

## Record of officer decision

<b>Decision title:</b>	Decision to accept and sign the £1.37m Community Renewal Fund (CRF) grant funding agreement offered by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.								
<b>Date of decision:</b>	13 December 2021								
<b>Decision maker:</b>	Neil Taylor – Interim Director Economy and Place or Andrew Lovegrove, S151 Officer								
<b>Authority for delegated decision:</b>	<p>Cabinet Member Decision - Herefordshire Community Renewal Fund submission – taken on 11 June 2021.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>c) Authority is delegated to the Director for Economy and Place and S151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member Environment and Economy to undertake any operational decisions required to implement the Community Renewal Fund within Herefordshire;</p> <p><a href="https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50090285/Herefordshire%20Community%20Renewal%20Fund%20submission%20-%20main%20report.pdf">https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50090285/Herefordshire%20Community%20Renewal%20Fund%20submission%20-%20main%20report.pdf</a></p>								
<b>Ward:</b>	Countywide								
<b>Consultation:</b>	Consultation with the Cabinet Member Environment, Economy and Skills.								
<b>Decision made:</b>	To accept the grant offer of £1.37m from Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) for the Community Renewal Fund projects and scheme management and sign and return the Grant Funding Agreement with DLUHC.								
<b>Reasons for decision:</b>	<p>In March 2021 the DLUHC announced the launch of a new funding programme, the UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF). The council, as the unitary authority for Herefordshire, was designated by DLUHC as the lead authority for the CRF within the county.</p> <p>In line with the role delegated by DLUHC to lead authorities the council undertook an open invitation for projects meeting the CRF criteria, receiving 18 proposals within the deadline. After the deadline the council arranged independent assessment and prioritisation of the proposals received, and put forward a shortlist of eight proposals to DLUHC. The eight proposals included within the shortlist submitted to DLUHC amounted to a total combined value of £3m.</p> <p>On the 3 November 2021 DLUHC announced the proposals that were successful in receiving funding. For Herefordshire there were three successful projects, these were:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 20%;">Project Deliverer</th> <th style="width: 30%;">Project Name</th> <th style="width: 50%;">Project description</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>HVOSS</td> <td>From sparklers to brilliances</td> <td>This project will work in communities to identify and support people, coming alongside them to build motivation to engage with existing Plan for Jobs initiatives such as Kickstart, REED partnership, Shaw Trust and Building Better Opportunities. The project has two elements:</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Project Deliverer	Project Name	Project description	HVOSS	From sparklers to brilliances	This project will work in communities to identify and support people, coming alongside them to build motivation to engage with existing Plan for Jobs initiatives such as Kickstart, REED partnership, Shaw Trust and Building Better Opportunities. The project has two elements:
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			<p>Inspiring communities. It will work with communities Herefordshire-wide, building trusted relationships and raising community-wide aspirations.</p> <p>Reducing individuals' barriers to work through coaching and mentoring, support to develop core life skills, etc.</p>
	Walsingham Support	People with Disabilities Employability and Enterprise	<p>The Project will involve developing existing craft, woodworking and kitchen activities to support a Community Café and shop at The Barn, Ledbury to offer internship and job taster work experience. The Project will have two strands:</p> <p>A client-centered and practical employability skills development programme, including job tasters and 'internship' job experience in a community enterprise setting.</p> <p>The development of connections with further learning, training and employers through the internship and post internship, to provide supported progression routes for all current and future participants.</p>
	Maybe Solutions Ltd	Digital Skills Transformation for the High St	<p>This project will deliver accelerated digital learning for High Street businesses and their staff through a program of digital skills training, social media grants and a comprehensive digital platform. The project will develop individual skills, improve business profitability and resilience, and is a replicable and scalable process.</p>
<p>The projects were awarded a total of £1.508m broken down between the projects as follows:  HVOSS - £628,224  Walsingham Support - £138,026  Maybe Solutions Ltd – £741,725</p> <p>Further to the announcement of successful projects by DLUHC, officers have been in regular contact with the three projects awarded funding. Since receiving the Grant Funding Agreement (see paragraph below) the Walsingham Support the project deliverer for the “People with Disabilities Employability and Enterprise” project have announced their intention to withdraw from the programme due to the impact the delay in DLUHC’s announcement of successful projects had on their intended delivery model.</p> <p>As a consequence DLUHC have recalculated the award made to Herefordshire, the total awarded is now: £1.37m broken down between the projects as follows:  HVOSS – £628,224  Maybe Solutions Ltd - £741,725</p> <p><b>Funding Agreement</b>  The previous decision taken on the 11 June 2021 agreed that the council</p>			

	<p>would act as the accountable body for any Community Renewal Funds awarded to Herefordshire applicants.</p> <p>The council will be required to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) with DLUHC which sets out the terms and conditions attached to the receipt of the £1.37m. The council has received the GFA, which has been reviewed by the legal team who have confirmed that there are no unusual or onerous conditions in the agreement and that there are no reasons that the council should not enter in to the GFA.</p> <p>Most of the obligations set out in the GFA will be included in the grant funding agreements to be entered into with the HVOSS and Maybe Solution Limited as project deliverers for the projects detailed above. These grant funding agreements will also set out the grant claim processes that the project deliverers will be require to follow and details of the procurement procedures that have to be followed for expenditure to qualify for reimbursement.</p> <p><b>Scheme Management</b></p> <p>A subsequent officer decision, taken on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021 - <a href="https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50091055/Herefordshire%20Community%20Renewal%20Fund%20project%20shortlist%20and%20bid%20submission%20summary%20submission.pdf">https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50091055/Herefordshire%20Community%20Renewal%20Fund%20project%20shortlist%20and%20bid%20submission%20summary%20submission.pdf</a> – approved the submission of a CRF bid submission summary setting out the management and administration of the Community Renewal Fund within Herefordshire.</p> <p>An additional amount of £27,399 has been awarded by DLUHC to the council for the management costs associated with acting as the accountable body for the CRF.</p> <p>The financial management and monitoring of the CRF scheme is being conducted, as per the submission to DLUHC, by the Delegated Grants team on behalf of the council. Early conversations with the successful projects have commenced in order to provide information, guidance and relationship management.</p>
<p><b>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</b></p>	<p><b>Financial</b> – The council has prepared a funding agreement which the project deliverers will be required to sign. This places any risk of project overspend with the project deliverer organisation. This risk is considered to be minimal given the projects are revenue funded and will deliver to the set budget.</p> <p>In line with most EU and government grants, projects will be required to incur expenditure and then claim retrospectively from the council. This will reduce risk to the council and identify any ineligible expenditure before council makes payment of grant.</p> <p>The Delegated Grants team will hold a detailed project inception meeting with the projects to cover eligible and ineligible expenditure. The project deliverers will be required to report on spend and programme on a monthly basis, this will identify any issues relating to the budget.</p> <p>The CRF has provided accountable bodies with funding to be used towards the costs incurred in managing grant fund awards. DLUHC has awarded £27,399 to the council for the costs incurred in managing grant fund</p>

	<p>awards.</p> <p><b>Legal</b> – The council has the power to act as the accountable body and deliver the CRF under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.</p> <p>Legal services are responsible for drafting and negotiating suitable grant funding agreements with the individual projects to ensure that all grant monies are applied to the project and that any and all obligations placed on the council as accountable body are passed on to the grant recipients.</p> <p>The DLUHC grant funding agreement has been reviewed by the legal team and is considered to be acceptable. Attention is to be drawn to the fact that the council will receive 62.5% of the funding on signing of the GFA and the remaining 37.5% will need to be claimed by the council from DLUHC on or before 31 August 2022.</p>
<b>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</b>	<p>At the point of project submission to DLUHC an alternative option to not submit a shortlist of projects or not complete the bid submission summary was considered.</p> <p>This option was rejected as it would not comply with the eligibility criteria of the CRF and would mean that Herefordshire projects would miss the opportunity to secure up to £3m of external government funds.</p>
<b>Details of any declarations of interest made:</b>	<p>No declarations of interest.</p>

I am an officer delegated to make the decision

Signed:

Print Name: Neil Taylor

Job Title: Interim Director for Economy and Environment