

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Establish a budget for Re-opening The High Street Safely Project and agree an action plan

Date: 6 August 2020

Author: Service Manager Economic Growth and Regeneration

Wards Affected: Ernehale – with the potential to impact all wards

Purpose:

To obtain Cabinet approval to establish a budget for the re-opening high street safely project across the Borough's town and local centres, funded through the recently announced ERDF's re-opening high street safely fund.

To seek approval of the implementation of the re-opening high street safely project and obtain the delegations as outlined in the recommendations to enable the project to be delivered.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- 1) **Cabinet approve the budget of £105,213 for the re-opening high street safely project, to be fully funded from ERDF funding.**
- 2) **Cabinet delegate authority to the Service Manager for Economic Growth and Regeneration to implement the associated action plan (in Appendix A) subject to any necessary approvals or consents being obtained to enable implementation.**

1 Background

Context

- 1.1 Councils across England have been awarded a share £50m of additional funding to support the safe reopening of high streets and other commercial areas. The funding allows local authorities to put in place measures to establish a safe trading environment for businesses and customers, particularly in high streets, through measures that extend to the end of March 2021. This funding comes on top of the Governments packages of support for business and workers during the economic emergency created by the Covid19 global pandemic.
- 1.2 Expenditure for reimbursement under the grant will be eligible from 1st June and will be claimed back in arrears. The grants awarded will be available to access up until the end of March 2021, although it is encouraged the use of the grant before the end of the year to address the immediate economic situations and needs in 2020.
- 1.3 The guidance states that the funding supports four main strands of activity. These are:
1. Develop an action plan to safely reopen the Borough's local economies.
 2. Provide consumer and business communications plan to ensure the reopening can be managed successfully and safely.
 3. Provide business support, especially to SMEs, providing the government advice on re-opening safely.
 4. Produce public realm temporary materials (signage, amendments to traffic regulations orders, speed limits etc)
- 1.4 Since Covid19, the Council has its own re-set strategy (which fits in with the wider Nottinghamshire Local Resilience Forum recovery strategy). As part of the reset strategy, there are five work streams which will be grouped into three overarching aspects as follows;
- Businesses
 - Residents and Communities
 - The Council – split into
 - i) Frontline services
 - ii) Support Services
 - iii) Finance

As part of the business section, an economic Bounce-Back Plan has been prepared, in which delivering the re-opening the high street safely action plan was one of the key interventions identified to support the Borough's economy and to restore public confidence in the high street.

ERDF Funding

- 1.5 Of the total £50m additional funds, Gedling Borough Council has been allocated £105,213 of ERDF funding from government to support the safe

reopening the Borough's town and local centres. For Gedling, this means the following areas:

1. Arnold Town Centre
2. Carlton Hill Local Centre
3. Carlton Square Local Centre
4. Mapperley Local Centre
5. Netherfield Local Centre
6. Gedling Local Centre
7. Burton Joyce Village Centre
8. Calverton Village Centre
9. Ravenshead Village Centre

1.6 The fund focuses on implementing measures to support our business communities that enable a safer trading environment in public places. Other commercial areas not within the above centres may be eligible for improvement measures but the primary focus of the grant is on public shared spaces that are at the heart of our town and local centres. The fund is intended to help address the short to medium term issues of reopening the local economies (focus on between now and Christmas period). It can be used to support temporary changes to the public realm but those changes should not be anticipated to last beyond 12 months or until no longer required for social distancing.

1.7 Although the funding has been allocated to Gedling, a grant allocation form has been provided to agree what the funds will be spent on. Once this has been agreed, the Council will need to enter into a grant agreement. The funds are then claimed, in arrears, on a quarterly basis.

Work done to date

1.8 The Council has assembled a corporate working group ("re-opening high street safely working group") made up of officers from Economic Growth & Regeneration, PASC, Communications and Marketing team, Environmental Health to work together to ensure that the high streets were re-opened safely and that this is closely monitored.

1.9 As part of this work, there was a launch programme of events in the first week of the non-essential shops re-opening. This launch programme included:

- EGR officers visited 500 businesses that had re-opened, identifying if the business had a government Covid19 secure poster (or their own version); if they had received the recent letter issued by the EGR team offering help and support; and if there were any issues/further interventions required.
- EGR officers and neighbourhood wardens reviewed the pedestrian areas and potential pinch points or areas of vulnerability (to consider

- areas of interventions) which are mapped and clearly identified;
- PASC team undertook a “deep clean” in each area (disinfecting and steam cleaning public realm over and above the normal cleaning work programme);
- Environment health officers were available to provide support and guidance on premises/businesses being Covid19 secure; and
- Neighbourhood Policing officers were in some of the busier areas, including Arnold Town Centre and Victoria Retail Park.

- 1.10 Since then, the group have been meeting regularly to monitor the situation. There has been amendments to work programmes, including:
- Monitoring of the re-opening of other businesses and retailers and any emerging issues linked to queues or crowds of people (especially with the public houses re-opened);
 - Wardens visit the town/local centres to monitor pinch points and areas of queues/crowds;
 - Working alongside the police – extra patrols of Arnold and Victoria Retail Park; and
 - Deep cleaning specific areas are now part of the weekly cleaning routine.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 The re-opening high street safely working group have identified a number of key priorities for the funding and project to deliver:
- Use the funding to support businesses re-opening
 - To ensure that the funding provides support for Arnold Town Centre and local/village centres, arterial routes, commercial and neighbourhood retail areas.
 - Supports independent businesses and retailers
 - Phased intervention to reflect / monitor the easing of CV-19 restrictions over a period of time (this will be subject to change given the array of constraints / opportunities in different localities)
 - To maximise the value by working with local businesses, business organisations, parish councils and trusted partners.
- 2.2 This group has prepared an action plan to support the funding request to ERDF and this is shown in Appendix A. Within this action plan, there are three main work programmes:
- Communications and marketing of the high streets
 - Develop & implement local branding & identity for our Town & Local Centres
 - Design & launch phased ‘Keep it Local’ campaign.
 - Develop & deliver a programme of low level key events and activities
 - Business support
 - independents, existing retailers

- business advisors posts
- Information officer (support post)
- EGR ongoing business support & review of economic indicators
- Social distancing measures and public realm temporary improvements
 - Review & implement meaningful social distancing measures and floor markings, where appropriate.
 - Plan and re-order external spaces & activities e.g. pop up market stalls
 - Review access & control of use of key external spaces e.g. amendments to the TRO on Front Street in Arnold
 - Security measures in identified vulnerable areas

2.3 Approval is being sought to establish a budget of £105,213 for the delivery of the re-opening high street safely project to be fully funded through ERDF funding (subject to a successful application).

2.4 If approved, the final delivery plan will be implemented. Members are therefore asked to give the Service Manager for Economic Growth and Regeneration authority to implement the action plan at Appendix A) subject to any necessary approvals and consents being obtained where necessary, for example, considerations of facilitating outdoor pop ups for outside trading may be subject to separate approvals to permit use of the land in this way. Should more extensive changes be required Officers will come back to Cabinet with a revised scheme for approval.

3 Alternative Options

3.1 Not to set up the budget, but then the allocation of ERDF funding cannot be spent and the required interventions to re-open our high street safely will be not be delivered.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 The total cost of the project will be capped at the maximum allocation for ERDF (£105,213). Until the grant agreement is in place, there is a small amount of money (no more than a third of the funding) which is being spent, at risk.

4.2 The breakdown and budget for the action plan will be reviewed by the re-opening high streets safely working group to ensure spend is distributed to the areas of most need.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 If the Council is successful in its funding proposal to ERDF, the Council will need to enter into a grant agreement to claim the money spent back in arrears. The legal service team will review the proposed work programme to ensure that this meet with the funder's requirements (to limit the potential of not being able to claim the money back).
- 5.2 Whilst Cabinet is asked to delegate implementation of the plan to the Service Manager for Economic Development, some of the measures forming part of the action plan will require further legal advice and separate approvals where appropriate. Procurement advice will need to be considered potentially for the 2 new posts proposed as part of the action plan. Any physical works to the area, dependant on price may need to be subject to a procurement process. In addition advice will need to be provided in respect of the use of land and any impacts this has on the Council's Street Trading Policy and/or any necessary licences which the Council may be required to provide should any of the trading occur on Council land, for example Eagle Square. Advice should also be sought in respect of any Traffic Regulation Order proposed to reduce traffic on Front Street.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be prepared to support this delivery plan at the appropriate time, as there are some proposed actions which may have implications that need to be carefully considered. This will be done as part of the finalisation of the action plan.

7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 This will be considered as part of the identification of the actions and how these will be delivered. Wherever possible, we would like to support low carbon and more environmental friendly measures, including reducing the reliance on car travel and creating additional soft landscaping in the town/local centres.

8 Appendices

Appendix A: Re-opening high street safely – Gedling's action plan

9 Background Papers

None

10 Reasons for Recommendations

- 10.1 This will ensure that the town/local centres in the Borough are safe places for people to visit and spend their time/money in.

10.2 This allows for the swift delivery of the action plan and to allow minor amendments to the scheme where required.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer