

Name of meeting: Cabinet

Date: 16th March 2021.

Title of report: Investing in Small Town Centres

Purpose of report: To set out and agree an approach for developing programmes to support smaller town centres across Kirklees. This report sets out the first phase of this requirement; the conditions for implementation; the resources required and seeks approval to commence the programme of engagement, plan development as well as identification and delivery of projects.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	Yes
Key Decision - Is it in the <u>Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports)?</u>	Key Decision – Yes Private Report/Private Appendix – No
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Yes
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	David Shepherd – 24th February 2021
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?	Eamonn Croston - 1st March 2021
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	Julie Muscroft – 1st March 2021
Cabinet member portfolio	Cllr Peter McBride – Regeneration

Electoral wards affected:

Batley East, Batley West, Cleckheaton, Heckmondwike, Holme Valley South

Ward councillors consulted: Ward Members from Batley, Cleckheaton, Heckmondwike and Holmfirth have been consulted between 11th January 2021 and 11th February 2021.

Public or private: Public.

Has GDPR been considered?

GDPR is applicable to the Town Centre Programmes and will be considered within the development of programmes, projects, and related stakeholder engagement plans.

1. Summary

1.1 This report is presented to Cabinet for the reasons set out below:

- a. To set out, for consideration and agreement, the first tranche of town centres to benefit from additional funding allocated as part of the Council's Capital Plan. (See para: 2.4 - 2.7).
- b. To identify, and agree with Cabinet, the requirements needed to access the funding. (See para: 2.8 - 2.13).
- c. To agree project or programme types that funding can be used towards. (See para: 2.14 - 2.16).
- d. To agree the amounts of funding to be made available. (See para: 2.17 - 2.19).
To agree the Council resources to support this initiative. (See para: 2.20)
- e. To highlight an indicative timeframe for delivery, subject to projects being developed. (See para: 2.21 - 2.22).
- f. If report agreed, to authorise the Strategic Director for Growth and Regeneration to commence engagement, plan development and identification of projects stages and authorise the subsequent implementation of individual programmes in consultation with the portfolio holder for Regeneration.

2. Information required to take a decision

a. Introduction

2.1 We are already underway with a programme of work in the two principal town centres of Huddersfield and Dewsbury. The aim here is to create modern, thriving, and exciting town centres that everyone wants to visit and use. However, our ambition should not end there. We have many important centres outside of these which will require support and investment over the next few years to ensure they remain vibrant places for the communities they serve. We should recognise that these centres can play an important local role and are part of a strategy which allows local people to access a wider range of local services and contributes to a more sustainable way of living which embraces our climate change agenda.

The Impact of the Pandemic on Local Centres

2.2 The current pandemic is shining a light on local centres with more and more people using and discovering what is on their doorstep. On a positive note, lockdown has meant walking to the local food store to access everyday goods is more commonplace. Similarly, discovering local parks and community facilities will bring people together. However, if we are to continue to support our objectives for inclusion and climate change then we will want these centres not only to survive the current crisis but also to be strengthened moving forward so that they play an important part of local community life moving forward. However, these centres will require investment and businesses will need support if this ambition is to be fulfilled.

Place Based Discussions

2.3 Place based working taps into the huge pride that the people of Kirklees have for the places in which they live, work and play, and their valuable skills, strengths and local knowledge. Through the past year several conversations have been taking place across Kirklees either through Place Standard or other engagement processes. Concern for the future of town centres remains a key theme. This combined, with the national decline in town centre activity and a shifting emphasis during lockdown to a more locally based lifestyle means that widening out investment to centres other than Huddersfield and Dewsbury is now paramount.

Investing in the next set of Towns

2.4 As indicated above all centres will be feeling the impact of town centre decline because of the shift to online shopping, changing leisure habits and more recently the effects of Co-Vid19. Even though some centres are doing well they will still need investment to ensure that they continue to thrive into the long term. The revitalisation of town centres also represents a contribution to the overall economic recovery of the district as articulated by the Economic Recovery Plan. However, there needs to be careful consideration of where to invest next as the number of town and district centres dictate that not all can be developed together. This would be too difficult to manage all at once and would mean that investment may be too thinly spread.

2.5 However, the current hierarchy of towns, set out below, does help to define where we might want to target investment next. The four town centres of Batley, Cleckheaton, Holmfirth and Heckmondwike provide a convenient next stage as they are the next largest and important centres as defined by work undertaken as part of the Local Plan

Level	Centres
Principal Town Centre	Huddersfield and Dewsbury
Town Centre	Batley, Cleckheaton, Holmfirth and Heckmondwike
District Centre	Almondbury, Birstall, Denby Dale, Honley, Kirkburton, Lindley, Marsden, Marsh, Meltham, Milnsbridge, Mirfield, Moldgreen, Ravensthorpe, Skelmanthorpe and Slaithwaite
Local Centre	There are 61 local centres as set out in the Local Plan.

2.6 These four centres are important to Kirklees. They are either important town centres which provide a range of business, cultural, leisure and local retail facilities (Holmfirth) or are in areas where there is a greater expectation for local growth (Batley/Cleckheaton). They are also areas where there is already some other investment planned. For example, West Yorkshire Transport Fund (Holmfirth) or Transforming Cities Fund (Heckmondwike Bus Hub). There is also the future of Council Assets to consider (Library – Holmfirth/Heckmondwike) and Town Halls (Batley/Cleckheaton).

2.7 Based on this evidence officers would recommend that Batley, Cleckheaton, Holmfirth and Heckmondwike be selected for the next phase of town centre investment.

b. Accessing Funding and Internal Governance

2.8 A deliverable and transparent plan, including an agreed boundary, is at the heart of this process. We now have a few models – set by central government and ourselves – that could be adapted to help develop a plan. Essentially the stages of *engage – plan – fund - deliver* should underpin this process. At the end of the process areas will find themselves with an agreed list of longer-term projects that have funding and a level of agreement within their communities.

2.9 This process should be underpinned by community engagement to better understand how citizens feel about their town centre and to use feedback and insight to inform actions and priorities. The Place Standard tool has already been used in Huddersfield town centre, where citizens feedback has helped to shape the actions and priorities within a revised,

final version of the blueprint. A similar approach, potentially using the Place Standard Tool, can be undertaken to influence investment in other town centres.

- 2.10 It is envisaged that ward members working closely with their communities will be at the heart of these programmes. Subject to Cabinet decision, ward members will be briefed further and can work with officers to plan engagement and work collaboratively with citizens and other stakeholders to inform longer term investment proposals.
- 2.11 Each of the centres will benefit from short-term and long-term interventions up to a total of £1.5m. Those interventions will be informed by the engagement process with ward councillors and other stakeholders. Individual plans and projects are required to be approved by the Strategic Director for Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder prior to implementation and delivery.
- 2.12 From an internal programme and project management governance perspective, the overall programme will sit under the Town Centre Programme Board. This is chaired by the Strategic Director for Growth and Regeneration.
- 2.13 It is also important to note that this early planning and investment in towns by the Council is only a first step towards the total regeneration of a particular area. In many cases this investment will help boost the confidence of the private sector to also invest in those areas. Importantly, any plans drawn up can provide a more compelling strategic case for government should other funding become available. A pipeline of projects for the future is also helpful.

c. Ensuring the Right Projects are Supported

- 2.14 Further investment in these centres will help to consolidate them as strong local focal points for both existing and new communities. Importantly, as outlined above, funding needs to be targeted on both short and long-term measures.
- 2.15 It is important that investment is targeted at the right types of project. These could be categorised (not in any order of priority) as:
- Supporting retail, employment, community, and local centre activity.
 - Sustainable travel and climate change measures.
 - Improved community safety.
 - Culture, art, and leisure activities; and,
 - Public realm/landscaping, heritage, conservation, and better design – including shopfronts
- 2.16 There could be a case for using some of the investment on short term place mending schemes provided it helps strengthen the identified centre.

d. Capital Allocations

- 2.17 It is proposed that the amounts for Batley, Cleckheaton, Holmfirth and Heckmondwike be set at up to £1.5m per centre to cover both short and long-term projects.
- 2.18 It should be expected that the majority of such an allocation will be used towards long term projects set out in the Action/Investment Plans identified in 2.11 above. It is not expected the short-term measures will exceed £500k.
- 2.19 This would leave a residual amount from the initial capital allocation that will go towards other centres in the authority. Officers will set up a process so that those centres not yet identified can put forward proposals for future investment. This will need to be managed carefully with a spending cap applied. This process will be subject to a future cabinet report.

e. Officer Support

2.20 The programmes for each centre cannot be delivered without resources being in place. It is proposed that the Head of Town Centre Programmes puts together a team of officers to support the programme. The cost of this, estimated at £143k per annum, will be secured from the overall approved capital allocation of £10m. Officers will provide support and expertise alongside other services within the council. Resources to undertake Place Standard engagement are already in place from within the Democracy and Place Based Working Service and will be commissioned to facilitate the delivery of the proposals set out in this report as required.

f. Indicative Timeframe for Delivery

2.21 If an approach which settles on the 4 main centres is adopted, then it is suggested that funding be spread over the next 3 years. The main principles are:

- Resource put in place – 3 months
- Short term project delivery – initial 12 – 18 months
- 6-9 months for Action/Investment Plan development in parallel with above including engagement
- Long Term Project development and delivery 30 months

2.22 The overall programme for this phase will start in 2021 and end in 2024.

3. **Implications for the Council**

- **Working with People**

Engagement exercises on each programme is expected in the identified towns as part of the process.

- **Working with Partners**

The programmes will cover a wide range of projects and initiatives which require working with different partners. The council will also work closely with its own specialist consultancies, train and bus operators, road user representative groups, equality access groups, business forums and delivery contractors.

- **Place Based Working**

Development of all programmes will involve recruiting the services and/or knowledge of local user representative and community groups. Ward councillors will take a central role and Members of the public will be consulted on their views to deliver the Programmes and address local needs.

- **Climate Change and Air Quality**

The reduction of carbon emissions is recognised as an important area for delivery. Project and programme impacts will be assessed as part of the programme and project development stages.

- **Improving outcomes for children**

Town centres need to be child and family friendly the investment programmes can help improve that element.

- **Other (e.g. Legal/Financial or Human Resources)**

The ongoing development and delivery of the small centres programme requires a number of programme and project management staff, together with design and support service staff. The Town Centre Regeneration, Housing Growth and Major Project Services are undergoing a process to quantify and provide the necessary staff resources.

Individual interventions /projects will require consideration of legal powers and procedures on a case-by-case basis particularly relating to land, planning and procurement in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules. The Council has a public sector equality duty under section 149 Equality Act 2010 and an Equality Impact assessment will be considered at the appropriate stages of delivery of the programme. Individual projects will have their own risk logs.

Internal governance and monitoring arrangements will be via the officer Town Centre Programme Board chaired by a Service Director.

- **Do you need an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)?**

An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required at this stage.

4. Consultees and their opinions

4.1 During January 2021 discussions with ward Members from the 4 areas identified in the report above were contacted and engaged in an early discussion relating to potential issues and initiatives that could be supported in their areas. There was a good degree of support for further investment and a great understanding of the need to plan to ensure that their towns became a destination of choice for local communities.

4.2 These discussions were wide ranging. There was a desire to have a plan and join up funding and service activities to maximise opportunities. Discussions on project potential also varied but there were common themes that were evident. These were:

- Provision of community spaces and better community buildings
- Enhancing public realm and the streetscape
- The importance of green spaces and making connections to the town
- Supporting businesses to get the right offer
- Improving shopfronts
- Preserving the character of the area
- Better traffic management
- Introduction of Markets
- Linking up with other investment

5. Next steps and timelines

5.1 If Cabinet has approved the recommendations set out in this report then individual programmes can continue to be progressed to delivery subject to the conditions set out in the report.

6. Officer recommendations and reasons

6.1 Cabinet is asked to:

1. To agree the next tranche of town centres namely: Batley, Cleckheaton, Holmfirth, and Heckmondwike to benefit from additional £1.5m per centre allocated as part of the Council's Capital Plan as set out in paragraphs 2.4 and 2.7 above.
Reason: To ensure Capital allocations are directed to the next set of Town Centres

2. Agree the requirements needed to access the funding as set out in section 2.8 to 2.13 and to delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Growth and Regeneration to approve individual plans and projects in consultation with the Portfolio holder regeneration.
Reason: To ensure a consistent and transparent process is applied across the 4 centres.
3. To agree the generic list of project or programme types that funding can be used towards as set out in section 2.14 and 2.16.
Reason: To ensure projects have maximum impact.
4. To agree that £1.5m per centre is made available as highlighted in section 2.17 and 2.18.
Reason: To ensure projects can be delivered.
5. Note the indicative timeframe for delivery subject to projects and programmes being worked up.
Reason: To ensure a programme is delivered in a timely manner.
6. To note that a further report will be brought back to Cabinet dealing with the residual amount of investment as referred to in paragraph 2.19 of this report.
Reason: To ensure projects can be delivered in other centres.
7. To agree the staffing resources to support this initiative and the mechanism for doing so as set out in 2.20.
Reason: To ensure projects can be delivered.
8. Note the officer Town Centre Programme Board will oversee and monitor the delivery of the projects and capital investment programme in Small Town Centres.
Reason: To ensure projects can be delivered to programme.

7. Cabinet Portfolio Holder's recommendations

- 7.1 The Portfolio holder Regeneration - Cllr Peter McBride is supportive of the proposals

8. Contact officer

Simon Taylor – Head of Town Centre Programmes

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9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

None specifically.

10. Service Director responsible

Service Director is Angela Blake, Service Director for Economy and Skills.