

## DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
RESOURCES DIRECTORATE	FINANCE AND DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE	28 JUNE 2021	8
<b>REVENUE BUDGET INCREASE – WELCOME BACK FUND</b>			

### PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

### SUMMARY

The report seeks the Committee's approval for a revenue budget increase.

The Planning Committee at its meeting held on 19 May 2021, received a report on the "Welcome Back Fund" to support town centres in their recovery from the economic effects of the pandemic. The proposed administrative arrangements to enable relevant funding to be applied for, managed, and allocated were considered by the committee.

Councils across England are to share £56m of funding to support the safe reopening of high streets and other commercial areas, through the Welcome Back Fund, which is an extension to the Reopening the High Street Safely Fund. The money will allow the Council to support and promote a safe public environment for the town centre economy.

The report recommends that Finance and Democracy Committee approve a revenue budget increase of up to £243,516 in 2021/22 fully funded from the government grant funding streams as detailed in the report.

### RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is requested:

1. To approve a revenue budget increase of up to £243,516 in 2021/22 fully funded from the government grant funding streams as detailed in the report.

### SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

#### Planning Committee – 19 May 2021

2. To delegate the following powers to the Director of Development Services:

*Power to enter into all administrative arrangements necessary for the council to claim and receive funding from the Welcome Back Fund and the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund, including entering into a grant funding agreement*

3. To delegate the following powers to the Director of Development Services, to be exercised following consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of the committee

*Power, after appropriate consultations with relevant stakeholders and consideration by the Town Centres Working Group to develop and implement plans and projects to be funded from the Welcome Back Fund and the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund.*

4. To recommend to Finance and Democracy Committee a revenue budget increase of up to £243,516 in 2021/22 fully funded from the government grant funding streams as detailed in the report.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES	
Economy – To create a vibrant and healthy economy	√
Environment – To deliver services customers expect	√
Efficiency – By spending money in the most efficient way	√
Tourism – To create a great place to live and visit	√

## REPORT

1. At the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 19 May 2021, consideration was given to the details of the Welcome Back Fund.
2. Councils across England have been allocated £56m of European Regional Development Fund funding to support town centres in their recovery from the economic effects of the pandemic. The funding is known as the “Welcome Back Fund” and builds on the £50m Reopening High Street Safely Fund (‘RHSSF’) allocated to councils in 2020. The fund forms part of wider government support to communities and businesses.
3. Fylde’s allocation under the Welcome Back Fund is £171,758. The allocation under RHSSF was £71,758, making a total funding package of £243,516 for Fylde.
4. The purpose of the fund is to assist town centres during the next few months and beyond as they emerge from the economic dislocation caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The Fund will provide Councils with additional funding to support their business communities with measures that enable safe trading in public places. The Fund will particularly focus on our high streets, as well as other public places that are at the heart of towns and cities gearing up to reopen as safe, welcoming spaces.
5. The proposed administrative arrangements to enable relevant funding to be applied for, managed, and allocated was considered by the Planning Committee in line with Government guidance. Information and guidance regarding the parameters for this fund will be used to develop an action plan in consultation with relevant Council officers and key partners that will form part of the Welcome Back Fund agreement.
6. For information purposes, the delivery of grants is through the mechanism of a grant funding agreement that recipient councils must enter with the Government. Councils are expected to engage with local businesses, business organisations, lower tier authorities (such as town and parish councils) and other relevant stakeholders as part of the development of Welcome Back Fund plans. However, the Government acknowledges that that different areas will prioritise different activities according to local need and that it is for local authorities to assess the best mechanism by which to do this.
7. Activities outside scope - there are three main categories where activities cannot be supported and therefore outside scope of grant agreement:
  - Activity that provides no additionality - This funding is intended to be additional funding on top of that existing activity; it should not be replacing the source for already committed expenditure.
  - Capital expenditure - This funding is intended to help Councils address the short-term issue of re-opening their local economies
  - Grants to businesses – Funding cannot provide direct financial support to businesses to make adaptations to premises, purchase PPE, purchase goods or equipment or offset wages or other operating costs.
8. Any expenditure incurred that is not eligible cannot be reimbursed. The funding period for The Welcome Back Fund funding period begins as soon as the guidance has been published and ends on 31st March 2022.
9. As a minimum the Council will have to submit claims containing the following information:
  - A summary of expenditure.

- Details of every transaction, irrespective of value, that is included in the project expenditure in the claim period.
- Details of the outputs, and results achieved in the claim period; and
- Details of procurements included in the claim
- A progress report for the claim period – a progress report will be required even if no funding is being claimed.

10. For costs to be eligible to this project the Council will need to evidence how the costs are over and above any that we might otherwise incur. In line with ERDF funding evidence must be retained to demonstrate that any project expenditure is eligible and that costs have been defrayed. These records will need to be retained through the life of the project and for the relevant retention period.

11. Funded increases of between £50,000 and £250,000 require approval by the Finance and Democracy Committee, following consideration by the relevant programme committee. Increases above £250,000 require approval by the council.

12. The report seeks approval of the Finance and Democracy Committee for a revenue budget increase of up to £243,516 in 2021/22 fully funded from the government grant funding streams as detailed in the report.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	The report recommends that Finance and Democracy Committee approve a revenue budget increase of up to £243,516 in 2021/22 fully funded from the government grant funding streams as detailed in the report.
Legal	The council needs to put in place accountable and transparent arrangements in relation to its decisions on how the fund is used. The Council will need to ensure that all procurement is awarded in line with the Public Procurement Regulations. Officers will also need to check the terms of the Grant Funding Agreement to ensure compliance before any spend is incurred.
Community Safety	None arising from this report.
Human Rights and Equalities	None arising from this report.
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	None arising from this report.
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None arising from this report.

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
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BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
Welcome Back Fund - Guidance	16 April 2021	HYPERLINK "https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/978509/Welcome_Back_Fund_-_Guidance.pdf" <u>Link</u>