

Dudley Long Term Plan for Towns (LTPFT)

Board Meeting no1 – 10th May 2024

Agenda Item no 6 – Town Plan and Investment Plan - proposed approach.

Purpose - *for discussion and decision*

The paper sets out the need to prepare a 'Long Term Town Plan', with a three-year Investment Plan, by 31st July 2024, with a proposed approach to that - for discussion.

Recommendation

- That Board members review the information below and share their thoughts/views at the Board meeting to enable a decision to be made on approach and next steps.

Context

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) has produced guidance for Town Boards on developing the 'Long Term Plan' and a three year Investment Plan. The Plan needs to be prepared and submitted to DLUHC by 31st July 2024 and, in summary, should set out the following:

- A vision for the 10 year programme.
- The case for change – linked to evidence and the priorities of the local community.
- The proposed interventions – aligned to the three LTPFT intervention themes¹.
- Evidence that the Plan is community led and has been developed through engagement.
- The first three year investment programme – with interventions, costs and outcomes.

Funding will then be provided to the Council on an annual basis (as the accountable body for the Board) to fund the Boards three year Investment Plan.

Proposed approach

Agreement to the LTPFT boundary will facilitate DLUHC providing £200,000 of capacity funding, some of which can help prepare the Town Plan. The work will need to be undertaken following this meeting, through June and July 2024 - a short timescale that will require an efficient and streamlined process, also allowing for Board consideration and approval. The proposed approach is summarised below and shown on the final page:

- Task 1 – Information analysis. A review of the existing 'Dudley Town Investment Plan' prepared in January 2021, set against the LTPFT criteria and the three themes, to identify the areas where there is little information and where issues/interventions have not previously been proposed.
- Task 2 – Stakeholder engagement with Board members, internal Council teams (such as the Community Safety team, Public Health and the Transport team), local

¹ 1 – Safety and Security. 2 – High Streets, heritage and regeneration. 3 – Transport and connectivity

ward councillors and key partners such as the Police and Crime Commissioner and the CVS – to discuss the information, the detailed evidence, the issues to be addressed and consider potential interventions.

- Task 3 – preparation of the ‘Key Issues and proposed interventions’ paper. This is in effect a first draft of the Town Plan, for discussion with the Board and then for public consultation. It will set out what issues the Board should focus on, and the type of interventions for the first three years.
- Task 4 – a public consultation programme. A suggested approach to this is set out overleaf for discussion with the Board and agreement on next steps. Key to this will be to secure the level of support necessary to ‘validate’ the Plan, whilst giving assurance that this is a long term process and there will be ongoing community consultation and engagement.
- Task 5 - preparation of the Town Plan and the Investment Plan, for agreement with the Board and submission to DLUHC on 31st July 2024.

Proposed consultation methodology

A single, survey based, public consultation on a regeneration project(s) or proposition would often run for a longer than the time available between now and the deadline for the Investment Plan permits. Allowing sufficient time for consideration and response is one of the four Gunning Principles for consultation² and there is a risk that undertaking community engagement within this timescale could be perceived as a tick box exercise to reach an imposed milestone, disengaging people from the outset.

However, as the Town Board and the Investment Plan are to be firmly and deeply rooted in the community it is critical that the community is engaged with the LTPFT programme and has meaningful opportunities to contribute and shape the vision and plans. It will therefore be essential that it becomes an ongoing conversation with the community, rather than a one-off consultation, and leveraging the networks and reach of the Board members to engage as many people and organisations as possible in the time available and to reiterate that this is only the beginning will be essential to that.

It is therefore proposed that the initial engagement this summer is merely the start of the process and is focused on the principles and priorities for the investment plan. Thereafter a regular wide and deep conversation is had with communities across the LTPFT geography.

² The Gunning Principles set out four rules which must be met for public consultation:

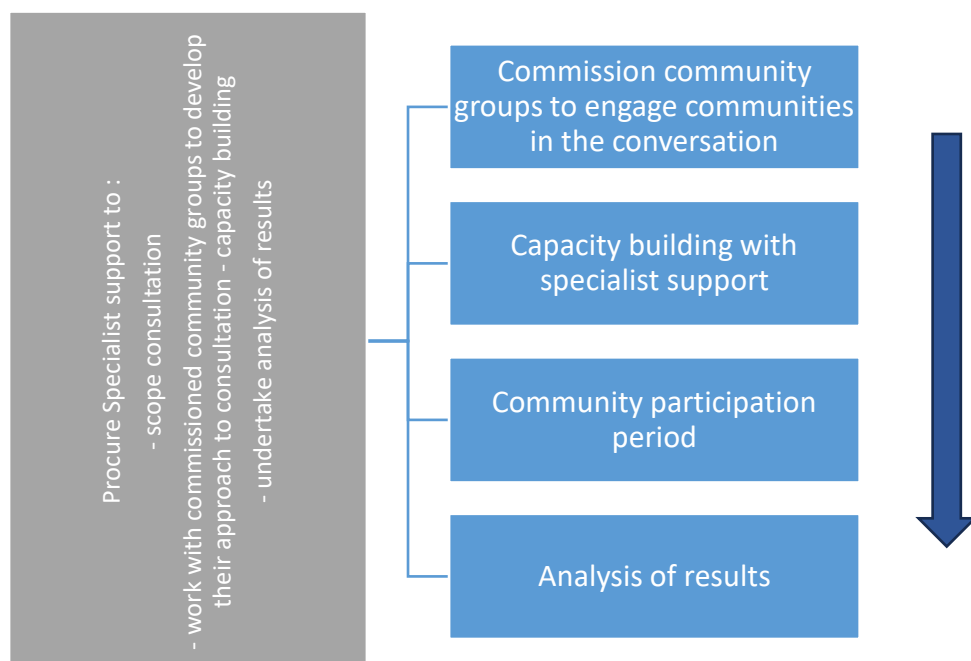
1. proposals are still at a formative stage: A final decision has not yet been made, or predetermined, by the decision makers i.e. responses must still be able to influence the outcome
2. there is sufficient information to give ‘intelligent consideration’: The information provided must relate to the consultation and must be available, accessible, and easily interpretable for consultees to provide an informed response
3. there is adequate time for consideration and response: There must be sufficient opportunity for consultees to participate in the consultation.
4. ‘conscientious consideration’ must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made Decision-makers should be able to provide evidence that they took consultation responses into account

As LTPFT guidance highlights community capacity building and capitalising on the passion and reach that local people and organisations have for their place, it is proposed that a number of community groups/organisations are commissioned to undertake the consultation. A set of key areas for the consultation will be agreed beforehand but it will then be up to those groups to determine and undertake the consultation in the way that they have proposed, rather than a single, standardised approach. This will likely mean that the form the consultation takes may be different and will require additional work to analyse and bring together at the end, but the benefits will be richer content which has engaged widely and built capacity to undertake that ongoing conversation going forward.

This is expected to need some external support to help set the parameters for the consultation, support the community groups in undertaking it, and then particularly in assimilating and analysing the results for the final investment plan. This will need to be swiftly procured for it to be in place to provide up front support. Similarly, the groups to be commissioned to undertake the consultation will also need to be quickly identified and engaged.

A People's Panel / Citizen's Assembly was used in 2019 to inform the Forging a Future for All vision. Not only are some of the findings from this relevant to this work but conducting another People's Panel would provide another aspect to the consultation process.

Following this initial stage, and as part of the ongoing conversation with the community, the Board may wish to consider an annual 'temperature check' engagement activity to test whether the benefits of the investment being made through the investment plan are being felt and making a positive impact, and what the Board should be thinking about for future investment priorities accordingly. This could be supported by an annual conference or event, bringing together the community, strengthening ties, sharing experiences and good practise etc.



Other specialist resource will be needed to support different aspects of this process and these will need to be procured utilising some of the capacity funding Government is expected to release once the Boundary has been agreed. This could include:

- Quantity Surveyor – to provide high level costs for proposed capital projects
- Graphics and plan preparation capacity
- Outline business case if interventions are 'off-menu'

Questions for Board

- Would 2-3 Board members be willing to form a small task and finish group to act as a sounding board and work alongside Council colleagues in the detailed development of the consultation approach?
- Do you know any community organisations who might be well placed to lead part of the consultation?
- Are there any consultation specialists you would recommend to support with this work?
- Are there other ways you have seen elsewhere which would enable strong community participation in the development of the Investment Plan which should be considered instead of / in addition to the above?
- What risks or concerns do you have about the process and how could we work together to mitigate those?
- Is the Board happy to pursue this approach?

Task 1	<p>Information Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2021 Town Investment Plan • LTPFT DLUHC guidance • Community Safety Survey • PCC Hot spot data 	Weeks 3&4 May
Task 2	<p>Stakeholder engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LTPFT three themes • Evidence and data • Identify key issues • Potential interventions 	Weeks 1&2 June
Task 3	<p>Key Issues and Interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare paper • Consult with Board • Agree consultation material 	Weeks 3&4 June
Task 4	Public consultation	Weeks 1&2 July
Task 5	Final Town Plan/Investment Plan Board approval	Weeks 3-5 July