

REPORT TO: Executive Board
DATE: 14th June 2012
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Children and Enterprise
SUBJECT: Portas Pilot and High Street Innovation Fund
PORTFOLIO: Physical Environment
WARDS: Mersey

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Executive Board of the recent submission for Portas Pilot funding
- 1.2 To advise Executive Board on the recent grant of £100,000 under the High Street Innovation Fund Initiative.
- 1.3 To seek views on how the High Street Innovation Fund Should be managed and allocated.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board

- 1) notes the submission of a bid for Portas Pilot funding;**
- 2) approves the establishment of a Town Team for Runcorn;**
- 3) approves the total allocation of the High Street Innovation Fund to Runcorn Town centre; and**
- 4) invites the Runcorn Town Team to prepare a funding plan outlining how the High Street Innovation Fund could be spent.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

PORTAS PILOT BID

The Council made a bid to Government in March for Runcorn Town Centre to be nominated as a Portas Pilot Town Centre, to assist in the regeneration of the Town Centre. The Portas Pilot arose from a review Mary Portas submitted to Government in December 2011. The concept of forming a Town Team to improve town centre locations was

included within the 28 recommendations contained in the Portas Review. Government agreed to fund twelve pilots, with a maximum allocation of £100,000 per town team. (At the time of writing), Government will make a decision on the successful pilots in May. The interest in the funding has been significant and government has agreed to hold a further bidding round to select a further 12 pilots (deadline for receipt of applications is 30th June 2012).

Halton's bid for Runcorn, which included a supporting video, focused on making Runcorn Town Centre a unique destination for everyone by developing a mixed use leisure, business, retail and cultural offer. Emphasis was also placed on a longer term legacy and the attraction of visitors 'for the future'. The bid seeks to establish a more family friendly approach to the town centre which maximises the town's cultural and leisure assets whilst providing a retail offer that shoppers could not obtain by visiting large shopping malls and supermarkets.

A local community group, Hazlehurst Craft Studios also features in the bid as an example of where empty property can be brought back into use to provide affordable studio spaces for local Artists wishing to develop within a supportive and not for profit environment.

Although, the grant on offer is not huge, the actual process of developing the bid helped to reinforce good working relationships between the Council, its Partners and the local community.

A consultation event was held on 14th March at Churchill Hall, where local people provided suggestions on the make up of a Town Team (a pre-requisite, should the bid be successful). A list of potential representatives is contained in appendix 1.

The event was very positive with local people confirming that irrespective of whether the bid is successful, there is a real appetite to develop and contribute to the running of a Town Team.

High Street Innovation Fund

As part of the Government's response to the Portas Review, the Government also agreed to establish a £10 million fund to support Councils "In areas blighted by empty shops and recovering from the riots to help bring entrepreneurs back to their communities".

Halton has been allocated £100,000 to “work collaboratively with landlords to encourage them to contribute to supporting their new occupiers”. Funding will be revenue.

Although this is a borough wide allocation and not specifically for Runcorn, the Executive Board is asked to consider allocating the fund to Runcorn both to complement emerging regeneration activity in the town but also to consolidate the momentum gained in developing the Portas bid.

Furthermore, it may wish to consider giving responsibilities to any newly formed Town Team to draw up a funding plan to allocate this funding.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

If the Portas Pilot is successful, it will complement work the Council is doing to promote inward investment in Runcorn.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The High Street Innovation Fund provides additional resources to assist in the future regeneration of the Borough’s town centres. It provides a useful albeit small pot of money to work with landlords and businesses within the Runcorn Town Centre to encourage potential investors to take up empty properties within the town centres. By allocating the resources to a Runcorn Town Team, it is proposed that this will reaffirm the Councils commitment to supporting Runcorn and will give the establishment of a town team added weight and influence.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

N/A

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

N/A

6.3 A Healthy Halton

N/A

6.4 A Safer Halton

N/A

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The proposals will support the Council's Urban Renewal Priority by assisting in the future regeneration of Runcorn in creating a vibrant town centre and improving the immediate environment.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

Given the small amount of money available, there is the risk of raising expectations with the local community as to what can be done. However, through the establishment of a Town Team, this would be used as forum for agreeing what can be realistically achieved and managing expectations accordingly.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

Good work has already been undertaken to get the views from a broad range of local community groups and local businesses to obtain a consensus view which reflects needs of residents and employees in Runcorn.

9.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

The reason for this decision is based on an opportunity to link the High Street Innovation Fund to other regeneration activity taking place in Runcorn Town Centre.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

The other option would be to allocate resources across other parts of the borough, but given this is a small amount of revenue funding, this approach could dilute any potential impact the funding might have. Therefore, it is proposed to concentrate the resource on one distinctive area – Runcorn Town Centre.

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

11.1 The result of the Portas Pilot bid are expected in May. The High Street Innovation Fund allocation is imminent. A town team would need to be set up. Therefore, September 1st 2012 is the anticipated start date.

12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Portas Bid	5th Floor Municipal Building	Jennifer Carr

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The following links provide further information of the PORTAS PILOT AND HIGH STREET INNOVATION FUND

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/regeneration/pdf/2120019.pdf>

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/regeneration/portaspilotsprospectus2>