

REPORT TO	DATE
Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council	17 August 2021



TITLE	REPORT OF
Urgent Decision Under Section 35 of the Council's Constitution: Welcome Back Fund	Deputy Chief Executive

Is this report confidential?	No
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PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To outline proposals for how the council's allocation of money for the Welcome Back Fund will be spent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. To note the allocation of funds.
3. To approve an expenditure budget based on the action plan at Appendix A, using the allocated funding.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

4. Given the sum of money we have been allocated is over £100,000 we need to get approval to to create a budget for spending it.
5. As we want to make use of this funding as soon as we can having agreed the action plan with the Government we are bringing this as an urgent decision.

CORPORATE OUTCOMES

6. The report relates to the following corporate outcomes:

An exemplary council	
Thriving communities	X
A fair local economy that works for everyone	X

BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

7. To support communities to recover from the pandemic the Government set up the Reopening High Streets Safely (RHSS) Fund, which has latterly become the Welcome Back Fund.
8. South Ribble was given an initial allocation of £97,965 and this was increased to £195,930 once it became clear that restrictions would be in place through into 2021.
9. When the fund was initially announced the criteria for how the money was spent was quite restrictive and we only incurred a small amount of expenditure (circa £2,000) in 2020.
10. In the last couple of months the criteria for how the money can be spent has been expanded to include elements around tourism and attracting visitors to the area, which means we have now been able to outline how we could spend the full amount of money.
11. The guidance for the fund and FAQs can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/welcome-back-fund>.
12. The money has to be claimed back upon expenditure and it must be spent by March 2022 otherwise we expect it to be withdrawn unless further extensions to programme are announced.
13. The action plan has been put together with input from teams across the organisation responsible for these functions.

PROPOSALS

14. The action plan for South Ribble allocates money for a series of marketing campaigns, additional staffing resource to deliver this and provides resource for

business advice. It also utilises the fund to update and refresh the promotion of South Ribble as a visitor destination.

15. We've also allowed for some funding to support 'welcome back' events in communities across the borough to support the villages and service centres.
16. Following discussion at SMT we have allocated some money to look at providing a legacy for the fund by creating a town centre radio scheme, which would set businesses up ahead of the Leyland Town Deal investment.
17. The action plan, which we have shared with our contract manager at the relevant government department, does meet the relevant criteria for spend and is attached at Appendix A.

CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT AND OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION

18. We have undertaken a survey via Citizenspace to understand what measures residents and visitors would like to see as we re-open society and the action plan has taken account of this.
19. Colleagues liaising with the businesses in the borough who have been accessing grant support have also been getting feedback.
20. And we have discussed this with the Leyland Town Team with a view to getting feedback on the actions.
21. It is worth noting that we can update the action plan as things progress and we will keep in dialogue with the relevant groups and businesses to ensure we are spending the money in the best way possible for the borough.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

22. We could decline to spend any of the fund, which would be a missed opportunity.
23. And as mentioned above this action plan can change as circumstances change depending upon how the pandemic is affecting us.
24. Any new suggestions and ideas can still be fed in at a later date.

AIR QUALITY IMPLICATIONS

25. None

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 26. The main risk lies with ensuring all our spend in relation to this pot of money fits the criteria so it can be claimed back from the Welcome Back Fund.
- 27. To ensure this is happening we are in close dialogue with the contract manager at the relevant government department to make sure all activity is within scope of the fund.
- 28. A risk register will also be developed to ensure we put appropriate measures in place.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPACT

- 29. It is part of the funding criteria that the activity supports residents and businesses across the borough equally. An equality impact assessment will be undertaken as part of the project.

COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

- 30. Funding will be received by way of claim to the grant body and drawn down as spend is incurred. This will be monitored via the usual revenue and capital budget monitoring processes.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

- 31. There are no concerns with what is proposed here from a Monitoring Officer perspective. This decision will be reported in due course at the next Council meeting.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Appendix A – Welcome Back Fund Action Plan

Chris Sinnott
Deputy Chief Executive

Report Author:	Telephone:	Date:
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Approval of Urgent Decision

Following careful consideration and assessment of the contents of the report, I approve the recommendations contained in the report in accordance with the Council's constitution in consultation with the Leader of the Council:



Gary Hall
Chief Executive

Dated: 17/08/2021



Councillor Paul Foster
Leader of the Council

Dated: 16/08/2021