

Dewsbury Neighbourhood Board

Date: 1st May 2025

Title of report: Plan for Neighbourhoods: Capacity Funding for Engagement

Purpose of report: This report seeks Board approval to allocate Plan for Neighbourhood capacity funding to support the development and delivery of engagement activities to support the development of the Regeneration Plan.

Officer recommendations and reasons:

- Board notes the content of this report.
- Board approves for a total of £66,000, of the expected £200,000 MHCLG capacity funding (year 2025/26) to be allocated to support engagement activities as part of the Plan for Neighbourhoods.

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? Yes

1. Summary

The former Long-term plan was paused following last year's election by the new government. Recent updated guidance has replaced the long-term plan, which is now the Plan for Neighbourhoods.

This guidance has had some priority changes which need to be reflected in the Regeneration Plan, and the funding for delivery has been delayed by a financial year, however £200,000 of capacity funding has been allocated to support development of the Regeneration Plan for Dewsbury in 2025/26.

To enable further engagement to take place this report is seeking approval to utilise approximately one third of the capacity funding for further engagement activities. This will build on the engagement activities undertaken in Summer/Autumn 2024.

2. Information required to take a decision

During 2024 a substantial programme of engagement was undertaken as part of the then Long-term Plan for Towns programme. The new government has now confirmed this programme will be known as the Plan for Neighbourhoods and has shared new guidance.

To ensure we maintain momentum by providing continuous engagement, and ensure engagement reflects the new guidance it is proposed that a programme

of engagement activities are undertaken and funded through the forthcoming capacity funding for 25/26.

Without this plan being agreed, there will be no resourcing to develop a cultural and event- led engagement plan that is essential for Dewsbury's regeneration.

The recommended distribution of funding, summarised below, will enable engagement and communication activities, supported by Kirklees Council consultation team and project officers. Events will be planned and delivered through this allocated resourcing, and promoted through existing Board platforms if the allocation is agreed.

It is proposed that the funding is distributed as follows:

Event-led Engagement

Allocate £10,000 to support a programme of event-led engagement with the community. This would be led by The Arcade Group who have already secured £48,000 UKSPF funding to deliver events in Dewsbury. This allocation will enable events-led engagement and support up to 20 events, differing in scale and offer in Dewsbury Town Centre.

Feedback from the latest consultation *#OurFutureDewsbury*, a diverse offer of events was high on the priorities that communities would like to see in the centre. Supporting this priority and the Arcade Groups work with this additional funding would offer Dewsbury residents other reasons to visit the centre and increase footfall, where we have clear evidence that promoted events significantly increase footfall.

A well-planned programme of events, coordinated and led by the Arcade Group and working closely with the Council and Board will enable engagement opportunities that support the Regeneration Plan. It is anticipated the range of events will include: five larger events, such as the food festival, three smaller events around the town and monthly 'pop-up' events. These will help to increase activity in the town and create the opportunity to engage with the community.

Engaging with communities throughout the development of the Regeneration Plan is something that is required by MHCLG. Events taking place following the submission of the plan, will enable ongoing conversations with Dewsbury residents, developing the relationships between communities and board members; which is an area board members have stated they like to see positively develop.

Progress and updates would be given by The Arcade Group Chair, to both Kirklees Council for UKSPF funding as well as Dewsbury Neighbourhood Board for capacity funding.

Business-engagement

Allocate £20,000 to help establish a business network to support increased engagement with local businesses. It is proposed that the The Arcade Group as

an established entity take responsibility for establishing this group and facilitating engagement.

The potential benefits of establishing a business network that is led by local businesses for Dewsbury would be:

- Engagement-led networking, informing regeneration plan
- Strengthened Collaboration & Communication between businesses
- Stronger Economic Resilience
- Increased Visibility and Footfall
- Upskilling & Innovation
- Attract New Investment
- A strong business network presents a more compelling case to investors

The Chair of the Arcade Group would be accountable to the Neighbourhood Board and provide updates and progress where required.

Communications / Profile

Allocate £13,000 to the Communications Working Group. This will enable a continuation of work that has already started to shape how various communications are needed to support priority messaging of investment projects and local community events.

In addition to physical and digital messaging, this will support an ongoing need and commitment for both Dewsbury Neighbourhood Board social media platforms, and the website.

Communications are required to ensure that messaging is seen in public as well as on the digital platforms, as well as being able to promote events as they are planned and happening. Additionally, the need for these channels to engage with residents and community groups as the Board have committed and would seek to strengthen conversations and engagement throughout project delivery.

Feedback from members of the public has been that there has been a lack of physical communications in the town centre itself, and the working group are currently looking at options to progress this, and a budget position following a decision will inform next steps.

Without this allocation, key messaging in town centre and a continued online presence will be minimal and there is a risk a continued online presence will be weakened over the next financial year, where engagement and promotion of events would be crucial to ensure the Neighbourhood Board are able to promote events they are also supporting.

Events, planning and resourcing

Allocate £23,000 to resource a part-time role for the next 12 months (2-days per week). This role would need to be established to support the events and cultural development of the Plan for Neighbourhoods. This role would work

closely with Council, Board, Dewsbury Arcade Group and other partners to support the cultural activities across Dewsbury in year 1 and provide support for the planning process and longer-term programming.

In summer 2024, thematic working group members led by board members articulated this role was a priority and should be led by someone independent of the Council. It is anticipated this role would be led by the same freelance events and cultural development expert, who also led on the *Taking the Lead* programme. They would create a body of events that delivers to the uniqueness of the cultural infrastructure of Dewsbury through their significant experience and knowledge.

Due to the freelance relationship, they can be employed in a way that best supports the aims of the Neighbourhood Board, supported and managed by Council officers as with Taking the Lead. This role will be vital to develop of the next phase of cultural programming for Dewsbury.

Should this recommendation be agreed, it is anticipated an immediate start can be taken for progressing all these areas to ensure the benefits of these are realised at the earliest opportunity. Once progressed, engagement plans can then be developed as part of the events and networking that can then be fed into regeneration submission timelines.

3. Implications

3.1 Working with People

As part of the consultation for the former long-term plan for Dewsbury, a comprehensive engagement with the various communities in Dewsbury was undertaken. This included in person engagement activities, such as family fun days, shopping centres, directly engaging with businesses, religious organisations, schools, colleges and drop-in sessions at the Town Hall. These engagement activities were planned to be as inclusive as possible, future engagement activities will enable continued engagement with local people to ensure the Regeneration Plan reflects their needs.

3.2 Working with Partners

Dewsbury Neighbourhood Board includes a wide of stakeholders from across the Dewsbury area including community, education, business, and development sectors as well as the Council and the local Member of Parliament. Ongoing engagement will continue to engage with key partners in Dewsbury.

3.3 Place Based Working

The Dewsbury Blueprint is based on the idea of working with local people and businesses to improve the town centre and this has been taken forward in subsequent projects. The Strategic Development Framework approved by Cabinet on the 22nd of January 2019 draws upon the earlier Strategic Development Framework produced in 2010. This was also a result of extensive public engagement and highlighted the importance local people place on having an attractive and vibrant town centre. The consultation carried out by the

consultants 'Social' for the Dewsbury Town Deal in late 2020 provides further support to these conclusions.

The development of the Regeneration Plan for Dewsbury will build on past engagements and be shaped by the community through further engagement to ensure it reflects local priorities and is tailored to the needs of Dewsbury to achieve the best outcomes for residents.

3.4 Climate Change and Air Quality

The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and has adopted a 'net zero' carbon emissions target for 2038. As part of developing the Plan for Neighbourhoods, projects will ensure that they are contributing positively to tackle Climate Change & Air Quality and will feed into any design and development as these progress.

3.5 Improving outcomes for children

The regeneration of Dewsbury, particularly the town centre, has always had a family friendly emphasis. The stakeholder engagement has reconfirmed this. The projects reflect the need to encourage families back into the town. Projects such as the Town Park, and the Market have a significant focus on improving outcomes for children.

3.6 Other (e.g Legal, Finance, Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment or Human Resources)

It is important to note that the Council is the "Accountable Body" to MHCLG with responsibility for receiving and managing the grant funding and delivery of the projects. Management, governance and delivery of the PfN will be overseen by the Dewsbury Neighbourhood Board and the Council will be responsible for the delivery of projects in conjunction with the Board and other partners.

Legal Services will advise on the relevant grant conditions and associated compliance risks including failure to achieve contracted spend and output profiles, procurement will be in line with relevant regulations, failure to comply with branding guidelines etc.

The Council will comply with its Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules; and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and/or the Procurement Act 2023 in relation to Goods, Works and Services and the Subsidy Control Act 2022. The Council must comply with its duty of Best Value under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999. The Council must comply with its Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 Equality Act 2010 in relation to projects on a case-by-case basis before making any decisions.

4. Consultation/Engagement

Feedback from the Dewsbury Blueprint consultation, and the engagement undertaken during 2024 as part of the Long-term Plan will be reviewed, and the additional engagement outlined in this report will feed in to the development of the Regeneration Plan.

5. Options

Without this support the engagement activities outlined cannot happen. The recommendation to allocate the funding as described in this report has been discussed and endorsed by the Communication Working Group, which consists of three board members.

6. Next steps and timelines

Subject to the recommendations being agreed and capacity funding being released by MHCLG, it is anticipated work can start in May to progress all areas outlined so that engagement can commence as soon as possible and feed into the programme to develop the Regeneration Plan.

7. Contact officer

James Blamires, Project Officer, Town Centre Regeneration

8. Appendices (If applicable)

n/a

9. Service Director responsible

Joanne Bartholomew - Service Director, Development