

# Cabinet

10 September 2020

## Revenue Investment Funds 2020/21 Quarter 1 Report

### Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 1) Approves a £0.150m allocation from the Place Shaping and Capital Feasibility Fund to the Art Challenge for Economic Recovery project.
- 2) Supports the progress made on the Economic Recovery Strategy with four projects approved by Corporate Board under the under the authorisation delegated to Chief Executive at a total cost of £0.458m.
- 3) Authorises the Strategic Director for Communities to procure and enter any agreements to give effect to the proposals in 1 and 2 on terms and conditions acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources.

### 1. Purpose of the report and context

- 1.1. As part of the 2020/21 budget, Council approved the creation of four Revenue Investment Funds, with a total allocation of £20m, to provide opportunities to run initiatives to meet objectives of tackling climate change, investing in commercialism, sustaining prevention of demand within communities and investment in place shaping including scoping capital and development opportunities for better value service provision. The indicative allocation of the resources between the funds was then updated by Cabinet in June 2020 to reflect the increased need to invest in economic recovery post Covid-19. The breakdown of these funds is below:

Council Investment Funds	Total £000s
<b>Sustaining Prevention Fund</b> – A fund to pump-prime upfront investment in demand management and early intervention initiatives prior to the financial benefits accruing.	5,000
<b>Climate Change Fund</b> – A fund to invest in priorities flowing from the Climate Change Task and Finish Group and Council Plan 2025	4,000
<b>Commercial Fund</b> – A fund to deliver commercial investment in outcomes for Warwickshire arising from the commercial strategy.	3,500

<b>Place Shaping and Capital Investment Fund</b> – A fund to support capital feasibility work, investment in place and to improve delivery.	7,500
<b>Total MTFS Allocation</b>	<b>20,000</b>

- 1.2. 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.
- 1.3. The schemes detailed in this paper are all part of the Economic Recovery Programme supported in principle by Cabinet in June 2020, on the basis that individual projects within the programme would go through the governance arrangements set out above. Subject to Cabinet’s decision today a total of five projects will be funded from the Place Shaping and Capital Feasibility fund, leaving £6.892m in this fund for further initiatives across the next five years.
- 1.4. Section 2 details the 5 bids submitted to Investment Panel, three are for information as the value means the Chief Executive has approved under delegated authority for use of funds under £0.1m; one (Survive, Sustain, Grow) has already been approved by the Leader on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2020 prior to Investment Panel; one (Art Challenge) requires Cabinet approval through this paper.

## **2. Description of the Schemes**

### **Art Challenge for Economic Recovery**

- 2.1. Cabinet are recommended to approve £150,000 funding from the Place Shaping and Capital Feasibility Fund to deliver the Art Challenge for Economic Recovery, with the project sponsor being the Assistant Director, Strategic Commissioning for Communities.
- 2.2. The project aims to enliven and provide creative ways to support safe movement, social distancing and community confidence around our town centres and outdoor spaces, to encourage shoppers and visitors back to the high street and to support active travel. The project will also create linkages with initiatives being delivered as part of Coventry City of Culture, strengthening Warwickshire's contribution to 2021 and to the celebration of art and culture in public spaces. Creative place curators will be commissioned to deliver a £194k Government capital grant, through the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership, for art and culture based public realm regeneration in the north of the county as well as to deliver art interventions elsewhere across the county.
- 2.3. During its evaluation, the panel requested additional thought is given to working closely during planning stage with the Council's Public Health team, and to developing an exit strategy if lockdown measures are reintroduced, making the initiative unfeasible. Both of these features will be incorporated into the delivery of the project.

### **Employee Assistance for Economic Recovery**

- 2.4. Corporate Board have approved £8,300 from the Place Shaping and Capital Feasibility Fund for the Employee Assistance for Economic Recovery Project, with the project sponsor being the Assistant Director, Strategic Commissioning for Communities.
- 2.5. This project focusses on a Mental Health and Wellbeing support offer to independent micro high street businesses, through expanding the WCC Employee Assistance Provision. It will provide a paid for support mechanism which allows for staff from these businesses to access counselling and other resources which would not normally be available to them.
- 2.6. During its evaluation the panel requested more thought be given to engagement with Public Health and how this would fit with wider regional and national mental Health initiatives. This will be incorporated into the delivery of the project.

### **Marketing and Promotion for Economic Recovery**

- 2.7. Corporate Board have approved £75,000 from the Place Shaping and Capital Feasibility Fund for the Marketing and Promotion for Economic Recovery project, with the project sponsor being the Assistant Director, Strategic Commissioning for Communities.
- 2.8. The funding is to support an enhanced marketing campaign to promote Warwickshire as an open and safe tourism destination, to include support for existing Destination Management Organisation activity, additional targeted collective marketing, and support for small independent tourism businesses. The focus will be on promoting rural tourism to relevant domestic markets. It will require a coordinator, a commissioned consultant, to steer and deliver the work, liaising with multiple local, regional and national partners.
- 2.9. During its evaluation the panel suggested delivery would be strengthened with a sensitivity analysis of the expected benefits, and with consideration of an exit strategy to minimise losses if the campaign cannot go ahead due to Covid-19 restrictions. This feedback has been incorporated into the final proposals.

### **Tech Challenge for Economic Recovery**

- 2.10. Corporate Board have approved £80,000 from the Place Shaping and Capital Feasibility Fund for the Tech Challenge for Economic Recovery project, with the project sponsor being the Assistant Director, Strategic Commissioning for Communities.
- 2.11. The funds will be used on the two winning ideas from a competition to encourage projects and ideas to come forward that can help support the retail and cultural sectors with solutions to the challenges they face. The aim is to encourage businesses to adapt to the Covid-19 crisis, ensuring jobs are retained, whilst adopting a more digital approach and increasing skills levels and confidence of introducing digital capabilities into their business.
- 2.12. During its evaluation, the panel highlighted the enhanced benefits this scheme could have if it focused on technology to help the community engage with business rather than just helping businesses.

### **Survive, Sustain, Grow**

- 2.13. £295,118 has been previously agreed by the Leader to be allocated to this project, from the Place Shaping and Capital Feasibility Fund, with the project sponsor being the Assistant Director, Strategic Commissioning for Communities.

- 2.14. The funding will be used for an intensive business survival programme for businesses most affected by Covid-19. Specialist advisors will work with business owners on a bespoke, 1:1 basis to review the business and its financial position, explore diversification and growth options, and to help them develop an action plan. The programme will focus on sectors most affected (retail, tourism & leisure, and manufacturing). It will be complemented by existing/ new finance support including new CIF retail and Covid-19 recovery grants.

### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1. The cost of the projects are limited to the amounts detailed above. The Investment Panel have highlighted exit strategies to ensure further funding is not committed without prior approval being sought. The anticipated financial benefit from the investments is to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on longer term business rate and council tax income through maintaining a vibrant economy.

### **4. Environmental Implications**

- 4.1. There are no environmental issues or concerns arising from the initiatives proposed in this document.

### **5. Background Papers**

None

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