

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## CABINET

12 APRIL 2012

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>SUBJECT:</b>                      | <b>WIRRAL TOWN TEAMS FUNDING</b>                      |
| <b>WARDS AFFECTED:</b>               | <b>ALL</b>  |
| <b>REPORT OF:</b>                    | <b>DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION, HOUSING AND PLANNING</b> |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b> | <b>REGENERATION AND PLANNING STRATEGY</b>             |
| <b>KEY DECISION</b>                  | <b>YES</b>  |

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Following the recent Council budget (4<sup>th</sup> February 2012, minute 317 refers), this report sets out the approach for taking forward the £500,000 which has been made available for local shopping areas to bid for, to help to improve the vitality of their centre.
- 1.2 The report outlines the approach to consulting and advertising the application process to help gain interest in creating a Town Team and bidding into the funding. The report also outlines the process for applications and the requirements that Town Teams will need to meet in order to be eligible for funding, as well as outlining the criteria which the applications will be considered against.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 As part of the Government's initiative to tackle the challenges of high streets, Mary Portas was commissioned to undertake a review of high streets in 2011. In December 2011 Mary Portas published 'The Portas Review - an independent review into the future of our high streets'. This set out 28 recommendations for overhauling our high streets, one of which was to create "Town Teams", described as a "visionary, strategic and strong operational management team for high streets".
- 2.2 On 4th February 2012 Government announced the 'Portas Pilots – Prospectus: an invitation to become a Town Team' which is inviting bids from groups across the country to become a Town Team. These must be submitted to Government by 30<sup>th</sup> March 2012. The Government will support twelve pilots across the Country with up to £100,000 available for each, dependant on the amount sought and Government's assessment of the bid.
- 2.3 As Members will be aware, the Council has been working with interested groups who are looking to create Town Teams and submit bids to CLG. Cabinet (15 March 2012, minute 20 refers) agreed the approach that the Council has taken to co-ordinating these and ensuring that they provide value for money for the tax payer in the use of the grant.

2.4 As part of the Council's budget on 21 February 2012, £500,000 has been allocated to support local Town Teams to improve the vitality of their shopping areas. The bids that will be supported will need to demonstrate how local trader groups will come together and contribute their time and/or resources to the bids successful outcome. This process will work alongside and complement any successful bids into the Government's Mary Portas pilots.

### **Consultation approach**

2.5 To take forward the Wirral Town Team bidding process, we will engage with as many existing trader groups (including those which have bid into the Governments 'Portas Pilots') as we are aware of. We will also advertise the application process in April on the Council's website, through press releases, Invest Wirral and social media networks. We will also be distributing a letter to traders in Wirral's 24 Town, District and Local Centres to inform them of the funding and application process.

2.6 This will also complement the Council's on-going work through the Town, District and Local Centre Study and Delivery Framework and Action Plans (Cabinet 21<sup>st</sup> July 2011, minute 75 refers). Through this on-going work officers have been engaging with Trader Groups in the first phase of Action Plans to start to create a Vision for their centre and an approach going forward.

2.7 Following agreement by Cabinet the application process will open and run for six weeks for Traders groups and Town Teams to bid into. The applications which meet the criteria for funding will be brought back for Members to consider at a Cabinet meeting in June/July with the funding being allocated thereafter.

### **Criteria and Aims of funding**

2.8 The 'Portas Pilots' are aiming to help to galvanise commitment from local traders, landlords and other local groups to tackling issues in their Town Centres through a strong local leadership approach.

2.9 To take this forward at a local level it is proposed to follow the example pilot set out by the Department of Communities and Local Government and set up a bidding process for local 'Town Teams' to bid into from across the borough.

2.10 The application process would allow bids for up to £100,000 per Town Team through one application per Town Centre. The process would require a robust application which sets out the key criteria for the funding application to meet, including:

- Ensuring that the applications are innovative in their approach and reflect some of the key elements of the Portas Review,
- Demonstrating value for money for the use of grant,
- Showing how the funding will enhance and support the vitality of the Town Centre,
- Meets the eligibility criteria for the funding and demonstrates its sustainability and will have demonstrable outputs,
- Ensuring it has a wide range of support and commitment to the Town Team approach with integral Trader support to take the aspirations forward,
- Complying with all relevant legislation including The Equality Duty 2010 and the Council's priorities, Corporate Plan and Local Competition Rules.

2.11 Applications would be reviewed by an Officer panel against these criteria in May/June and proposals brought back for Cabinet approval in June/July.

### **3.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

3.1 The main risk is ensuring that the money once allocated is expended for the purposes for which it was given. To address this risk each approved project will be required to sign a grant funding agreement and each applicant will have to conform to the terms and conditions of the funding and account in line with the Council's accounting policies and procedures.

### **4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

4.1 The funding has been allocated through the Council's Budget Options for this specific purpose and therefore there are no other options to be considered.

### **5.0 CONSULTATION**

5.1 The application process will be open for 6 weeks and as outlined in 2.5 it will be advertised through the Council's Website, Invest Wirral, a press release and Social Media to ensure the widest possible consultation and engagement. A letter will also be distributed to the traders in 24 Town, District and Local Centres across the borough.

### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

6.1 The application process will engage the voluntary, community and faith groups.

### **7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

7.1 The report sets out the approach for taking forward the £500,000 which is set out in the Council's budget for 2012/13 as agreed by Cabinet on 4th February 2012.

7.2 The project will be delivered from existing resources within the Department of Regeneration, Housing and Planning.

7.3 There are no IT or asset implications.

### **8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 A funding agreement will have to be entered into by the Council with each successful Town Team, setting out that the project funding will be managed in accordance with the Council's procurement and accounting practices.

### **9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Has the potential impact of your proposals been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes and impact review is attached

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010-0>

### **10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The Town Team plans must be in conformity with national policy in terms of sustainable development.

## 11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The proposals for Town Team bids may involve the need for planning applications for change of use to any buildings which are proposed to be used, dependant on the use classification.

## 12.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

12.1 Members agree the process and criteria for individual bids of up to £100,000 to be invited from Traders Groups in Wirral for the creation of a number of Town teams.

12.2 Members agree that a further report is submitted to Cabinet for the approval of bids once the application process has been completed

## 13.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 To allow maximum impact in the use of the grant.

13.2 To allow officers to commence the application process.

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## APPENDICES

None

## REFERENCE MATERIAL

Portas Pilots: Prospectus - an invitation to become a Town Team

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/regeneration/portaspilotsprospectus>

## SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

| Council Meeting                    | Date          |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Cabinet – Portas Pilot Bid funding | 15 March 2012 |