

High Street regeneration post Covid-19 evaluation

Committee name	Residents' Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Helena Webster – Place Directorate
Papers with report	Retail Revival Evaluation Report including Appendix 1: Business Resilience Survey Appendix 2: Shoppers Survey Appendix 3: Business Support Programme
Ward	All

HEADLINES

On 16 March 2022 the then Environment, Housing & Regeneration Select Committee received a report on a range of initiatives and activities undertaken across the town centre improvements, regulatory services, and economic development teams to support town centres and shopping parades across the Borough in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and post-recovery.

The original report noted that a full evaluation of the impact of the events and businesses support provided by Retail Revival, fully funded through the Central Government 'Welcome Back' fund initiative would be prepared and that these findings could then be shared with the Committee.

The Retail Revival Evaluation report describes the activities undertaken and the programme outputs and outcomes achieved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee notes the range of bespoke promotional events and initiatives tailored to the feedback from business and residents within the high streets and associated outputs achieved by the London Borough of Hillingdon utilising the Welcome Back fund grant.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

In June 2020 a dedicated Reopening High Streets Safely Fund was announced. The intention of the funding was to support temporary measures enacted up to 31 March 2021 to encourage the safe reopening of high streets across the UK. The LB Hillingdon received a £272,855 grant fund.

The grant funding had been sourced from unallocated European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) so use of funding needed to comply with ERDF regulations especially in terms of European compliant procurement and use of the EEC and ERDF logos in all publicity.

The grant conditions included three main categories where activities could not be supported,

which were:

- *Activity that provides no additionality*

The funding is intended to be additional, on top of existing activity; it should not be replacing the source for already committed expenditure.

- *Capital expenditure*

The funding is to help local authorities address the short-term issue of re-opening their local economies. 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*

Funding cannot 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 Government announced on 20 March 2021 that the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund (RHSSF) had been expanded and would begin a new phase of delivery up to the end of March 2022 as the Welcome Back Fund (WBF).

The original RHSSF allocation was doubled for each local authority and the scope of eligible activities was increased significantly to better support the reopening of local economies i.e., running publicity campaigns and holding events like street markets and festivals to support local businesses. As reported in March 2022, the total Welcome Back fund was allocated against the following initiatives:

Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government Grant		
Scope of Activity	Summary	Grant
a) Communications and public information activity	ERDF compliant promotional materials	£ 65,000 (£25k design and £40k resources)
b) Business-facing awareness raising activities including events	21 Town Centre/Parade events, Borough-wide digital on-line marketing training for small businesses	£142,720 (£50k specialist support and £92.72k resources based on average £4.4k per event)
c) Temporary public realm changes	Rental and maintenance of planters, parklets, hand sanitisers etc	£303,490
d) Support & promote a safe public environment, visitor economy	Specific Uxbridge BID support July-August 2021 Summer programme	£ 34,500 (£22.4k Uxbridge BID £12.1k temporary gazebo hire)
	Total grant	£545,710

Following an ERDF compliant tender, Retail Revival were appointed to lead on specific support for small independent businesses. The exact brief was:

Specialist Retail/Town Centre expertise to support small independent businesses within town centres and local parades. Scope of services to include:

- Organising a promotional event for each of the nine minor and local town centres between August 2021 up to February 2022;
- Organising up to two promotional events within Uxbridge and the five district centres between August 2021 up to February 2022;
- Digital marketing training to help small independent businesses across the town centres and parades adapt to on-line retail and encouraging the increased use of film and social media to help businesses with more effective marketing.

The 15 town centres and local parades which were the focus for activity were Uxbridge, Ruislip, Ruislip Manor, Ickenham, Eastcote, Northwood, Northwood Hills, Yiewsley and West Drayton, Hayes, Harlington, Uxbridge Road, Harefield, Kingshill Avenue, Ryefield Avenue and Hillingdon Circus.

£142,720 from the total £545,710 grant (£50k specialist support from Retail Revival and £92.72k resources based on average £4.4k per event) were earmarked.

The Retail Revival Evaluation report describes the activities undertaken and the programme outputs and outcomes achieved.

PERFORMANCE DATA

Performance data relating specifically to the 'Welcome Back' grant funded activity is included within the Retail Revival evaluation report.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

The specific aim of the project was to support small independent businesses within 15 town centres and local shopping parades across the Borough to safely 'Welcome Back' residents and other shoppers following the Covid-19 pandemic.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report and its recommendation to the Committee.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Borough Solicitor confirms that there are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

APPENDICES

Retail Revival Evaluation Report including:

Appendix 1: Business Resilience Survey

Appendix 2: Shoppers Survey

Appendix 3: Business Support Programme