESION AND PLANNING POLICY
17TH JANUARY 2024**

Cabinet Member:	Portfolio:	
Cllr. Ann Davies	Cabinet Member Decisions Meeting for Rural Affairs, Community Cohesion and Planning Policy	
Ten Towns Capital Development Fund		
Purpose: To seek approval to establish a Capital Development Fund as part of the Ten Towns Initiative.		
Recommendations / key decisions required: To approve the establishment of the Ten Towns Capital Development Fund		
Reasons: To support the economic regeneration of the County's rural market towns as part of the Ten Towns initiative.		
Directorate Name of Head of Service: Jason Jones Report Author: Rhian Phillips	Designations Head of Regeneration, Policy and Digital Economic Development Area Manager	Jason Jones Tel: 01267 242 336 JaJones@carmarthenshire.gov.uk Rhian Phillips mrphillips@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Declaration of Personal Interest (if any):

None

Dispensation Granted to Make Decision (if any):

N/A

DECISION MADE:

Signed:

DATE: _____

CABINET MEMBER

The following section will be completed by the Democratic Services Officer in attendance at the meeting

Recommendation of Officer adopted	YES / NO
Recommendation of the Officer was adopted subject to the amendment(s) and reason(s) specified:	
Reason(s) why the Officer's recommendation was not adopted:	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS MEETING FOR RURAL AFFAIRS,
COMMUNITY COHESION AND PLANNING POLICY
DATE: 17th January 2024

Ten Towns Capital Development Fund

Purpose:

To consider the establishment of a Capital Town Development Fund as part of the Ten Towns Initiative.

Background

The aim of the Ten Towns Programme is to increase the resilience and future growth of Carmarthenshire's rural market towns and their surrounding areas.

The Authority has committed £1m capital funding to support the respective towns to take forward some of the capital aspirations identified within their economic growth plans. In addition, further funding has been secured via the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund as part of the Rural Anchor.

To complement existing projects being delivered in the towns, a need has been identified to reduce the number of vacant commercial properties across the Ten Towns which are impacting on the growth and vibrancy of the towns.

Ten Towns Capital Development Fund

The aim of the fund is to convert vacant business premises across the Ten Towns bringing them back into economic use. The fund will be targeted at town centres thus creating new business and employment opportunities locally, whilst increasing footfall.

A grant of up to £50k per eligible premise will be available at a maximum 70% of total project costs. The grant will support refurbishment costs for vacant premises and/or development of new commercial space. The fund will be operated on a competitive basis.

The fund will also compliment other targeted investment programmes such as the Tackling Towns Centre (SPF) and Revitalising Rural Town Centres (RRTC) funds which are currently being delivered as part of the Ten Towns initiative.

As part of their role to support the needs of the Ten Towns, the Rural Market Town Officers have received initial enquiries for support to reduce the number of vacant premises within the town centres. It is proposed that these enquiries will be followed up to ensure that there is sufficient demand across the Ten Towns.

Recommendation:

To approve the establishment of the Ten Towns Capital Development Fund subject to further scoping and discussions with local landlords.

OTHER OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND THEIR PROS AND CONS

The option of not approving the establishment of the fund is open to Cabinet member. However non approval will mean that the town will lose out from the economic benefits that will be created as part of the project.

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 and Digital**

Policy and Crime & Disorder	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Organisational Development	Physical Assets
YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO

Policy, Crime and Disorder

The Ten Towns programme provides an opportunity for rural market towns to create new economic benefit and opportunities developed as a recommendation from the Moving Rural Carmarthenshire Forward Plan.

The above is aligned with the county's existing strategies and plans including the Local Investment Plan for Carmarthenshire, Economic Recovery Plan, Local Innovation Strategy, Wellbeing Assessment, and the South-West Wales Regional Economic Delivery Plan and Corporate Strategy.

The fund will also deliver against the Authority's Vision Statement which identifies the Ten Towns initiative as a key priority in 'Making our communities and environment, healthy, safe and prosperous' places to live.

The Programme will support the objectives of the Wellbeing & Future Generations Act by targeting interventions which aim to ensure that the Welsh speaking communities of the County remain vibrant and sustainable communities.

Legal

Formal grant agreements will be issued to all successful applicants which will set out the Terms and Conditions of the grant. The legal team has been involved in the drafting of the agreements.

Finance

A budget of £500,000 is already secured for the Town Development Fund which is made up from slippage from the Ten Towns core budget and the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund as part of the Rural Anchor.

A minimum £100,000 will be ringfenced for both Cross Hands and Laugharne (£200k in total) as they have been unable to utilise their original approved budget allocations. If there is insufficient need within these areas, the funding will be available to the 8 other towns.

Risk Management Issues

A programme level risk management process will be followed to ensure that risk is assessed and managed at all levels.

A key risk is the short delivery timeframe of SPF with all 3rd party grants required to be financially completed by the end of December 2024. The timeframe will be clearly articulated to grant applicants as part of the fund documentation.

At a project level, a risk register will be maintained together with appropriate mitigation measures. The Rural Anchor Team who are responsible for administering both funds will closely monitor progress of the project individual awards. Where a lack of progress is being made, applicants will need to provide clarification as to how they will be able to deliver against the original approved amount. As a last resort this may mean suspension of a project mid delivery.

CONSULTATIONS

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

Signed: Jason Jones

Designation: Head of Regeneration, Policy and Digital

1. Local Member(s) – Elected Members in each of the respective towns have been consulted and are supportive of the initiative.

2. Community / Town Council - On-going consultation with the relevant Town Council in the development of the proposals.

3. Relevant Partners - Members of the established growth plan teams.

4. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations n/a

**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		Carmarthenshire County Council website - https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/business/development-and-investment/ten-towns/

Main Report

Ten Towns Programme Capital Development Fund

Purpose:

To seek approval to establish a Capital Development Fund to support the regeneration of town centres as part of the Ten Towns Initiative.

Background

The aim of the 10 Towns Programme is to increase the resilience and future growth of Carmarthenshire's rural market towns and their surrounding areas.

The Authority has committed £1m capital funding to support the respective towns to take forward some of the capital aspirations identified within their economic growth plans. In addition, further funding has been secured via the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund as part of the Rural Anchor.

To complement existing projects being delivered in the towns, a need has been identified to reduce the number of vacant commercial properties across the Ten Towns which are impacting on the growth and vibrancy of the towns.

Ten Towns Capital Development Fund

The aim of the fund is to convert vacant business premises across the Ten Towns bringing them back into economic use. The fund will be targeted at town centres thus creating new business and employment opportunities locally whilst increasing footfall.

A grant of up to £50k per eligible premise will be available at a maximum 70% of total project costs. The grant will support refurbishment costs and/or development of new commercial space. The fund will be operated on a competitive basis.

The fund will also compliment other targeted investment programmes such as the Tackling Towns Centre (SPF) and Revitalising Rural Town Centres (RRTC) funds which are currently being delivered as part of the Ten Towns initiative.

Eligibility Criteria

- Eligible applicants will include owners of the freehold or leaseholders holding an unexpired term of seven years from proposed date of completion of works. Leaseholders will have to secure their landlord's written consent to the proposed works.
- The applicant must bring an empty unit/premises back into use in order to create and/ or safeguard jobs.
- Applicants must either have end tenants in place or be able to evidence occupation within 6 months of completion of the works.

Non-commercial space will be ineligible for support.

Potential outputs achieved:

Applications will be assessed in relation to their ability to meet the following key outputs:

- Number of commercial buildings improved
- Amount of commercial space improved (M2)
- Jobs created as a result of support
- Jobs safeguarded as a result of support

Available budget

The available budget is £500k which is made up from slippage from the existing Ten Towns core fund as well as the SPF Rural Anchor.

The fund will be operated on a competitive basis and will be open to all Ten Towns.

As Cross Hands and Laugharne have been unable to utilise their original allocation due to various reasons, a minimum £100k will be ringfenced for both towns within this fund.

If there are insufficient applications that come forward from these two towns to take up the ringfenced amounts, the funding will be made available to the other eight.

Timeline

Subject to approval, the fund would be operated in line with the following timeline:

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|--|----------------------|
| - Fund launch | January 2024 |
| - Deadline for applications | End of February 2024 |
| - Project assessment | March 2024 |
| - Cabinet member decision | March 2024 |
| - Grant awarded to successful applicants | March/April 2024 |
| - Deadline for project completion | December 2024 |