

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

14 SEPTEMBER 2021

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES

TRANSFORMING TOWNS (TT) PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION 2021-2022

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the former Targeted Regeneration Investment (TRI) programme and seek approval from Cabinet to progress TRI's successor programme - Transforming Towns (TT) within the County Borough.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:-

- **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
- **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** – taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 Welsh Government's (WG) TT programme is an extension of the 2018-2021 TRI Programme and takes a wider approach to regeneration by allowing Local Authorities to widen their boundary areas and the interventions it can support and undertake. Importantly, it continues the ambitions of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the priorities identified in Local Well-being Plans and other local and regional plans for enhancing economic regeneration and community well-being.

- 3.2 To date the Regeneration team has secured circa £2.7 million via the TRI programme to support the following projects:

TRI Grant Element	Project	Applicant / Match Funder	Status
Strategic	11 Nolton Street: Construction of the ground floor	Coastal Housing Group	Complete
Strategic	Acquisition and Demolition of the police station site at Cheapside	BCBC	Ongoing-via TT
Thematic Urban Centre Property Enhancement / Living Grants (UCPEF /UCLG)	27 Caroline Street, Bridgend (Adventure Rooms)	Private Landowner	Complete
	2 Station Hill, Bridgend (Racoon Hair)	Private Landowner	Complete
	67 Nolton Street, Bridgend	Private Landowner	Complete
	11 Nolton Street, Bridgend (La Cocina and Rye and Cane)	Leaseholder	Complete
	38-40 Commercial Street, Maesteg (Former Family Value Building)	Private Landowner	Ongoing via TT
	15 Talbot Street, Maesteg (Former Natwest Building)	Private Landowner	Ongoing via TT
	24 Talbot Street, Maesteg (Talbot Dental Practice)	Private Landowner	Ongoing via TT
	Coity Castle Pub, Bridgend	Private Landowner	Ongoing via TT
	5 Dunraven Place, Bridgend	Private Landowner	Ongoing via TT
Covid Outdoor Improvements Grant	17 Properties supported in Bridgend, Maesteg and Porthcawl Town Centres	Private landlords / leaseholders	Complete
Green Infrastructure	Maesteg Town Centre: Commercial Street	BCBC	Ongoing-via TT
Green Infrastructure	Sunnyside Re-development project	Linc Cymru	Ongoing-via TT
Development Funding	Bridgend Town Centre Masterplan	BCBC	Complete
Revenue Funding	Town Centre management projects	BCBC	Complete

Regeneration officers are working with several landowners / leaseholders within the county boroughs 3 town centres with the aim of supporting projects through the TT programme going forward.

- 3.3 The TT programme is intended to run initially until March 2022, with possible extension, and will look to invest in projects which can deliver realistic economic and community outcomes. Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) will be looking to deliver these outcomes over the 2021-2022 financial year.

- 3.4 In June 2019 Cabinet approved the implementation of the TRI programme in Bridgend. WG has encouraged an extension to the regional approach to TT regeneration, in line with the SLA put in place via the TRI programme, thus, taking opportunities to work with partner authorities and agencies to deliver more targeted, localised projects. Under the TRI programme BCBC forms part of the South East region together with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Cardiff Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Newport City Council, Torfaen County Borough Council, Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council and Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council.
- 3.5 BCBC Project Board with representatives from Regeneration, Legal, Finance and Planning, with supporting work stream groups, was established at the beginning of the TRI programme and this is proposed to continue throughout the TT programme.

4. Current Situation/proposal

4.1 Transforming Towns: Strategic Projects

- 4.1.1 BCBC has been successful at securing £910,000 from the TT programme 2021-22, for the acquisition and demolition of the police station site at Cheapside. Officers are working in partnership with the Police and Bridgend College to progress the proposals for the site.

4.2 Transforming Towns: Place Making Grant

- 4.2.1 BCBC will continue to deliver the thematic projects in order to continue supporting project pipelines developed through the TRI Thematic 2018-21 scheme which require completion, whilst recognizing the additional eligible activity included in the TT Place Making Grant 2021-22.

Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC (RCT) will act as the lead body and will report to the Welsh Government and the South East Wales Regional Regeneration Board, which will comprise the Cardiff Capital Region Regeneration Board. RCT's Terms & Conditions etc will be devolved to the other Local Authorities via a Service Level Agreement.

The Senior Responsible Officer will be RCT's Regeneration Manager; the delivery team being RCT's Regeneration Team, supported by the Corporate Finance Team.

A hybrid offer of interventions under the TT programme will allow the Authority to maximize support for revitalizing our town centres by addressing the following shared issues:

- Dealing with vacant premises
- Addressing poor quality retail premises
- A need to increase footfall
- Creating flexible, modern, affordable floor space for business growth and support
- Supporting tourism
- Increasing housing and urban living opportunities
- Community facilities for co-location of key services

- Public realm and essential enabling infrastructure
- Provision of Green infrastructure and Biodiversity in town centres
- Furthering of the 'digital towns' agenda
- Supporting active travel routes

For BCBC it is proposed to include the county boroughs three Town Centres of Bridgend, Maesteg and Porthcawl.

An operational group will be established to oversee the operation of the TT service level agreement. The operational group will meet at regular intervals (at least on a quarterly basis) to review projects, share information and best practice, share progress, resolve joint issues and escalate serious risks. Each authority will be entitled to vote on decisions within the operation group's remit and such decisions will be decided by a simple majority of the members of the operational group present. It is proposed that the Principal Regeneration Officer be appointed as BCBC partner representative on the TT operational group.

4.3 Transforming Towns: Business Fund

4.3.1 BCBC has been successful at securing £1,166,000 to be shared with the other South East Local Authorities in 2021-22 to bring projects under the following headings to fruition within the Town Centres:

- Meanwhile Projects
- Events and Marketing
- Digital Support

4.4 Grant Finances

4.4.1 Transforming Towns: Strategic Projects

4.4.2 Police Station Site (Cheapside):

Led by BCBC in collaboration with Bridgend College, a TT funding award was approved to the value of £910,000 for the acquisition and demolition of the Police Station site within Bridgend Town Centre.

4.4.3 Regeneration officers are working with landowners to progress other strategic projects within the Town Centre that may be eligible for TT funding, however no formal applications have been submitted due to the early stage of project development and discussion.

4.5 Transforming Towns: Place Making Projects

4.5.1 An award of funding has been secured from Welsh Government to the South East Local Authorities to support TT Place Making projects by March 2022 to the value of £5,540,000. There is not an equal financial split across the 10 Local Authorities. Local Authorities are to bid into the funding when projects are ready to go.

4.6 Transforming Towns: Business Fund

4.6.1 An award of funding has been secured from Welsh Government to the South East

Local Authorities to support TT Business Fund projects by March 2022 to the value of £1,166,000. There is not an equal financial split across the 10 Local Authorities. Local Authorities are to bid into the funding when projects are ready to go.

4.7. Risks and issues

There are a number of risks and issues which Cabinet need to be aware of in deciding whether to continue with the programme. Many of these are common to all local authorities who have submitted successful bids, but nonetheless, in the present local government financial context, these must be fully understood.

- Place Making and Business Fund: There is not a set amount allocated to each South East Local Authority. As such projects will only be awarded when ready to go and if funding is available. Robust monitoring by both BCBC and RCT officers is required. Any cost to grant applicants until grant is awarded is at their own risk.
- Due to the nature of the projects and the various potential eligible elements that the grant could offer, we cannot fully assess the costs of each individual property improvement until we have received the breakdown of intended works. As such the spending profile may be subject to change along with the outputs/outcomes. There is a risk of cost overrun on some projects, and a risk that we will be unable to claim the required amounts from WG to cover costs this financial year.
- There may be insufficient take up of grants. Officers will be actively marketing this project and will be canvassing all eligible properties within the town centre. For properties that are vacant, land registry searches will be undertaken and the landowners will be contacted directly.
- There is a risk that the defrayment evidence required for the release of grant monies is not forthcoming or correct from third party grant recipients. If BCBC are not satisfied with the evidence received then the grant will not be paid. To avoid this, regular liaison with grant recipients is required to ensure that all parties are aware of their obligations.

4.8 Next Steps

4.8.1 Cabinet will need to consider the above proposals and determine whether to approve its implementation within the County Borough. If the decision is made to proceed, the next step is for BCBC to:

- Sign the revised SLA agreement with RCT and begin approval and dissemination of grants to applicants for the place making projects.
- Allow the award of grant to other parties as part of strategic and business fund projects.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There is no direct impact on the Council's policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment is annexed to the report. A summary of the key elements are as follows:

- Long Term: The regeneration planned for Bridgend's Town Centres as part of the TT programme will drive local prosperity, providing local employment opportunities and offering better environments to promote the health and wellbeing of those who live, work and visit town centres in the long term.
- Prevention: By improving the commercial, office and residential developments in the town centres it will strengthen the existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base. Converting unused or underutilized commercial space into economically productive property also helps boost the profitability of the district
- Integration: The TT programme will focus on delivering a set of physical, commercial and social improvements through re-developing vacant, poor quality, under used or derelict building and premises. This will generate employment opportunities; provide prominent and suitable locations for commercial and retail use and sustain local shopping areas, increase town centre footfall and make available suitable town centre housing.
- Collaboration: The project will allow property owners, lessees and RSL's to access funding which will allow them to tackle poor quality and unattractive properties; offering these properties a new lease of life and therefore enhancing the physical appearance of the shopping offer, streetscape and public realm.
- Involvement: Investing in a community offers a means to connect with local stakeholders. Strong, resilient communities will reinforce the regional and Welsh culture which is a key feature in promoting visits and tourists to the area.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 Welsh Government have awarded the following the following grants for spend in 2021-2022:

Transforming Towns Elements	Projects	WG Funding	Comments
Strategic Projects	Police Station Site (Cheapside) Acquisition	£910,000	Full WG Funding secured

	and Demolition:		
Place Making Projects	Various Bridgend, Porthcawl & Maesteg Town Centres	£5,540,000	WG funding to be shared between the 10 South East Local Authorities
Business Fund	Various Bridgend, Porthcawl & Maesteg Town Centres	£1,166,000	WG funding to be shared between the 10 South East Local Authorities

- 8.2 BCBC, private and third sector will be match funding into the above grant streams.
- 8.3 Match funding for grant for all TT projects will be signed off by the Chief Finance Officer under the grants policy.

9. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 9.1 Approve the outline proposals for the delivery of TT in Bridgend town centres, as set out in section 4 of the report.
- 9.2 Note and accept the risks and issues highlighted in paragraph 4.7.
- 9.3 Authorise the Chief Finance Officer to accept the TRI grant on behalf of the Authority.
- 9.4 Delegate authority to the Director of Communities, in consultation with the Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change and Chief Officer - Legal, HR and Regulatory Services, to:
- 9.4.1 negotiate and enter into the revised service level agreement with Rhondda Cynon Taff; and
- 9.4.2 approve any extension or amendment to the service level agreement and to enter into any further deeds and documents which are ancillary to service level agreement.
- 9.5 Delegate authority to the Group Manager, Regeneration, to award the TT place making and Business Grants.
- 9.6 Approve the appointment of the Principal Regeneration Officer to sit as BCBC partner representative on the TT operational group.

Janine Nightingale
CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES
11th August 2021

Contact Officer: Laura Willcox, Principal Regeneration Officer

Telephone: (01656) 815203

E-mail: Laura.Willcox@Bridgend.gov.uk

Postal Address: Bridgend County Borough Council, Communities Directorate, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB

Background documents:

1. Transforming Towns Programme South ST Wales Place Making Grant- Award of Funding Letter
2. Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme implementation – 18th June 2019 Cabinet Report