

## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

**31<sup>ST</sup> JULY, 2014**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLANNING**

**Author: Adrian Evans, Town Centre Strategy Manager.**

#### **Welsh Government funding to support the development of Town Centre Partnerships in Wales**

##### **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides details of the Welsh Government's funding to develop Town Centre Partnerships across Wales. The Welsh Government issued the application pack for this fund on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2014.
- 1.2 It outlines an approach for identifying up to 2 town centres in Rhondda Cynon Taf and seeks agreement to apply to the Welsh Government Town Centre Partnerships Fund.

##### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 Aberdare and Porth are the 2 towns within Rhondda Cynon Taf nominated.
- 2.2 The Director of Regeneration and Planning is authorised to submit an application for the Welsh Government Town Centre Partnerships fund.
- 2.3 This report will not be subject to call in as the deadline for submission to the Welsh Government is 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2014.

##### **3.0 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Welsh Government has announced funding to support the development of Town Centre Partnerships (TCPs) in Wales. A total fund of £1 million is made available for proposals across Wales. A total of £50K is available per application.
- 3.2 A maximum of 2 centres per Local Authority are permitted to apply. Areas such as Pontypridd which were successful in the Vibrant and Viable places funding are excluded from making an application.

- 3.3 The purpose of the TCP funding is to support the development of TCPs and Town Centre Action Plans within the settlements that have not been successful with VVP funding streams.
- 3.4 A TCP is defined as a partnership of the private, public and voluntary sectors that have collectively developed and agreed on an Action Plan for a specific settlement to support regeneration and economic development initiatives and activities. The TCP will be tasked with delivering the Action Plan. The funding may be used to support new or existing TCPs and Action Plans.
- 3.5 The funding programme will run across two financial years, 2014/15 to 2015/16. The total funding available in 14/15 is £400K and 15/16 is £600K. all projects to be completed by the end of March 2016.

#### **4.0 AIMS & OBJECTIVES**

- 4.1 The purpose of the funding programme is to act as a catalyst for the formation of Town Centre Partnerships and the creation and delivery of Town Centre Action Plans for each area. It is envisaged that these Action Plans will support activities that contribute to:
- Increasing the vibrancy of town centres by increasing footfall.
  - Increasing public, private and community investment in town centres.
  - Reducing the impact of vacant properties within town centres.
  - Supporting town centre businesses and services to establish, grow and prosper.
  - Supporting the diversification of town centres by promoting alternative uses such as residential and leisure.
  - Supporting new and innovative approaches to address the challenges facing town centres with the intention of disseminating best practice to other locations.
- 4.2 It will be for each TCP to determine the priority actions locally, Welsh Government solutions include:
- Complementing Welsh Government's High Street Campaign with events and activities to generate footfall.
  - Initiatives that support marketing & promotion of the town centre such as loyalty card schemes.
  - Embracing technology – websites, Apps etc
  - Business support initiatives.
- Initiatives that provide a solution to empty properties such as meanwhile use, 'pop-up shops', vinyl window displays etc.

#### **5.0 RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

- 5.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf has several key strategic town centres:
- Aberdare
  - Ferndale
  - Llantrisant/Talbot Green
  - Mountain Ash

- Pontypridd
- Porth
- Tonypandy
- Treorchy

5.2 Pontypridd is excluded as the Welsh Government criteria prevent settlements benefitting from Vibrant and Viable Places funding applying for this fund.

5.3 Each town centre in Rhondda Cynon taf has been carefully considered against criteria derived from the Welsh Government guidance to establish which offers the greatest opportunities and success at this time. Based on Welsh Government's guidance, stakeholder engagement and a track record of stakeholder planning and delivery are key to a potentially successful application and delivery.

5.4 Aberdare and Porth currently show the closest fit with the Welsh Government criteria (see Appendix 1). However, as stated in the guidance notes, Welsh Government are looking for the dissemination of best practice to other town centres and so other town centres can benefit from the experiences of the selected towns.

## 6.0 FUNDING

6.1 Revenue funding of up to £50K is available per application. An application should be based on one settlement area.

6.2 Match funding **and** in-kind contributions are required to support the wider Action Plan. 50% minimum match funding from other funding sources, external to Welsh Government is required.

6.3 In-kind contribution from the Council's Town Centre Team, Events and Marketing Team would be integral to match funding requirements. Welsh Government do not specify the split between in-kind and cash match funding.

6.4 The funding does not support new or existing members of staff.

6.5 Breakdown

Settlement	Year	Welsh Government Town Centre Partnership	RCT Town Centre Budget	RCT In-Kind match funding	Project Cost
Aberdare	2014/15	£7,200	£5,800	£5,800	£23,200
	2015/16	£10,800	£8,700	£8,700	£34,800
				<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>£58,000</b>
Porth	2014/15	£7,200	£5,800	£5,800	£23,200
	2015/16	£10,800	£8,700	£8,700	£34,800
				<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>£58,000</b>

## **7.0 ACTION PLAN PROJECTS**

- 7.1 Potential projects that traders view as important to benefit the high street are events and activities within the town centres that are well marketed and delivered as a mechanism of increasing footfall and promoting the town centre to existing and new visitors.
- 7.2 With recent history of planning and delivering trader led activities, Porth and Aberdare are ideally suited to build on current activity. This will lead to an increasingly sustainable stakeholder led activity programme.
- 7.3 There is an opportunity to build on the recent Town Centre Mobile App and build in a loyalty/reward scheme that is tailored to Aberdare and Porth. Mobile technology is the fastest growing trend in retail and a town centre app that includes all local businesses and services within the centre would be a powerful tool to support businesses get 'online'. The app could also have the loyalty/reward scheme built into the platform and allow tourism and events notifications to be delivered.
- 7.4 Initiatives that provide a solution to empty properties such as meanwhile uses, pop-up shops initiatives, vinyl window dressing etc.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 To be successful in applying for the Town Centre Partnership Fund, Welsh Government is advocating a collaborative approach and expects the private sector, Local Authorities and other organizations, such as community and voluntary groups to contribute to the development of the TCP Action Plan. Local Authorities must lead on the application process.
- 8.2 The success of this new initiative to support the high streets depends on the engagement of stakeholders to plan, organise and deliver projects locally. Based on these requirements, Aberdare and Porth would be suitable nominated town centres to apply for Town Centre Partnership Funding.

	Town Centre							
	Pontypridd	Aberdare	Llantrisant	Treorchy	Mountain Ash	Tonypandy	Ferndale	Porth
Opportunities for diversification of the town centre by promoting alternative uses such as residential and leisure		3	3	3	2	2	2	3
Active Chamber of Trade		3	2	3	1	3	1	3
Community groups active in the town		3	2	3	3	3	2	3
Recent track record of positive trader engagement and delivery of town centre initiatives		3	2	2	2	2	2	3
Integrated Transport infrastructure		3	2	2	2	2	1	3
Potential for future Business Improvement District development based on a sustainable income levy.		3	2	1	1	1	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>

