



REPORT of DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY, PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE

**to
PERFORMANCE, GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
9 JUNE 2022**

COVID ECONOMIC RECOVERY FUNDING ACTIVITY UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the COVID Economic Funding Activity from October 2021 to date.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee notes the work that has been delivered as part of the COVID Economic Recovery and Transformation (CERT) programme and the on-going work to support our economies.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 As part of the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Welcome Back Fund (WBF) and Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) were developed to support businesses and communities. These funds were provided to district, borough, and unitary authorities to administer and defray in accordance with the relevant guidance.
- 3.2 In addition to the above, Essex County Council (ECC) made available, via the Department of Health and Social Care's Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), a COVID Safe Tourism and Public Spaces Fund and High Street COVID Improvement Schemes for district and boroughs to administer and defray in accordance with the relevant guidance.
- 3.3 **Welcome Back Fund**
- 3.3.1 The WBF provided councils across England a share of £56 million from the European Regional Development Fund to support the safe return to high streets and help build back better from the pandemic. The funding built on the £50 million Reopening High Street Safely Fund allocated to councils in 2020 and formed part of the wider support government provided to communities and businesses.
- 3.3.2 Maldon District Council (MDC) received an allocation of £180,218, the grant is claimed in arrears. All defrayal associated with this fund must have occurred on or before 31 March 2022. The final claim for the fund was submitted in April 2022 with an identified underspend of £7,209.
- 3.3.3 The following activities were delivered via the fund:
- Lead Specialist for Prosperity recruited in October 2021 to project manage the fund.

- Marketing materials to promote and support localised high street activities and events.
- Support for Maldon and Burnham Christmas events.
- Removal of historic social distancing markers in Maldon and Burnham-on-Crouch High Streets.
- Support for new and existing High Street trails.
- Health check and future scoping for Maldon Market.
- Deployment of 'Hello Lamp Post' to gather resident and visitor sentiments at key locations within the District.
- New dog waste bins in key areas of need.
- Delivery of 'Keep It Local – a community together' dual town centre event.
- Radio advertising to promote Visit Maldon District.
- Delivery of trial 'Vegan Market' at Promenade Park.
- Early preparations for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.
- Additional flower and tree planting.
- Upgrades to public conveniences.
- Development of District gateway signage concepts.
- District accessibility report to identify barriers to visitors and residents and accessibility improvements to enhance the visitor experience for everyone.

3.4 **Additional Restrictions Grant**

3.4.1 The Additional Restriction Grant scheme aimed to support businesses severely impacted by coronavirus restrictions and the rise of the Omicron variant, when most needed. Funding was first made available in financial year 2020-2021 and could be used across financial years 20/21 and 21/22. Local authorities had the discretion to use the funding as a mix of direct grant payments and business support mechanisms.

3.4.2 In May 2021 district, borough, and unitary authorities were provided with a second top up to the Additional Restrictions Grant. The allocation for MDC was £564,745. All defrayal associated with this fund must have occurred on or before 31 March 2022. As of April 2022, the total underspend for this grant was £106,798. In accordance with the guidance issued, this underspend must be returned to Government.

3.4.3 The following activities were delivered via the fund:

- Business support surgery.
- Social Enterprise Accelerator Fund – providing 12 grants totalling £167,847.00.
- Visit Essex subsidised membership scheme for hospitality and tourism businesses.
- Essex Chamber of Commerce subsidised membership scheme.
- Photography to support the District Investment Prospectus.
- Business Wellbeing and Resilience training.
- Sensory awareness training and guide for the District.
- Click It Local ecommerce platform.
- District Investment Prospectus platform.
- Collaborative commissioning with North Essex Economic Board for business support and skills provision.

The business and skills support activities will continue throughout 2022/2023.

3.5 Contain Outbreak Management Fund

- 3.5.1 The Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) provided funding to upper tier local authorities in England to help reduce the spread of coronavirus and support local public health through localised mechanisms.
- 3.5.2 In July 2021 ECC confirmed MDC had been successful in its request for up to £150,000 of funding as part of the COVID Safe Tourism and Public Spaces Fund. Of this fund, £114,365.51 has been claimed. A further fund, High Street COVID Improvement Schemes, was developed in December 2021, which MDC received £3,457.00. Both schemes were supported by ECC's COMF allocation.
- 3.5.3 The following activities were delivered via the funds;
- Enabling safe space in Maldon High Street.
 - Additional resources for compliance at Promenade Park.
 - Additional resources for compliance river users.
 - Personal watercraft vehicle transportation trailer to support above.
 - Visitor footfall analysis tool.
 - COVID secure adaptations of Princes Road offices as host for Maldon Vaccination Centre.
 - Frontline staff depot reconfiguration and health protection measures.
 - Replacement of St Lawrence slipway.
 - Upgrades to public conveniences.
 - Additional High Street cleansing.
 - Additional public convenience cleansing.
 - Marshalling of events.
 - Additional PPE and sanitisation for event marshalls.
 - Pedestrian lighting.
 - Traffic management.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 All work undertaken has been in accordance with the relevant funder's guidance. Work continues with the management of the Additional Restriction Grant commissioned business and skills support projects which will conclude in March 2023.

5. IMPACT ON STRATEGIC THEMES

- 5.1 The work undertaken has contributed to the Prosperity Outcomes of 'Enabling future economic investment and new jobs', 'Supporting existing local businesses' and 'Enhancing and promoting the District's visitor economy'.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – The activities will continue to have benefit to our customers who will be able to access the support, and benefit from the interventions delivered.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – None.

- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – Final claims have been submitted to the relevant bodies. Due diligence/compliance checks are expected, however, the guidance for all funds has been adhered to and no issues are expected to arise.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – The Lead Specialist, Prosperity, will continue the management of the contracts until the end of their fixed term contract.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – None.
- (vii) **Impact on Strengthening Communities** – The activities will continue to benefit to our communities who will be able to access the support, and benefit from the interventions delivered.

Background Papers:

- [11 Welcome Back Fund.pdf \(maldon.gov.uk\)](https://www.maldon.gov.uk/11-Welcome-Back-Fund.pdf)
- [Welcome Back Fund Guidance v3 Final.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/90441/Welcom_Back_Fund_Guidance_v3_Final.pdf)
- [Additional Restrictions Grant: guidance for Local Authorities \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/90441/Additional_Restrictions_Grant_guidance_for_Local_Authorities.pdf)
- [Contain Outbreak Management Fund: guidance – financial year 2021 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/90441/Contain_Outbreak_Management_Fund_guidance_-_financial_year_2021_to_2022_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

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