

Chichester District Council

THE CABINET

2 November 2021

Business Rates Pool High Street Project

1. Contacts

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2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees the release of the Business Rates Pool monies totalling £70,000 for spend on a 'high street project'.
- 2.2 That Cabinet agrees to work commencing on the feasibility study for the project as set out in section 4 of the report, using the total fund allocated to this Council.

3. Background

- 3.1 West Sussex Council Leaders met in July to discuss the use of the remaining funds from the Business Rates Pool. The leaders agreed to make some funding available quickly to help high streets and allocated each District £70,000 to establish an 'innovative' high street project.
- 3.2 It is up to each individual District to establish their own project to meet their own needs and the other Districts and Boroughs are at various stages in deciding on how to use their funds. We are aware that one of them is exploring a Pop Up Shops scheme. It is anticipated that via the West Sussex Economy Group meetings, information on projects and their impact will be shared.
- 3.3 There are no conditions attached to the fund in terms of timing but it has been suggested that we should aim to spend within the next 12 months in order to aid the case for any future high street funding bids.

4. Proposal

- 4.1 Officers met to establish ideas at a high level and a 'long list' of options was developed, as attached at Appendix 1. This options list was reviewed and considered by the Economic Development Panel at their meeting of 28th September and the Panel were in favour of using the funds to develop the project to enable new Destination Markets at the Cattle Market and/or Little London location, plus lockable 'pods' for flexible use.
- 4.2 The funds allocated to this Council would cover the costs of a feasibility study for the above markets, including a secure covered area to enable year round use

and the potential for lockable chalets or 'pods' that could be used in other locations. Should the feasibility study lead to the delivery of a capital project any remaining funds can be directed towards those costs.

5. Outcomes to be Achieved

- 5.1 A project to be delivered which provides additional support to the City Centre in a new form and which could form the evidence for future funding applications for similar projects to support the high street.

6. Alternatives Considered

- 6.1 Do nothing. With funding available this is not considered appropriate.
- 6.2 The option to use the fund across the district was discussed. Officers consider that if the fund is split across the five district 'high streets' it will have limited scope and impact and would not be able to meet the requirement set in respect of an 'innovative' project. It is therefore proposed to focus the fund on the City as the city's high street has been impacted more by the pandemic in terms of shop closures than the high streets in the market towns and currently has the highest percentage of voids compared to the market towns.
- 6.3 Other ideas were considered by the Panel, with Appendix 1 detailing reasons why these are not being recommended to progress.

7. Resource and Legal Implications

- 7.1 If Cabinet agree to the recommendations in this report, resources will be required from a number of service areas within the Growth & Place Directorate. It is anticipated the feasibility study will be completed by 31st March 2022.

8. Community Impact and Corporate Risks

- 8.1 The project will support the objectives of both the Council's Corporate Plan, the Economic Development Strategy and the markets task and finish group.
- 8.2 Consultation with stakeholders including adjacent retailers/occupiers and the BID will be undertaken as part of the feasibility work.

9. Other Implications

	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder		✓
Climate Change		✓
Human Rights and Equality Impact		✓
Safeguarding		✓
Other		✓

10. Appendix

10.1. Appendix 1 – Summary of suggested projects

11. Background Papers - none