

Report of:	Meeting	Date	Item No.
Councillor Gordon McCann, Economy Portfolio Holder and Michael Ryan, Corporate Director of People and Places	Cabinet	12 September 2012	10

Get Rewyred – Town Centre Business Support Grant Scheme
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek member agreement to pilot a new business support grant scheme referred to as 'Get Rewyred' for a period of up to 12 months, funded by the Performance Reward Grant.

2. Outcomes

- 2.1 Better engagement with the business community.
- 2.2 Professional business advisors appointed to work alongside the Economic Development Team to assist local town centre businesses on the brink of closure.
- 2.3 Improvement to the vitality and viability of our town centres by providing a bespoke business advice and grant service to existing businesses in need of intervention.

3. Recommendation/s

- 3.1 That a Town Centre Business Support Grant Scheme project costing £35,000 be agreed to deliver a bespoke package to existing Wyre businesses for a period of up to 12 months.
- 3.2 That the contract be awarded via the CHEST system with quality and price being the key criteria for selection. The standard corporate procurement form on the CHEST will be used.
- 3.3 That the area lead members be consulted on the inclusion of this project in the locality plans for Fleetwood, Poulton, Thornton, Cleveleys and

Rural East for ultimate consideration by the Executive.

4. Background

- 4.1** The 'number of new start businesses surviving after 12 months' is currently monitored via an ORVIA project called ISUS (Intensive Start Up Initiative). ORVIA are a national business support service funded by ERDF. This project finished in December 2011, although outputs will still be reported in TEN for the next 12 months. It is unclear whether or not a similar programme will be repeated. ORVIA have submitted an application to become the consortium lead for ISUS 2, which if successful could be launched in November 2012. ORVIA will be competing with other business support providers and they will have to go through the ERDF procurement process before a decision will be made. (Even if successful this grant would only support new start businesses and these would not include retail units).
- 4.2** When the ISUS programme ceased, the Council appointed Bay Business Centre (based in Fleetwood) to deliver 12 new start businesses in Wyre over a three month period from January – March 2012. This contract was for £3,000 (£250 per new start business advised) and all the outputs were delivered successfully and on time. The contract was not renewed as it was highlighted that support for existing businesses was needed more than support for 'new start' businesses and the outcome of the Portas Pilot bid was also awaited.
- 4.3** Historically the drive has been to support 'new start' businesses, and most of the grant support has been focussed in this area. In Wyre it has been highlighted through partners that although a high number of the low level new start businesses are successful, there are a lot that do not survive due to lack of affordable office space and a lack of help and support available once they reach the 12 month survival mark.
- 4.4** The work of the Economic Development Team (EDT) in association with various partners, local businesses, feedback from Wyred Up members and consultation exercises has indicated that there is a need in Wyre to support 'existing' town centre businesses which, without intervention, could be at threat from closure.
- 4.5** Blackpool Council has recently appointed in-house business advisors and provide their own package of support for their local businesses. Fylde Borough Council was fortunate to receive monies from the High Street Innovation Fund, due to their high number of empty shops and will be using the £100k grant to procure a business support service for their area. The longer term plan is to work with Blackpool Council and Fylde Council to provide a Fylde Coast Business Support Package. However, in the interim Wyre is the only authority on the Fylde Coast with no official support package in place. To maintain our reputation amongst our external colleagues and also to secure confidence within our own business communities there is a greater need than ever to offer some

level of support.

- 4.6** The council's Economic Development officers work closely with the Wyred Up service. This is, however, primarily a networking service and does not provide the level of direct business support required to maintain and improve the vitality and viability of our town centres. Officers receive on average 10-20 business enquiries per month. Most can be dealt with in-house, however there are a number that are referred to colleagues across the Fylde Coast if they need a full diagnostic or need more help and time than our resources allow. There are a number of businesses that we know need help but we do not currently have the time or resources to actively seek these out and provide diagnostics for a solution.

5. Key Issues and Proposals

- 5.1** Based on feedback from businesses and the experience of the council's Economic Development officers a short term package called 'Get Rewyred' has been developed, which would deliver the right support and outputs. An application form, guidance notes, monitoring forms, and evaluation forms for applicants to complete will be drawn up once the proposal has been agreed by Cabinet.
- 5.2** A key priority in the Council's Business Plan is to 'facilitate improvements to our town centres; Cleveleys, Garstang, Fleetwood, Poulton and Thornton. This project will involve consulting with the business communities situated in the town centres, and as a result an action plan with short, medium and long term suggestions will be produced for each town centre. The 'Get Rewyred' Town Centre Business Support Grant Scheme will be used to kickstart momentum for this project and will ensure buy-in from the business communities. It will directly support existing businesses in our town centres and complements the work we are undertaking with the town centre action plans.
- 5.3** There will be a PQQ process where we invite three quotes. These will be scored on price (70%) and on quality (30%).
- Track Record and Delivery – Experience of work undertaken in the past 5 years of similar nature to that required under this contract. (10%).
 - Local Knowledge – Provide evidence knowledge of the local needs of the businesses in each Town Centre (10%).
 - Managerial Structure – Numbers of business advisors appointed to deliver and methods to use. (10%)
- 5.4** It is expected that each diagnostic will cost £350 and a provision of £20,000 will ensure that 57 town centre businesses could be helped over an 8-12 month period (depending on take up). The diagnostic will help the advisor decide on the next appropriate action to be taken to assist the businesses. This could range from a financial advisory session, a shop

front improvement scheme (e.g. signage), or a new or improved website etc. The second part of the funding (£15,000) will be used to provide grants to the retailers to allow the appropriate action to be delivered. The grant will, however, only be awarded if match funding is secured by the retailer. This will ensure commitment and longevity to the project. For example, it is expected (based on similar projects that have been delivered in Garstang) that approximately half of those receiving diagnostics will require funding to follow through the advice provided by the advisor. Based on this assumption it would leave £15,000 between 25 businesses. The grant would therefore be a maximum grant of £600 from the Council and would require at least 50% match from the business. Therefore, if a business needed £1,500 to improve its signage, the maximum we would contribute would be £600, and we would expect a contribution of £900 from the retailer.

- 5.5** The majority of referrals will come from officers and also via Wyred Up and the Chamber of Trades. The Head of Planning Services will retain discretion on all grant decisions and will work closely with the business advisors to ensure best practice and achieve high quality outputs.
- 5.6** The 'Get Rewyred – Town Centre Business Support Grant Scheme' will complement and kick start momentum for 'Investment in Your Town Centres', which is a priority project in the Council's Business Plan.
- 5.7** The project will ensure buy-in from the business community and raise the profile of the council in terms of providing a bespoke service to our town centre businesses. This in turn will provide evidence of our attempt to assist our own businesses, which when applying for future funding will show that we are dedicated and pro-active.
- 5.8** A £1 million Future High Street X-Fund, which will be awarded in a year's time to the locations which deliver the most creative and effective schemes to revitalise their high streets, is to be launched later this year by the Government on the back of the Portas Pilot Review. This project will provide evidence for this and will support our case for future funding, for not just the X Fund but for other similar grants that may become available.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	Funding of £35,000 would be required from the PRG monies, earmarked for the 'Shaping Your Neighbourhoods Initiative'.
Legal	The contract will be awarded in accordance with the Council's contract procedure rules.
Community Safety	None arising directly from this report
Equality and Diversity	None arising directly from this report

Sustainability	None arising directly from this report
Health and Safety	None arising directly from this report
Risk Management	None arising directly from this report
Asset Management	None arising directly from this report
Climate Change	None arising directly from this report

Report Author	Telephone No.	Email	Date
A. Kershaw	01253 887641	Angela.kershaw@wyre.gov.uk	Aug 2012

List of Background Papers:		
Name of Document	Date	Where available for inspection

LIST OF APPENDICES

None

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