



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

27 January 2021

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| Report Title: | Town Deal – Town Investment Plan |
| Cabinet Portfolio | Economy, Regeneration and Housing |
| Cabinet Member | Councillor Richard McCauley |
| Exempt Report | No |
| Reason for Exemption | N/A |
| Key Decision | Yes |
| Public Notice issued | 23 December 2020 |
| Wards Affected | All |
| Report of | Lisa Harris Executive Director, Place Services LisaHarris@sthelens.gov.uk |
| Contact Officer | Mike Poulter Interim Director of Strategic Growth michaelpoulter@sthelens.gov.uk |

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| Borough priorities | Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life | X |
| | Promote good health, independence and care across our communities | X |
| | Create safe and strong communities for our residents | X |
| | Support a strong, diverse and well-connected local economy | X |
| | Create a green, thriving and vibrant place to be proud of | X |
| | Be a modern, efficient and effective Council | X |

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Cabinet with the completed Town Deal – Town Improvement Plan (TIP) for consideration and approval to submit to Government in advance of the 31st January 2021 deadline.

2. Recommendations for Decision

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) Approve the Town Improvement Plan for submission to Government.

3. Purpose of this Report

- 3.1 To provide Cabinet with the St Helens Town Deal – Town Improvement Plan for approval prior to submission to Government on 29th January 2021.
- 3.2 The report also sets out the next steps in the process following the plan's submission.

4. Background

4.1. Town Fund

- 4.1.1 On 6 September 2019 the Government established the Town Fund with the aim of driving the sustainable economic regeneration of towns to deliver long term economic and productivity growth. To achieve the aim each of the 100 selected towns (including St Helens) were asked to develop proposals to bid for up to £25m of the Town Fund. The proposals, in the form of a Town Investment Plan (TIP), were required to be framed around three main headings:
- Urban regeneration
 - Skills and Enterprise Infrastructure
 - Connectivity
- 4.1.2 Subsequently, and in response to the Pandemic, in addition to the three main headings, towns were also asked to consider how the fund could mitigate the impact of Covid – 19 with actions tailored to each town's circumstances and the localised impacts of the pandemic.

4.1.3 The Government also confirmed that if a town brings forward a project perceived to be of 'national significance' the Town Investment Plan (TIP) bid could be increased to a maximum £50m but this approach will attract higher levels of scrutiny and challenge prior to approval.

4.2 Town Deal Board

4.2.1 In January 2020 the Council established a 'Town Deal Board' to develop the TIP in accordance with the guidance detailed in the Town Fund Prospectus 2019. The Board includes local businesses, MPs, members from the local community, and other partners committed to improving the town. The Board has met each month to oversee the development of the TIP, together with the Council as the accountable body, with an agreed focus on developing a set of projects to address challenges in the Town Centre.

4.2.2 In the first phase the Board gathered stakeholder opinions and the available evidence to establish a clear view of the challenges the Town Centre faced. This approach provided the foundations for the development of a vision and objectives for the TIP, in line with the bid guidance, in order to provide a strong context for the development of TIP projects.

4.2 Town Deal Vision

4.2.1 The findings from extensive stakeholder engagement and consultation were distilled to develop an agreed Town Deal vision for the next 10 years (2020-2030)

“By 2030 St Helens will nurture and celebrate its cultural and industrial heritage, building upon its creative and innovative gene in glass making and foundation-industries to innovate and create new opportunities for the people of St Helens to benefit from. Vibrancy will be created for the town centre; the town will be a buzzing, shared space where community will come together, learn from one another, improve their physical and mental well-being and be a place where people want to live, work and visit. Businesses and residents will be attracted to the new opportunities available, have quality spaces to dwell and linger and benefit from improved transport and digital connections borough-wide”.

4.2.2 Underpinning the vision are three thematic pillars:

- Creating a place where people want to be
- Shrink and Link
- Connected Communities

4.2.3 The vision and thematic pillars were then used to develop the key priorities for St Helens Town Investment Plan as follows:

- Capitalising on and re-positioning St Helens' cultural and heritage assets
- Supporting St Helens' economic recovery through job creation and upskilling the workforce.
- Transforming and regenerating the heart of the town centre to create a new mixed-use quarter, diversifying the housing offer and encouraging vitality and vibrancy back into the high-street
- Creating sustainable and accessible routes across the town to re-connect the town centre with residential communities and growth opportunities
- Providing a strong youth offer to inspire our young people
- To address health and wellbeing inequalities in the Borough and to highlight the Health sector as a key a career aspiration for all.
- Achieve digital inclusion to support St Helens' residents and businesses to thrive and provide the infrastructure to attract future investment and businesses to the borough.

4.3 Project Development and Shortlisting

4.3.1 The vision, thematic pillars and key priorities provided the strategic framework to enable outline project proposals to be developed for consideration by the Board.

4.3.2 The project proposals were then distilled and further developed over several months to bring forward the agreed shortlist of projects for inclusion in the TIP

A: Glass Futures Phase 2

B: Town Centre Living & Regeneration

C: Heritage World

D: Healthy Communities (Youth Zone, Health Innovation Hub)

E: Connected Places

F: Digital Infrastructure

4.3.3 Given that the Glass Futures project is considered to be of 'national significance' the Board agreed to increase the St Helens TIP bid from £25m to £38.55m. The increase is directly linked to the Glass Futures project; the sum of the remaining projects does not exceed £25m.

4.6 Deliverability

4.6.1 Project deliverability is a key consideration for the Town Investment Plan process and the partnership that St Helens Council have developed with English Cities Fund (ECF) is laying the foundations for accelerated delivery of the Town Deal should the submission be approved.

4.6.2 In February 2021 ECF will prepare a masterplan for the town centre which builds upon the Towns Fund opportunity and makes the most of the spatial areas outlined in the TIP to create the place where people want to be, with connectivity and linkages to make St Helens and its people proud again of their town.

4.7 Cabinet Approval and Next Steps

4.7.1 The completed TIP is attached for Cabinet approval. If Cabinet approval is secured, the Town Investment Plan will be submitted to Government before the 31st January 2021 deadline. The first stage of the Government approval process will take up to 10 weeks from the date of submission, in the interim Government will raise any issues of clarification or request additional evidence in support of projects as necessary.

4.7.2 Should the TIP be approved in full, or part, by Government, each approved project will need to be developed to a full business case and will be subject to a second stage approval by Government. Cabinet will be continue to be updated part of this process.

4.7.3 It is important to note that Town Deal is not designed or intended to provide the full funding for project delivery. In every case each approved project will be subject to a match funding requirement, from sources that are applicable to the type of approved project, prior to securing second stage approval. This match funding will need to have been secured prior to the submission of each projects business case.

5. Community Impact Assessment

- 5.1 The requirement for a community impact assessment will be properly considered as part of the development of a full business case for each of the approved TIP projects. However, each of the projects if funded will have a beneficial impact on the St Helens Community.

6 Consideration of Alternatives

- 6.1 Alternatives have been considered by the Town Deal Board as part of the project distillation process. There are no alternatives in relation to the predefined approach and requirements of the TIP process as outlined in the TIP guidance document.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 Towns Fund investment is key to securing transformational change for St Helens. It supports the Council to achieve its ambitions as outlined in the Borough Strategy. The projects included in the submission have been subjected to high levels of scrutiny and challenge and it is the view of the Town Deal Board that the attached Town Investment Plan represents a strong and compliant bid for St Helens.

8. Implications

8.1 Legal Implications

- 8.1.1 The legal requirements are being addressed by following the government guidance for the first stage approval process. Should agreement be reached to proceed to full business case for approved projects legal representatives will be consulted and fully engaged.

8.2 Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Implications

8.2.1 Social Value

Should the TIP submission be successful then social value will be a key consideration for the development of the full business case for each approved project.

8.2.2 Sustainability and Environment

Sustainability is a key element of the TIP submission criteria. If the submission is successful, each project will be subject to the Planning process where environmental constraints will be properly considered.

8.2.3 Health and Wellbeing

The proposal incorporates a health-related project to improve health in the borough.

8.2.4 Equality and Human Rights

There are no equality or human rights implications to consider.

8.3 Customers and Resident

The projects included in the TIP submission are reflective of stakeholder views in relation to improving the Town Centre. In this regard the implications of a successful TIP submission are very positive.

8.4 Asset and Property

The TIP is a bidding process for capital funding to improve the Town Centre. There are projects included for facilities that are in Council ownership and the implications are properly understood given the Council's role as the accountable body for the TIP submission. Any implications will be further assessed as part of the development of full business cases for each approved project.

8.5 Staffing and Human Resource

There are no HR implications at this point. Should the TIP submission be successful project delivery arrangements will need to be established. This will occur in consultation with HR.

8.6 Risks

Should the TIP submission be successful each project will have a risk profile established and mitigated actions will be defined as part of contingency planning and risk management.

8.7 Finance

As the Council is the accountable body initial discussions have taken place in relation to any financial implications. Should projects obtain approval the financial implications will be fully considered as part of developing the full business cases.

8.8 Policy Framework Implications

The submission is in line with current policies and Strategies of the Council.

9. **Background papers**

Town Fund Prospectus Guidance

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/924503/20191031_Towns_Fund_prospectus.pdf

Town Fund Further Guidance

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/926422/Towns_Fund_further_guidance.pdf

10. **Appendices**

Town Improvement Plan submission (to follow)