

## **Update Report on Telford Marches Investment Fund allocation :**

### **1. Development of a Telford shop/spend local app for residents to encourage spend in retail, leisure and food and drink outlets**

Following the appointment of Yarrington to undertake a two stage commission leading to the development of a Telford App that will support primarily high street businesses badly hit by COVID (and previously in the case of Ironbridge by flooding) – Stage One of the commission has been completed with the consultants:

- Working with relevant teams across Telford & Wrekin Council to assess the performance and viability of the existing Telford Loyalty Card
- Visited borough town high streets to establish the visibility of the existing product
- Considered products already on the market that might be suitable for licence
- Assessed the benefits of a bespoke new product
- Presented their findings to the project team, Council Members and the Digital Sector Champion from the Telford Business Board

In terms of the existing TLC they found:

- It is in wide circulation with over 16,000 users/holders which is a valuable asset
- However it has very low levels of activity from businesses and card/app holders
- It has low visibility in any of the Borough towns
- Its features and functionality are out of date and the card is not fulfilling users or businesses requirements
- The resources required to support the card system are not achievable and the data is disjointed

Their research didn't find any existing App product that would meet the needs of Telford's smaller businesses:

- A new shopping app is being launched – Bublbtown – which facilitates on-line selling, but it has a cost to businesses who have to pay a percentage on each sale as well as a set charge per sale which could be costly to small high street businesses
- It cannot be locally branded and won't give the user a personalised service

Their recommendation is for a new, bespoke App product entirely for businesses that capitalises on the trusted TLC brand, (and the 16,000 users already registered) but is redesigned completely in terms of look and functionality:

- The new app should have enhanced functionality for businesses to make it easy for them to manage their profile and offers
- Enhanced functionality for users will make it easy for them to access offers
- The ability for users to tailor the information around their own favourite shopping areas and shops
- Improved data and metrics for businesses and T&W Council to support high street regeneration
- Automatic migration for users from the old to the new app
- Minimal internal support and management requirements

Following completion of Stage One of the Commission, the next step is to start the design and build of the App with a view to having a working prototype by mid to end December. Following testing

with a panel of selected high street businesses it is aimed to get the App live in January/February next year so it is ready for the build up to Easter at the beginning of April. A significant marketing campaign will have to be designed around this new product to take it out to businesses with a programme of assistance to help them get set up on the system and a vibrant campaign to promote it to residents and visitors.

## 2. High Street Events

The Council’s Arts and Culture team had been working with the Business Board, Town and Parish Council’s to establish a programme of high street activity to generate footfall in the lead up to Christmas and encompassing Small Business Saturday on the 5<sup>th</sup> December.

The aim had been to create a link between the 6 key high streets of the town – Wellington, Oakengates, Madeley, Newport, Dawley and Ironbridge with a thematic and innovative initiative that communities could engage with and that would encourage them to visit all of the high streets in the borough whilst still shopping and supporting local.

The initiative was to include a range of activity that all towns could buy into, that could be left in place for a number of weeks and ideally would be a legacy for the high street going forward. It was to be simple enough for each town and town council to adopt the scheme and mould it to suit their high street, reflecting their individual local stories. The Council’s Culture team would be supporting those towns which lacked the confidence to manage a project of scale.

Unfortunately the resurgence of COVID and the subsequent second lockdown has made the delivery of this initiative unachievable and the options for high street activity limited to the point where they would have insufficient impact. However, the principles of the initiative can easily be replicated and focussed on what will be a key time for high street recovery from COVID – the lead up to Easter which is early in April 2021.

To maintain some high street activity in the lead up to Christmas, the Council will commit funding through its Pride In Our High Streets Scheme to create a couple of simple festive offerings around Small Business Saturday.

We propose to reserve LEP MIF to allow us to deliver an initiative along the lines of the original proposals with the theme of ‘Leap Into Spring’ – this will see themes developed by each of the high streets that reflect their history and communities, will be linked together as a co-ordinated initiative to bring the communities of Telford together and will create a legacy from the LEP’s investment:

### Leap into Spring Campaign Outline:

High Street themes:

Wellington	Craft Makers
Oakengates	Carnival
Madeley	Music Hall/Heritage
Dawley	Heritage
Ironbridge	Heritage/Creatives
Newport	Carnival/Food

Legacy Items to support on-going high street regeneration will include:

- Reusable infrastructure equipment/installations e.g high street hanging wires, banner holders, lights, flags, window dressings
- Marketing plans and online collateral – generic and reusable
- Creations that are going to brighten the high street ongoing e.g murals, art work and community designed banners, props

Timeline:-

Continue Consultation with towns/develop ideas	November/December 2020
Small Business Saturday Christmas Trail	December 5 <sup>th</sup> 2020
Ideas plan agreed	Christmas 2020
Scoping of infrastructure projects – e.g building fittings, banner fixings	November – January 2021
Marketing campaign and supporting material	Launch end January 2021
Project launch	Weekend in February Half Term 2021
Project judging/competition announcements	February 2021
Marketing campaign – Easter plans	March 2021
Town Easter programme promotion	March 2021
Easter Trail in businesses across the towns	Easter weekend - Beginning April
Evaluation of impact of campaign /project	April 2021

### 3. Delivery Timescales and Funding Spend

Given the challenges around delivery of what are initiatives that need high levels of engagement to be successful, we would request that the LEP allows an extension to the end of March 2021 for expenditure of the LEP funds.

To date of the £404,557 allocation to Telford from the MIF £230,000 has been paid to IGMT and Phase One of the App commission has been completed at a cost of £6,800. Stage Two of the commission will be completed by January/February at which time costs will also be incurred for marketing collateral to promote the new App. It is envisaged that many of the legacy costs for the Leap Into Spring initiative will be incurred by January/February but there will be marketing and competition costs beyond that with final costs paid by the end of March.