

Cabinet

8 April 2021

Revenue Investment Funds 2020/21

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 1) Support the progress made on the Place Shaping strategy with the Social Enterprise Support project approved by Corporate Board under the authorisation delegated to Chief Executive at a cost of £0.039m.
- 2) Approve the bids as detailed in section 2.1 and 2.9, amounting to £0.103m from the Climate Change Investment Fund and £0.622m from the Place Shaping and Economic Growth Fund.
- 3) Authorise the Strategic Director for Communities to procure and enter any agreements to give effect to the above proposals on terms and conditions acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources.

1. Purpose of the report and context

- 1.1. The Chief Executive has asked for this report to come to Cabinet in April in particular due to the timing around the two economic recovery bids, which need funding in place before they can begin to implement initiatives to support business development coming out of national lockdown. To delay funding decisions until June Cabinet would reduce the effectiveness of such efforts by moving the possible start dates beyond the end of the planned national restrictions. In addition, the recommendations in the report relate to funding requests for initiatives within the scope of existing programmes and in that context are aligned with the strategic direction already agreed by the Council in these priority areas.
- 1.2. As part of the 2021/22 budget, Council approved the refocusing of the remaining amounts in the Revenue Investment Funds into three funds aimed at Preventing Vulnerability, Tackling Climate Change and Place Shaping & Economic Growth. The funds provide opportunities to run initiatives to meet the Council's objectives outside of services' core delivery budgets.

1.3. The breakdown of these funds is below:

Council Investment Funds	Current Resource £000s	Agreed Future Commitments £000s	Total £000s
Preventing Vulnerability – A fund to pump-prime upfront investment in demand management and early intervention initiatives prior to the financial benefits accruing.	5,021	(2,094)	2,927
Climate Change Fund – A fund to invest in priorities flowing from the Climate Change Task and Finish Group and Council Plan 2025	2,959		2,959
Place Shaping and Economic Growth – A fund to deliver investment in growth and commercial outcomes for Warwickshire	9,813	(1,591)	8,222
Total MTFS Allocation	17,793	(3,685)	(14,108)

1.4. The funds are outside of core budgets, and members approved a four-stage approval process for projects seeking funding:

- **Stage 1:** A project proposal document is developed and reviewed by Gateway Group/Corporate Board as to the strategic fit with the priorities in the Council Plan;
- **Stage 2:** The business case for the project is then prepared and an Investment Panel, made of representatives from Finance, Project Management Office and managers from services across the organisation, provides a technical evaluation and commentary on the proposal;
- **Stage 3:** Gateway Group use this technical evaluation alongside their own analysis of project governance and feasibility, to recommend the projects to Corporate Board if under £0.1m per project, or Cabinet if over this value for approval; and
- **Stage 4:** Cabinet approve/reject the allocations over £0.1m and note the projects under this value approved by Corporate Board. If the project is approved, funding is transferred to the service, and if savings have been identified flowing from the investment these are built into the medium-term financial strategy.

1.5. The schemes detailed in section 2 of this paper have been considered for strategic fit by Gateway Group, and for robustness of plans by the Investment Panel. Subject to Cabinet’s decision today the amounts remaining unallocated in the three Investment Funds will be as below:

Preventing Vulnerability Fund	£2.927m
Climate Change Fund	£2.856m
Place Shaping and Economic Growth Fund	£7.562m

2. Description of the Investment Fund bids

Safe and Active Travel project

- 2.1. Corporate Board recommend approval of £103,000 from the Climate Change fund for the Safe and Active Travel project with the project sponsor being the Assistant Director, Strategic Commissioning for Communities.
- 2.2. The Safe and Active Travel Project is an element of SAFER (Safe and Active Travel Focusing on Environment and Road Safety) programme aiming to encourage residents and communities to take up more physical activity for travel, promote safe walking and cycling, change public attitudes and habits around safe and active travel and encourage businesses to sign up to become Safe and Active Workplace accredited businesses. The primary objectives supported include: increasing the number of employees using safer, sustainable travel on the journey to and from work, increasing knowledge and understanding of healthy lifestyles, road safety and sustainable travel, use safe and active activities to link with existing programmes and providing a safer, cleaner less congested environment in the vicinity of work premises to benefit everyone.
- 2.3. It is noted that the funding is temporary for 2 years though the project may in the future request permanent funding. Any permanent funding requirement will need to be addressed as part of the annual MTFs refresh process, once there is evidence of the benefits delivered by the temporary funding, including the savings expected elsewhere in the Council's budget.

Start Up Support - Jump Start Project

- 2.4. Corporate Board recommend approval of £107,524 from the Place Shaping fund for the Jump Start project with the project sponsor being the Assistant Director, Strategic Commissioning for Communities.
- 2.5. The project is one of two economic recovery projects designed to help people start a business and to increase the number of sustainable new businesses. This community-based project will offer support to individuals considering starting a business for the first time who need additional support. It will complement the county-wide start-up service delivered on behalf of the Council by focusing on underrepresented groups and hard-to-reach individuals in deprived wards. The funding will be used to provide a grant to the Coventry and Warwickshire Reinvestment Trust (CWRT) to enable delivery of the programme until the end of 2023/24.

- 2.6. In their review, the panel have highlighted the opportunity to incorporate green ideas into new business start-up planning, and this feedback has been taken on board by the project team.

Tourism and Leisure Business Support Project

- 2.7. Corporate Board recommend approval of £513,622 from the Place Shaping fund for the Tourism and Leisure Business Support project with the project sponsor being the Assistant Director, Strategic Commissioning for Communities.
- 2.8. The project will establish and deliver a dedicated business support programme to support the recovery and future growth of the tourism & leisure sector. This initiative builds on the existing business support offer of Survive, Sustain and Grow programme which offers industry-specific support to tourism business and complements the new “Visit Warwickshire” marketing campaign which will promote the county as a safe, open destination for visitors. Both of these initiatives have previously been approved for investment funding by Cabinet.
- 2.9. The full cost of the project is £776,264; the Council’s investment of £513,622 will enable the organisation to access £262,642 grant funding from the European Regional Development Fund for this initiative. This funding cannot be accessed without commitment of match funding from the Council.

Social Enterprise Support project

- 2.10. Corporate Board has approved £38,514 from the Place Shaping Fund for the Social Enterprise project with the project sponsor being the Assistant Director, Strategic Commissioning for Communities.
- 2.11. The project will support Coventry and Warwickshire Co-operative Development Agency (CWEDA) with the delivery of their social enterprise support programme in Warwickshire for a further 12 months along with a small number of new services to be developed specifically for social enterprises in the county. The funding will bridge the gap between current budgets which end in March 2021 and the commissioning of WCC’s new third sector support contracts from April 2022.

3. Environmental Implications

- 3.1. The safe and active travel and jump start projects are anticipated to have positive impacts on the environment, by promoting greener approaches to

travel and business. There are no other environmental issues or concerns arising from the initiatives proposed in this document.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. All projects have exit strategies in place and there is no assumption of, or commitment to, funding beyond the level set out in the report for any of the projects. If, as a result of evaluating the benefits from the investment, these are found to be sufficiently material to warrant further funding being approved, Services will look to reprioritise existing resources in the first instance. If this is not possible then approval of future funding will be brought forward to Members for consideration.

5. Background Papers

None

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