

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Cabinet/Executive Management Team**

**25<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Rosemarie Harris, Leader**

**REPORT TITLE: Covid Recovery Funding Progress Update**

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**REPORT FOR: Information / Discussion**

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To update Members on progress with the implementation of the Council's Covid Recovery Fund and related financial support given to business via the Covid support grants.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 As part of budget setting for 2021-22, Cabinet announced the creation of a specific reserve fund to help support council and community services recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The fund will be used over two financial years to deliver a programme designed to deliver county-wide support and complement existing and planned Welsh Government recovery activities. The allocation of **£1.8million** to set up the fund was approved by Council at its meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Initial proposals for the Covid recovery programme were considered by Cabinet on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021. The programme has two key themes: i. Community and ii. Economy & Environment.

- 2.2 On 15<sup>th</sup> June 2021 Cabinet approved, following scrutiny recommendations of 10<sup>th</sup> June, year 1 funding for the following themes:

Theme 1 Community – Year 1 (2021/22) £400k  
Covid Community Recovery Grant £300k  
Public Convenience Support £100k

Theme 2 Economy and Environment – Year 1 (2021/22) £600k  
Business Recovery Support £120k  
Highways Recovery Fund £340k  
Financial Recovery Support £40k  
Council Services and Project Specific Support £100k

- 2.3 Welsh Government have announced various funding rounds since March 2020 designed to support businesses through the various Covid

restrictions on business trading. The administration of this funding in Powys has been supported by the Council's Income & Awards Team.

### **3. Theme 1 Community – Year 1 (2021/22)**

#### **3.1 Covid Community Recovery Grant Fund**

Following an open application process, 94 project proposals were received totalling £750k.

To date 54 projects have been supported and awarded grants totalling £498,990. Projects not meeting the criteria are being supported by Regeneration Officers to identify other possible funding streams for support.

- 3.2 All projects were approved through the Thriving and Sustainable Environment Board, chaired by the lead for Economy and includes cabinet members representing regeneration, property and highways. All meetings were recorded, noting any abstentions and decisions made.

Two key decisions to be noted includes the reduction of funding for property projects to 50% due to high demand of support requested in this area and an overall increase of funding awarded, noting that supporting communities as soon as possible to implement recovery investment would be more beneficial than waiting as recovery investment had already been put aside.

#### **3.3 Public Convenience Support**

- 3.4 Under the COVID Recovery Fund the Council made available funding of £100k to support the ongoing provision of toilets formerly operated by the Council and now operated by other organisations. A flat rate payment of £1,886 has been made for each of the 49 qualifying toilets. The funding has been paid to 5 Community Interest companies and 30 Town & Community Councils.

### **4. Theme 2 Economy and Environment – Year 1 (2021/22)**

#### **4.1 Business Recovery Support – 3 Officers grade 7 - £120k**

- 4.2 Business Recovery Support Officer have been recruited to support covid recovery work across Powys. Work undertaken to date has focused on providing advice on financial support for businesses and community organisations, and projects and initiatives to support economic recovery.

#### **4.2 Highways Recovery Fund**

- 4.4 The following work areas have been supported through the funding of £340k allocated for levelling up highways works.

5. £140k spend on hire of 'Archway Jetpatcher' in Area 1 north Powys. Work done to reduce the backlog of cat 2 defects in Area 1.
  6. £28k allocated to Resurfacing on three small sites in Area 1 North, B4393, B4395 and B4580
  7. £86k allocated to South area Sites, identified for completion in March 2022.
  8. £86k allocated to Mid area Sites also identified for completion in March 2022.
- 4.5 South and Mid sites will be complete now the capital programme is completed, and extra resource is available.
- 4.6 Financial Recovery Support
- 4.7 The funding of £40k has been used to recruit an additional Money Advice Officer, this officer has been added to the Income & Awards Team who support financially vulnerable customers in Powys. They provide personal budgeting support, income maximisation and checking benefit entitlement. The team also provide financial support to cancer sufferers through our partnership working with Macmillan (and are part of the ICJ programme).
- 4.8 Council Services and Project Specific Support
- 4.9 A sum of £100k was allocated to support frontline services recover from the impact of the pandemic by providing additional funding to support small scale, recovery specific initiatives and activities which focus on strengthening organisational resilience that will provide for progressive and sustainable service delivery.
- 4.10 Following an open call for applications, 8 projects were approved totalling £85,145.
- 4.11 Valleys Task Force Grant Covid Recovery for Small Town Centres
- 4.12 Grant support for Ystradgynlais town centre for capital purchases to help with adaptation to premises during covid such as support social distancing and enhancing outside facilities. 10 town Centre businesses were supported total of £35,760 awarded (Appendix 4).
- 4.13 Transforming Towns Adaptation Grant
- 4.14 Welsh Government funding made available to the Council to support adaptation schemes within town centres in Powys. Town Councils were invited to apply for the funding and 12 towns were supported with a total of £144,055 secured (Appendix 5).

## 5.0 Covid Business Restrictions Grants

5.1 The table below gives a summary of grant scheme rounds and amounts of applications and those that were successful.

Grant Scheme	Applied	Awarded	Value
Business Grants March 2020	5031	4559	<b>£52,380,337</b>
Freelancer Grant Round 1	172	147	<b>£367,500</b>
Child Care Grant	14	9	<b>£24,778</b>
Start Up Grant	191	76	<b>£190,000</b>
Freelancer Grant Round 2	172	147	<b>£367,500</b>
Retail Relief Scheme 2020	1100	1100	<b>£10,000,000</b>
Firebreak Grant NNDR Business	3475	2705	<b>£7,223,500</b>
Discretionary Firebreak Grant	479	236	<b>£354,000</b>
Business Grants Dec 2020 to Aug 2021 (3 rounds)	2901	2426	<b>£24,015,500</b>
Discretionary Grants Dec 2020 to March 2021	467	245	<b>£490,000</b>
Retail Relief Scheme 2021	1400	1400	<b>£11,500,000</b>
Freelancer Grant Round 3	106	64	<b>£160,000</b>

5.2 To date, the Council has supported 14 covid support grant and relief schemes to business with a value of 15,508 applications and successfully awarding to 13114 businesses – a 85% success rate.

5.3 A total of **£85,573,115** in Covid grants and **£21,500,000** in relief schemes from business rates has been awarded to Powys business since March 2020.

5.4 We will be receiving scheme details of the 3<sup>rd</sup> relief scheme for business for the year 2022/23 soon. This will see approximately 1400 business receive relief of approx. **£5.7m**.

5.5 Welsh Government have recently announced 2 new rounds of business grants to support business impacted by the December 2021 restrictions. Budget of £7.8m has been received for a Business Rates Scheme and a

Discretionary Business Scheme. We are expected to receive up to 4000 applications for help.

5.6 These schemes have only become available to businesses to apply from 13<sup>th</sup> January 2022 and will be closed to new applications from 14<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

5.7 The scheme information and guidance can be found on this Powys Council webpage. <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/11072/Emergency-Business-Fund-Business-Rates-Grant>

## **6 Resource Implications**

6.1 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Office) has commented as follows:

## **7. Legal implications**

7.1 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows:

## **8. Comment from local member(s)**

8.1 N/A

## **9.0 Covid Recovery Fund 2022/23**

9.1 A total of circa £1m has been allocated to date and approval for the remaining Covid Recovery funding allocations across themes will be considered by Cabinet in the next term, July 2022.

Contact Officer:	Liz Trow, Community Development Officer
Tel:	01597 827659
Email:	<a href="mailto:liz.trow@powys.gov.uk">liz.trow@powys.gov.uk</a>
Head of Service:	Diane Reynolds, Head of Economy & Digital Services
Corporate Director:	Nigel Brinn, Corporate Director of Economy & Environment