

1. Summary

The Government has confirmed that non-essential retail can look to re-open from 15 June, 2020 as long as they have implemented the recommended COVID-19 safe guidelines.

This report sets out proposals for how Thanet District Council will support the re-opening of high streets through an allocation of funding from the recently announced 'Reopening High Streets Safely Fund' (RHSSF). This fund will be administered through an ERDF Grant Agreement and the council's allocation is £126,456.

2. Introduction

In May 2020, the Government announced that local authorities are to use the RHSSF allocation to support the safe reopening of high streets and other commercial areas. Details can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/50-million-boost-to-support-the-recovery-of-our-high-streets>

The funding is to enable additional measures to be established to support a safe trading environment for businesses and customers, particularly in high streets and town centres, through measures that can extend to the end of March 2021.

Expenditure will be eligible from 1 June, 2020 and will be set out via an ERDF Funding Agreement between the council and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) which is expected to be agreed by the end of June. The grant award will be available for the council to access up until the end of March 2021, although it is being encouraged to use the allocation by the end of the calendar year to address immediate needs in 2020.

Eligible Activity for Support

The guidance recommends four main activity strands as part of the fund arrangement:

1. Development of an action plan utilising the COVID-19 recovery framework as set out by Institute of Place Management
2. Communications and public information
3. Business facing awareness initiatives
4. Temporary public realm changes

There are a number of elements that are deemed to be out of scope for funding and these include:

Activity that provides no additionality - This funding is intended to be additional funding on top of existing activity. It can support new temporary roles to support implementation but should not be used to subsidise existing staff salaries but can be used for additional materials purchased.

Capital expenditure – It can support some temporary changes to the physical environment, but those changes should not be anticipated to last beyond 12 months, or until no longer required for social distancing.

Grants to businesses – unable to provide direct financial support to businesses to make adaptations to premises, purchase PPE, purchase goods or equipment or offset wages or other operating costs.

The council will be eligible for reimbursement for the cost of 4% of the total grant value for administering the grant. However, the total claimed can be no more than the £126,456 allocation.

Government recommends using the High Street Task Force COVID-19 Recovery Framework as a guide to help formulate and deliver the recovery plan, and there is best practice guidance available from them.

Proposed Approach

It is proposed to focus the council's RHSSF grant allocation on the businesses' high streets and town centres in the district, with the level of intervention in each location being proportionate to scale. It will be a phased deployment of interventions across services. These locations are:

- Ramsgate (High Street and Harbour Parade)
- Margate (High Street, Old Town and Marine Drive)
- Broadstairs (High Street)
- Cliftonville (Northdown Road)
- Birchington (Station Road)
- Westgate (Station Road)

Secondary retail areas may be considered for support, but this will need to be light touch, in proportion to their footfall, and potentially subject to additional funding. These areas might include; Garlinge, Westbrook, Minster, St. Lawrence, and St. Peters.

Officers have been in touch with Highways colleagues at Kent County Council to discuss their bid to the Department for Transport for the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF), to understand how the two funding programmes could be complementary in supporting high footfall shopping areas to open safely.

Using the Recovery Framework as a guide, it is proposed to use the council's grant allocation to support activities captured in the table below which have been suggested through discussions with Members, Officers and stakeholders thus far. The table captures how proposals align to the in-scope activity strand

within the government guidance, summarises activity and identifies the council service areas involved in delivery of the activity. It should be recognised that some of these actions will already be undertaken by the Council and that the RHSSF grant allocation will be used to add value to this or support new activities required.

Funding Strand	Specific Activity	Service Area Resource required
Communications and public / business information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication plan - Design public and business messaging content type - Media relations - Social media management - Website management - Stakeholder management - Advertising - community magazines - Local radio - Academy FM - Business 'toolkit' materials and marketing campaign - continuously updated - Identify and focus on key entry and exit points - Link to county comms - EDRF and HMG A3 project signage – compulsory funding requirement 	<p>Communications</p> <p>Strategic Partnerships</p> <p>Operations</p> <p>Tourism</p>
Public Realm Interventions	<p>Signage: Phase 1 - include internally printed signs and some contracted provision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content development - use icons (to ensure we cater for visitors and ESOL residents) - Identify locations - Procurement - Installation - consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Toilets o Lamp posts (KCC) o Bus shelters o Promenades/ seafronts o Key high st. locations o Benches 	<p>Communications</p> <p>Procurement</p> <p>Operations</p> <p>Project admin</p> <p>Support from Town and Parish Councils Re: installations</p> <p>Operations</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Car parks ○ Bus shelters ○ Empty shop frontages ○ TDC vehicles (magnetic) ○ Parking meters ○ Litter bins ○ Notice boards / Visitor Information boards <p>- Updates</p> <p>Social distancing:</p> <p>Pavement markers - TBC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify locations ○ Procure materials - temporary ○ Mark out distance ○ Apply markers ○ Maintain markers <p>Review potential for a keep left system/one way</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify locations <p>Cleansing:</p> <p>Phase 1</p> <p>Increased town cleansing and toilets to be opened.</p> <p>Open Space:</p> <p>Phase 2</p> <p>[Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF)]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Street furniture 	<p>Strategic Partnerships</p> <p>Procurement</p> <p>Kent Council Council</p> <p>Project admin</p> <p>Open Spaces</p> <p>Kent County Council</p> <p>Licencing</p> <p>Planning</p> <p>Strategic Partnerships</p> <p>Kent County Council</p> <p>KCC/private contractor</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify locations ○ Agree cleansing management ○ Consider repositioning of existing street furniture (planters for instance) - Expanding spaces for seating/ queuing etc. (use of outside space/pavements/car parks etc.) - Proposal for 20 mile an hour zones in high footfall areas, particularly through the town centres and around coastal frontages - requires signage [EATF proposal]. - Proposal for temporary removal of parking bays across the district to allow for increasing footpaths around businesses premises - requires signage, cones/planters, maintenance [EATF proposal]. - Proposal for road closures, particularly in those areas where the pavements are narrow and the road provides the ability for safer access and queuing for the retail, and food and beverage outlets - requires RTO, signage, cones/planters, costs for management of the opening and closing the access, maintenance [EATF proposal]. - Consult with Town and Parish Councils on the above 	
<p>Business Engagement</p>	<p>B2B engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interaction with traders open for business, and those planning on opening - gather baseline data where possible. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Civica business rates data ● Postcard drop direct to businesses ● Invitations to consult / offer feedback through the 'hub' ● Work with key partners with existing relationship with businesses to convey our messages - Create business support 'hub' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create 'Toolkit' ○ Resource telephone line with VIC staff ○ Webinars etc. 	<p>Strategic Partnerships</p>

Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme Delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Monitoring and reporting progress against plan - Resource capacity planning - Location planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Key entry/exit points o Accessibility options o High Street audits (photography surveys and visits) - Data analytics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Baseline footfall - using counters, CCTV, or a data analytics consultant o Monitoring real-time footfall - Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Government guidelines o High Street Task Force guides for best practice o Learn what other destination's plans are to re-open safely - Stakeholder engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Produce stakeholder contact list o Direct business liaison - individual plans for re-opening (queuing etc.) - Financial processes and monitoring (allocate budget code) - Schedule regular review meetings - leading Officers across departments 	Strategic Partnerships
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Other funding opportunities

The Project Team will engage with Kent County Council and Town Councils for additional support and delivery throughout.

Town/Parish Council support

Meeting 9 June - support offered from all to put up signs and deliver literature to businesses.

Further engagement is required once Phase 1 is in place and we are able to react to the impact on our shopping areas.

Meeting to be arranged to discuss Phase 2 with the opening of the leisure and hospitality businesses.

5. Project Delivery and Next Steps

It is essential however that the Council move quickly in order to have as many actions as possible started by the 15 June, 2020.

Following discussion with Members and political support for the proposals officers will engage with Town and Parish Councils.

Delivery of the recovery programme will be Officer led and decisions related to the recovery plan will be taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, based on the proposals above. Throughout the delivery of the programme there will be regular updates on progress for Members and stakeholders.

The Strategic Partnerships Team will manage delivery of the project and monitoring tools will be applied throughout delivery to ensure ERDF grant requirements are met.

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