

Proposed Decision to be made Under the Council's Urgency Procedure by the Leader of the Council on or after 16 June 2021

UK Community Renewal Fund

Portfolio Holder	Leader of the Council
Date of decision	16 June 2021
	Signed

1.0 Decision and recommended actions

That the Leader of the Council:

1. Approves the submission of bids totalling £3.405m for the seven projects listed in Table 2 split across the five districts and boroughs for UK Community Renewal Fund funding to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG);
2. Authorises the Assistant Director – Finance, as the Senior Responsible Officer, to complete and submit the necessary paperwork to MHCLG on 18 June 2021;

2.0 Reason for Decision

2.1 The UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF) is a new £200m Government Grant aimed at supporting people and communities most in need across the UK. The priorities of the CRF are:

- Investment in skills;
- Investment for local business;
- Investment in communities and place; and
- Supporting people into employment.

2.2 The Government is seeking bids that build on local insight and knowledge, and project proposals that align with long-term strategic plans for local growth, target people most in need

and support community renewal for a maximum of £3m per place. The secondary objective is to pilot programmes and new approaches ahead of the much bigger the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to be launched in the Autumn, which will be replacing EU funding.

2.3 The Government has used the process to establish a new way of working between Government and places, using the highest tier of local government to build in an early stage evaluation of proposals in light of local needs and priorities. Warwickshire County Council is the lead authority across Warwickshire, which is split into five 'places', based on the district/borough boundaries and will need to submit a bid for each place.

2.4 This has meant operating to a very tight and restricted timetable. The prospectus for the CRF was issued in April and Warwickshire, as lead authority, advertised for bids from the 15 April, with a closing date of 20 May 2021. Since then a four-stage evaluation process involving County Council staff, representatives from the LEP and from the districts/boroughs has been undertaken to arrive at the list of projects recommended for submission to MHCLG for CRF funding.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus-2021-22>

2.5 As part of the CRF launch 100 priority places were identified based on an index of economic resilience across Great Britain. These areas were provided with additional resource to undertake the bidding process. None of the Warwickshire Districts/Boroughs were included in this list. Whilst this may reflect where the Government is looking to allocate funding, all lead authorities were invited to submit bids.

2.6 The submissions from across Warwickshire include some innovative projects that directly impact on local needs and priorities and would make a positive contribution to recovery, if supported by the Government. It has also been a learning experience for how a collaborative bidding and assessment process could work. Our submission to Government will therefore also reflect that this approach can deliver a locally tailored approach on a bigger scale and covering a wider scope in the future.

2.7 For these reasons it is recommended that the list of projects listed in Table 2 are proposed to MHCLG for approval.

3.0 Evaluation Process and Recommended Bids

3.1 As lead authority Warwickshire County Council is required to assess the bids via a robust process to ensure the bids going forward to Government are in line with the published prospectus and that outputs and outcomes are clearly defined for reporting purposes. Due diligence processes have filtered the bids received by scoring them against strategic fit, deliverability, effectiveness, finance, and efficiency.

3.2 Where outcomes are not achieved the Government will be able to claw back funding, so it is vital checks are thorough and do not expose the authority to financial risk. The likelihood of this has been reduced by creating a robust, auditable process of assessment which is explained below. Any risks will be further mitigated through the contracts which will be put in place with successful bidders.

3.3 Fifteen bids were received by the deadline of 20 May 2021 and went through the three-stage evaluation process with some bids being rejected at each stage

3.4 Stage 1

Finance and legal undertaking due diligence checks and check that the project met the minimum criteria of being able to deliver the stated outcomes by 31 March 2022. Those that met the minimum criteria progressed to stage 2

3.5 Stage 2

Each bid being reviewed against Gateway criteria set out in the CRF prospectus and scored independently by two separate individuals. The assessors were from across Warwickshire County Council finance function and also included staff from Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP). Any bids submitted by WCC were scored externally by CWLEP. All scores were then reviewed by a Moderation Panel.

3.6 Stage 3

The projects which met Moderation Panel expectations were forwarded to the Economy and Skills team at Warwickshire County Council so they could comment on the strategic fit and confirm whether there was any likely duplication with already existing provision.

3.7 Stage 4

A Strategic Panel comprising WCC's Assistant Director of Finance, Assistant Director of Communities and senior management from Warwick District Council and North Warwickshire Borough Council reviewed the bids from a County level strategic perspective prior to creating a final short list.

3.8 The bids going forward in the Warwickshire County Council bid will have passed all stages of the process and are now being recommended for approval. The bids will be split into places (districts) for submission. The total value of the bids to be submitted on a place by place basis is as follows:

Table 1 Summary of bids by CRF outcome

Bid outcomes	Nuneaton & Bedworth £	Rugby £	Stratford £	Warwick £	North Warwickshire £	Total sum requested £
Investment for local business	44,539	35,264	39,901	44,539	35,264	199,507
Investment in Communities and place	233,639		251,936			485,575
Supporting People into Employment	709,703	578,543	488,366	532,086	411,514	2,720,213
Grand Total	987,881	613,807	780,204	576,625	446,778	3,405,295

Table 2 Successful bids approved at Strategic Panel on 15th June:

Name of bidder	Description of bid	Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough	Rugby Borough	Stratford District	Warwick District	North Warwickshire District	Total sum requested from the CRF
Bidder 1	Supporting economically inactive and unemployed people into employment through cognitive and mindset training. Mentoring with a strong focus on mental health and wellbeing.	281,803	281,803	191,626	191,626	180,354	1,127,213
Bidder 2	To assist people into employment. Training and support focused on self-employment skills.	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	500,000
Bidder 3	Interactive and specialist support for 24 women owned businesses based in Warwickshire. Focus on gaining confidence around finance.	21,351	21,351	21,351	21,351	21,351	106,757
Bidder 4	To support 2 cohorts of 20 women entrepreneurs via a 3-month incubator programme. To help build and develop their businesses in a bespoke way.	23,188	13,913	18,550	23,188	13,913	92,750
Warwickshire County Council	Feasibility study into a Nuneaton Town centre health and wellbeing hub and theatre.	233,639					233,639
Bidder 5	Feasibility study and capital works to a former grain store in Stratford upon Avon			251,936			251,936
Warwickshire County Council	To fund a consortium of partners to pilot 5 activity strands targeting hard to reach unemployed disadvantaged groups. Break away camps, youth clubs, rural career workshops, employer focused SEND employment and esports for young gaming enthusiasts.	327,900	196,740	196,740	240,460	131,160	1,093,000
		987,881	613,807	780,204	576,625	446,778	3,405,295

Subject to Leader approval the UK Community Renewal Fund bid form will be submitted in line with the above bids.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 The programme requires Warwickshire County Council to act as Lead Authority for the management process around collating and ensuring bids meet due diligence standards
- 4.2 As the purpose of the report is to submit a bid for grant funding from MHCLG this report has no financial implications relating to the current budget of Warwickshire County Council. Any funding resulting from the process will be passed on per the terms of the grant agreement. WCC will be responsible for setting up the necessary contracted grant payments with the third parties.
- 4.3 There is a financial risk to the Authority if any funding advanced by MHCLG is clawed back as a result on non-delivery by the bidders and the Council is unable to recover any of the funding. The grant conditions attached to any funding provided to successful applicants will seek to minimise this risk

5.0 Environmental implications

None

Report Author	Lisa Fynn lisafynn@warwickshire.gov.uk
Assistant Director	Andrew Felton
Lead Director	Strategic Director for Resources
Lead Member	Leader of the Council

Urgent matter?	Yes
Confidential or exempt?	No – <i>exempt appendix</i>
Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework?	No

List of background papers

None

Members and officers consulted and informed

Portfolio Holder – Councillor Izzi Seccombe

Corporate Board – Rob Powell, Mark Ryder

Legal – Jan Cummings, Nichola Vine

Finance – Andrew Felton, Virginia Rennie,

Democratic Services – Paul Williams

