

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSE COMMITTEE
4 OCTOBER 2021**

Officer: Helen Ball – Town Clerk

WELCOME BACK FUND

Purpose of Report

To update the Committee on the allocation of funds under the Welcome Back Fund

Introduction

Shropshire Council has received funding approval for £288,000 under the Welcome Back Fund. Details of the fund are appended to this report.

The fund has been apportioned to various towns across the county with a remit to drive economic activity within those towns. There are various conditions of funding around what it can be spent on and how the funding can be drawn down. Typical activity that the funding can be used on includes the following:

- Placed based marketing, for example, supporting safe celebration events on high streets and in local towns.
- Marshals.
- Public space maintenance.
- Maintenance of public conveniences (toilets) including new temporary facilities (toilets) provision.
- Beautification activities including graffiti removal.
- Non-permanent public realm adaptations.
- Activities that future proof the high street.
- Improvement of green spaces and provision of outdoor seating areas.

£45,000 allocated to Shrewsbury. Given the economic focus of the funding, the first port of call for delivery has been the Business Improvement Districts. For all towns other than Shrewsbury & Oswestry the Town Councils are asked to consider how Shropshire Council should spend the funds with a preference of using their framework contractors. In the case of the two larger towns, provision has been made for the funds to be transferred to the Business Improvement Districts on the expectation that any spend is based upon a collective agreement between the BID and the respective Town Council. This has in effect provided greater flexibility on how the funding can be spent with this route.

The Town Clerk has met with the Executive Director of the Shrewsbury Business Improvement District to look at potential projects. All projects need to be completed funding claimed by the end of this financial year

Development of the Castle Street Feasibility Work

The Town Clerk & BID Executive Director have met and consider the most effective use of the funds to provide as long a term benefit. It is considered that the Castle Street Area of the town from the Railway up to its junction with Pride Hill would be most impactful, taking into account some of the public realm improvements suggested within the Castle Street Feasibility Study commissioned by the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan Partnership. Work would include:

- Delineation of the cycle/carriage way with a more semi-permanent solution than the social distancing measures – this would help continue the culture of promoting active travel within the town centre and a sense that the street becomes more pedestrian friendly space rather than being vehicle dominant, whilst continuing to provide appropriate loading arrangements for businesses
- Expansion of the public art project which has seen BT Boxes painted by local artists – to potentially include the two bus shelters (that would need refurbishment and sedum roofs) and possibly the crossing points (similar to a project in the Piccadilly area of London)
- Introduction on Street Trees in planters and very contemporary planting
- Development of an A-Board Scheme to help promote businesses but not cause public realm clutter
- Enhancements to seating

Much of these initiatives have the potential to really make a difference in this area. Members might wish to consider whether it wishes to invest further to establish a larger development pot. The BID is intending to invest an additional 10k in to this project.

It is suggested that a Task Group is set up which involves the Town Council and BID, bringing specialists in town promotion, tourism, highways, active travel, biodiversity and horticulture.

Given the timescales involved, it is imperative that work begins in earnest

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) That the Report be noted
- (ii) That the Committee considers any additional investment in the project
- (iii) That the Committee considers a representative to work on the Task Group