
Meeting of the Cabinet – 6th January 2020

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

Towns Fund – Proposals for Dudley Town Centre

Purpose

1. To advise members of Dudley Towns inclusion in Governments Towns Funds initiative and to seek approval to progress development of structures and proposals that focus upon delivery of additional Higher Educational facilities in the town in collaboration with Dudley College.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended:-
 - That Cabinet note the inclusion of Dudley Town in the Governments Towns Fund initiative
 - That Cabinet confirms that their priority is for the priority proposal to be developed focusses upon delivery of a further two educational establishments within a Town Centre campus, in collaboration with Dudley College
 - That the existing Dudley Town Centre Programme Board be re-named the Dudley Town Deal Board, with responsibility delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive to ensure Membership of the Board, governance and Terms of Reference are developed that are fit for purpose
 - That responsibility for the allocation of the £173,029 Capacity Funding provided by Government be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive in collaboration with the Cabinet Member, Regeneration and Enterprise
 - That a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet in order to outline progress on the Towns Fund initiative



Background

3. During September 2019, Dudley Town Centre was one of 100 centres invited by Government to bid for the £3.6 billion Towns Fund. Government wishes to see the establishment of a Town Board to prioritise and drive investment and to seek long term economic and productivity growth through investment in connectivity, land use, skills and enterprise infrastructure.

A detailed Prospectus was published by Government on November 1st 2019, setting out details of Government's expectations and awarding initial capacity funding – to be paid to the Council during November 2019 – of £173,029 to assist with the development of proposals. It is Government's intention that the resource be used in order to;

- Convene a Town Deal Board
- Run business and wider community engagement events
- Develop Town Investment Plans
- Provide technical expertise for business case development

The prospectus sets out the first stage of the process of agreeing a Town Deal, with further guidance to be issued by Government in due course as to how Councils are to use their Town Investment Plans to build a business case for interventions.

At Stage 1, it is Government's expectation that a Town Deal Board be established by the end of January 2020 and that a Town Investment Plan is produced by Summer 2020.

Government state that the role of the Town Deal Board is to;

- Develop and agree an evidenced based Town Investment Plan
- Develop a clear programme of interventions
- Coordinate resources and influence stakeholders

Representation on the Board should include;

- Combined Authority
- Member(s) of Parliament
- Local Businesses and Investors
- Local Enterprise Partnerships

Additionally, other local 'Anchor' institutions may be included, for instance, local FE colleges.

There should be clear and effective processes for involving the Community in development of Investment plans



The Lead Council should publish the Town Deal Board's governance structure and ways of working, such as a statement for how the board will engage stakeholders and agree decisions over time. Lead Councils should set out how capacity funding will be spent, and how that will support the process of developing a good Town Investment Plan.

Towns are expected to develop a well-evidenced Town Investment Plan, which sets out a clear understanding of the area, focusing on its assets, opportunities and challenges. The amount of investment from the Towns Fund will be determined based on the strength of the Towns Investment Plan amongst other relevant factors.

The Town Investment Plan should set out investment priorities that could drive economic growth, supported by clear evidence and targeting investment into the economic infrastructure listed around the objective of the fund, as well as making full use of existing powers, particularly in planning.

The Plan is a locally owned document and will not require sign off by government, However it will form the basis of deal negotiation and inform the amount of investment agreed through the Towns Fund. The Plan should explicitly set out how the Towns Fund is being used to crowd-in other local and private investment. It should also articulate how the interventions are driving economic regeneration and delivering value for money.

The timeline for activity is thus;

- Capacity funding distributed to Lead Councils - November 2019
- All Town Deal Boards convened - End of January 2020
- Further guidance published - Early 2020
- All Town Investment Plans produced - Summer 2020

Current Position in Dudley Town Centre

Cabinet will be aware of the fact that there is very significant confirmed and planned regeneration activity proposed for Dudley Town Centre that includes;

- Midland Metro Extension from West Bromwich, through Dudley to Brierley Hill
- Re-development of Cavendish House
- Development of replacement Public Transport Interchange
- Development of Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre and Test Track
- New Dudley Leisure Centre
- Investment into Churchill Shopping Centre by owners LCP



- New ownership of the Trident Shopping Centre seeking to invest in the centre
- Collaborative working with the WMCA to develop proposals for the 'St Thomas Quarter, from High Street Fountain to Top Church
- £23m investment into the Black Country Living Museum 'Forging Ahead' project
- Ongoing investment in the centre of Dudley via Townscape Heritage Funding
- UNESCO Geopark status to be awarded to Dudley by April 2020
- Imminent commencement of delivery of Institute of Transformational Technologies (IoTT) by Dudley College

Not only does this mean that some of the structures and arrangements necessary to create a Town Deal Board are already in place, the sheer extent of potential investment makes the case for further investment into the town extremely strong indeed.

A Dudley Town Centre Programme Board has been created in order to collaborate on and co-ordinate activity, whose membership already reflects most of the requirement of a Town Deal Board. Furthermore, Dudley Council and its Dudley North / Dudley South MP's have long campaigned for an Educational Campus in the town and the success of Dudley College in securing resources for Institute of Technology Status provides the impetus to create a true learning campus in the heart of the town.

Dudley College propose that two further learning establishments be developed, adjacent to the planned IoTT as the key element of the Town Investment Plan. Cabinet are requested to confirm that this is their preferred priority project as part of the development of the Investment Plan.

The next planned meeting of the Programme Board (December) will be used to agree that the Programme Board become the Town Deal Board and that appropriate Terms of Reference and Governance / consultation arrangements are put in place by the end of January 2020. That group will make recommendations to the Council regarding the use of the £173,026 capacity funding provided by Government, which will be assessed by the Deputy Chief Executive..

4. It is proposed that ongoing work as part of the Innovation in Democracy pilot be utilised to inform effective consultation with our communities as part of the development of the Town Investment Plan. Dudley People's Panel, which is funded through the national Innovation in Democracy Programme, is giving 50 members of the public the opportunity to deliberate on the future of Dudley and Brierley Hill Town Centres. The panel's recommendations will be available in mid-December 2019 and will be able to provide members with insight that can inform the developments to be delivered through the Town Fund.



Finance

5. At this stage, the Financial implications of this report are limited to the allocation of the £173,026 capacity funding which will be received by the Council during November 2019.

Law

6. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides the Council with power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions

Equality Impact

7. There will be no negative impact on people with protected characteristics as a result of this report. The development of the Town Investment Plan will be undertaken with full regard to the requirement for equality impact assessment
8. The development of a Town Investment plan will have beneficial impacts on local children and young people who will benefit from investment into economic development and skills training in Dudley. Children and young people will be consulted as part of development of proposals and their involvement sought in the process.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

9. There may be an impact on the Council's ability to service the Town Fund Board and associated Governance arrangements which will be considered during the allocation of capacity funding

Commercial/Procurement

10. There are no negative impacts on the Council's Commercial or Procurement arrangements at this stage. However, the development of Investment Plans and their subsequent implementation may well provide opportunities for local businesses in future.

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

11. The development of Town s Fund proposals will assist to make the local economy more robust while providing higher skills training to local people, increasing the potential to access higher paid work and assisting to make local communities more resilient.



At this stage, there are no detrimental impacts on local communities. This is a matter that will be fully considered as part of the development of investment plans and indeed its implementation



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Appendices

None

List of Background Documents

Appendix 1 – Towns Fund Prospectus

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/towns-fund-prospectus>

