

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: Monday 7 June 2021

Report Title: Welcome Back Funding, Contain Outbreak Management Funding (COMF) and Culture Recovery Funding - proposals

Report By: Jane Hartnell, Managing Director

Key Decision: Yes

Classification: Open

Purpose of Report

To advise cabinet of 3 funding opportunities, programme activities and seek delegated authority for each

Recommendation(s)

1. To seek delegated authority to the Managing Director or relevant nominee, in consultation with the Leader to:
 - Submit funding application form (action plan), sign the grant funding agreement, sign any relevant service level agreement with delivery partners, and commence spend, in some cases at risk, for the welcome back funding proposed interventions as detailed paragraph 14.
 - Allocate £80,000 from the Government's Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) to the Environmental Health and Licensing Team to help reduce the spread of coronavirus and support public health initiatives
 - Allocate the Culture Recovery Fund Grant to eligible costs in line with the funding scheme aims

Reasons for Recommendations

To ensure that the government's various Covid funding schemes are used to best effect in Hastings

Introduction

1. The government has released the following three funding initiatives to support local authorities in aiding the safe reopening of the cultural, tourism and retail sectors:
 - a. Welcome Back Funding (WBF)
 - b. Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF)
 - c. Cultural Recovery Fund (CRF)
2. This report will be in three sections, outlining each fund, and its status, and the proposed activities outlined in response to the various compliance issues for each funding stream.
3. This report seeks; delegated authority for the Managing Director or relevant nominee, in consultation with the Leader, to submit funding application and commence spend of the Welcome Back funding and to note the funding allocations for the COMF and CRF in line with the activities outlined.

Welcome Back Funding

4. The [Welcome Back Fund \(WBF\)](#) was launched in April 2021, building on the Reopening the High Street Fund launched in 2020. It is using European Regional Development Funding (ERDF), and as such comes with a number of conditions and contractual requirements. The funding allows local authorities to put in place additional measures to create and promote safe environment for local trade and tourism, particularly in high streets as their economies open, as well developing plans to respond to the impacts of Covid-19 on local economies, including how other funding streams could address these challenges in the future.
5. Coastal resorts such as Hastings have been given additional funding in recognition of the support required to prepare these areas for welcoming back visitors over the summer and beyond.
6. The funds can be used to implement temporary measures as follows:
 - Support to develop an action plan for how the local authority may safely reopen their local economies.
 - Communications and public information activity to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely
 - Business-facing awareness raising activities to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely.
 - Temporary public realm changes to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely.
 - Support and promote a safe public environment for a local area's visitor economy
 - Support local authorities to develop plans for responding to the medium-term impact of Covid including trialling new ideas particularly where these relate to the high street.

The programme can be delivered solely by the local authority or with partners through partner delivery arrangements (Service Level Agreement (SLA) approach).

7. **Total funding allocation:** £229,052
8. **Funding timeline:** spend can commence from the date of publication of the guidance (16 April 2021) to 31 March 2022. Any expenditure incurred before the grant funding agreement has been signed and the project activity form (funding application form) has been approved by MHCLG is spent 'at risk'.
9. **Payments:** in arrears every 3 months after appropriate claim and evidence is submitted
10. **Management and Administration (M&A):** each relevant service area will manage the proposed interventions in their relevant areas, but the monitoring and compliance of this EU funded scheme will be undertaken by the major projects and regeneration team. There is 4% allocation for M&A costs against the total value of the programme (detailed in table below)

Proposed activities/Interventions.

11. The proposed activities have been discussed and brought together under a cross council officer group, focused on:
 - a. Supporting safe reopening of the town
 - b. Mitigation actions for the additional work created by an expected, and welcome, increase in visitors to the town
 - c. Exploration into supporting the shoulder tourism season, and winter, which may see a natural reduction in footfall and dwell time for our tourism and retail offer.
12. The proposed interventions have been discussed at the council's Covid Taskforce, and with lead members, in addition a meeting with the following external business leaders (with notes and offer of feedback to a wider business leaders' audience) took place on Wednesday 19 May 2021, along with a walkabout on Monday 24 May 2021:
 - a. Love Hastings Ltd – Hastings Business Improvement District
 - b. Old Town Traders Association
 - c. Major tourism attractions and leaders – Hastings Adventure Golf, 18 Hours Ltd and the White Rock Hotel, the latter two also representing other tourism businesses in Hastings as the local private sector reps on the 1066 Country Marketing executive board

These proposals have been developed to ensure compliance and alignment with the funding conditions. It is a requirement of the fund that the programme interventions have involved relevant stakeholders in their development. All proposals need to be submitted by the 30 May, before being approved by the WBF grant manager and subsequent grant agreement being signed.

13. Below table outlines the proposed interventions identified for submission to the welcome back fund:

No.	Area of Scope	Using bullet points briefly set out the specific activities you will undertake	Briefly set out how the activity does not duplicate existing activity (additionality)	Indicative timeline for delivery	Total Indicative Budget £ per item Gross
5	Support and promote a safe public environment for a local area's visitor economy	<p>1. Seafront welcome marshals (parking/foreshore/repairs). 7 day working pattern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking- Help control flow of traffic, footfall and people • Foreshore -maintenance seafront, rapid response minor repairs/ unblocking to seafront toilets <p>2. Seafront welcome marshals (Cleansing Operative). 7 day working pattern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Litter picking, beach cleaning (sweeping of disability boardwalk) – via DSO 	<p>As a coastal town, the focus of the visitor economy is on the seafront as a main asset, with the expectation of increased visitor numbers, it is paramount that marshals are in place to control the flow of traffic and people, and direct people flow into the high streets. To ensure the highest hygiene standards and health and safety for Covid recovery, marshals will also be tasked with ensuring a rapid response to public toilet repairs, ensuring toilets stay open and crowding in key areas is limited.</p> <p>Marshals will also focus on seafront and litter collection, ensuring that highest hygiene standards are maintained with increase in visitors and ensuring the towns visitor asset stays attractive.</p> <p>These roles are additional temporary staff resource and are to cover the extra visitors, due to staycations and support Covid recovery.</p>	June - Sept	£60k
5	Support and promote a safe public environment for a local area's visitor economy	<p>Safe temporary placemaking - public realm improvements/amination to support SME's recover and encourage footfall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing the streets alive with music, creativity and movement, to increase dwell time and draw people into the high street in the low season. • Programme of small pop-up events (Oct-March) celebrating the creative, quirky vibe of Hastings, drawing in shoppers to linger and enjoy the space. • Temporary art trails and street art in unloved areas of town centre. • Beautification - Identifying key areas on the high street, neighbouring shopping streets, 	<p>Additional animation for the town centres, particularly focussing on things that encourage people to stay and linger, as well as address the shoulder season (traditionally October – March when footfall is lower)</p> <p>Beautification intervention would be above what the council/ county council have in terms of planned works</p>	July - March	£70k

		<p>and seafront that need beautification – removal of graffiti, temporary planting/ green space.</p> <p>Public Wi-Fi network servicing A public Wi-Fi network services the town centre and seafront, widely used by our businesses, local people and visitors (streaming, downloads, browsing, information searching etc). The network needs to be serviced and an improved service offered to business – helping them to trade digitally.</p> <p>Fund 12 month service and maintenance contract.</p>	<p>and would improve the appearance of unloved area of the high street.</p> <p>The network was funded by Coastal Communities Funding originally, but the contract for servicing and maintaining the network is now terminating so the network would end if unable to find funding.</p>		£18k
6	Support local authorities to develop plans for responding to the medium-term impact of CV-19 including trialling new ideas particularly where these relate to the High Street.	<p>Medium Term recovery planning Resource to develop engagement and delivery plans for Covid-19 recovery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement programme within the Town Investment Plan (Hastings Town Deal) • Action planning from High Street Taskforce • Pilots High Street Taskforce interventions • Community engagement platform for – community input and engagement into WB activities / pilots and wider high street regeneration- such as Town Deal fund. • Assessing and evaluating data • Marketing / rebranding engagement for high street revisioning • Footfall data 	Additional resource to support strategic medium terms plans for the recovery of Hastings economy and business from the impact of Covid-19	July - March	£72k
	Management & Administration	4% fee of the total value of the programme			£9k
	Total				£229k

14. The following proposed interventions were also considered and ruled out for a number of reasons, as detailed below.

Activity	Details	Why rejected
Temporary road signs	To advise visitors where spaces are	Agreement to replace permanent sign outside of the pier instead
Marketing/comms campaign	Safety advice/useful visitor information	Already in place, non-compliant as no additionality
Billboards	Covid/visitor information on billboards around the town	Not enough impact, Procurement difficult to manage as specific suppliers – risk of non-compliance
East and West Hill lift	Temporary extension to opening hours	Non-compliant (unable to off-set income)
Temporary bins	Extra temporary bins at high traffic areas	Bins already in stock with HBC – no additionality
Drone light show	One or more events to encourage visitors, evening economy spend	Initial quote too high (£100,000 for one event)
Additional seasonal beach huts	To provide additional tourism offer	Not compliant – capital, permanent asset (unable to off-set income)
Additional temporary car parking	To offer reduced or free car parking in town centre car parks	Non-compliant with fund rules (unable to off-set income) Would increase issues re over-crowding of seafront car parks and compound traffic management issues.
Additional Toilets	To provide temporary toilets on heavy use areas	Issue isn't with toilet provision but with vandalism and maintenance, therefore these areas are bolstered through seafront welcome marshals approach National stock low.

Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF)

15. The Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) provides local authorities (LAs) with additional financial support as announced in the Governments Covid Response – Spring 2021. A further £400 million has been allocated nationally to LAs for the financial year 2021/22 to continue to help reduce the spread of coronavirus, assist test, trace, and contain activity and support local public health initiatives.
16. Hastings Borough Council has been awarded and received £108, 351 as part of this latest COMF funding and it is proposed that £80,000 of this be allocated to the Environmental Health and Licensing Team. This will enable the existing Covid Compliance Officer resource to be upscaled for a period of 6 months to support businesses, the economy, and our public health role and responsibilities.
17. Government COMF payments are based on the government’s Covid-19 Relative Needs Formula (RNF) which gives a weighting to both population and deprivation levels, based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Therefore, funding has been targeted at areas with high infection and enduring transmission rates. In addition, the RNF allocates funding to both Upper Tier LAs (UTLAs) and Lower Tier LAs (LTLAs). This split recognises that LTLAs hold responsibilities for activities critical to the management of the Covid pandemic including enforcement activities, which form a core component of the local response to the pandemic and the measures that COMF funding is intended to support.
18. East Sussex Country Council, an UTLA, is in the process of updating the Local Outbreak Management plan and this latest COMF funding is designed to support the delivery of the objectives set out in this plan. The specific public health activities that can be funded from COMF are left to the judgement of LAs but suggested activities that COMF can be used to support include:
 - Additional contact tracing,
 - Additional resource for compliance with, and enforcement of, restrictions and guidance,
 - Enhanced communications and marketing, e.g. towards hard-to-reach groups and other localised messaging,
 - Targeted interventions for specific sections of the local community and workplaces,
 - Support for engagement and analysis of regional areas to assess and learn from local initiatives,
 - Community-based support for those disproportionately impacted such as the BAME population,
 - Providing support, as needed, to vulnerable people classed as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable.
19. It is also clear from the progression through the Governments Roadmap that the work and demands placed on the Council’s Environmental Health and licensing teams are increasing as the economy responds and grows once again. Enquiries from Step 2 continue to be received and responded to as well as providing vital support and assistance to those businesses and organisations preparing to and operating as part of Step 3 which began on 17 May, and then onwards towards Step 4 on the 21st June, subject to the data allowing this under the government’s roadmap proposals.

20. The funding already received will enable the Environmental Health and Licensing Team to upscale its existing Covid-19 Compliance Officer resource to help meet these demands. This will assist our public health role and responsibilities, our response to Steps 3 and 4 of the Government's Roadmap and help support the provision of timely guidance and advice to local businesses.

Culture Recovery Fund: Second Round

21. Hastings Borough Council has been awarded and already received £225,515 towards the costs of maintaining its cultural, arts and heritage operations through the Cultural Recovery Fund Second Round. The aim of this fund is to help support cultural, arts and heritage organisations and local authorities as they transition back to delivering sustainable operations during April-June 2021. It is being distributed on behalf of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport by a number of organisations including Arts Council England.
22. £170,515 of the £225,515 award is for off-setting existing commitments, already approved through the budget setting process. It is proposed that £55,000 is allocated to one off costs for Covid-19 related capital work and the development of the museum to improve its viability and sustainability as part of its re-opening for step 3 and beyond as we look towards step 4 and ongoing easing and management of restrictions.
23. This funding has been secured to cover and off-set the in-year committed budget costs for April to June for cultural, heritage and arts activity. The grant includes funding for core costs, like the museum overheads, and delivery costs such as the Stade Saturdays contract and the Arts Match Development Match Funding Grants programme. It also includes funding for additional improvements over and above the existing budget to the museum grounds and other changes resulting from the impact of Covid-19 to make the venue more sustainable. The funding can be used to support emerging costs as long as it remains in line with Culture Recovery Fund eligible costs and aims of the scheme.

Timetable of Next Steps

24. Please include a list of key actions and the scheduled dates for these:

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Welcome back funding	Submit funding application form	30 May 2021	Marketing & Major Projects Manager
	Approval from MHCLG and grant agreement signed	June 2021	
	Interventions preparations begin and delivery commences	June 2021	
COMF Funding	Increase Covid-19 compliance officer	June 2021	Environmental Health Manager

	resource		
CRF	Off-set existing budget & introduce additional Covid-19 measures	By end June 2021	Museum and Cultural Development Manager

Wards Affected

All

Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score: 31.6

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness - N

Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17) - N

Risk Management – interventions for all funds have been carefully consider to ensure compliance with respective funding conditions

Environmental Issues & Climate Change - N

Economic/Financial Implications – all 3 funding schemes are bringing additional funding into to the council that deliver interventions that support the continuing reopening of the economy and businesses, as well as ensuring Covid-19 safety is well managed

Human Rights Act - N

Organisational Consequences – WBF includes office capacity to oversee compliance and capacity from relevant teams to manage delivery for specific elements / COMF provides additional funded resource to the Environmental Health and Licencing team / CRF allows the museum to function within Covid-19 requirements

Local People's Views – WBF included opportunities for business leaders to shape interventions that support their ability to re-open and trade

Anti-Poverty - N

Legal – WBF will require signing of grant agreement and possible Service Level Agreement for any delivery partner arrangements

Additional Information

N/A

Officer to Contact

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