

CABINET

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| DATE | 2 nd September 2020 |
| REPORT OF | Cllr. Philip Jackson: Leader of the Council |
| RESPONSIBLE OFFICER | Clive Tritton: Interim Director of Economy, Growth and Environment |
| SUBJECT | Accelerated Towns Fund |
| STATUS | Open |
| FORWARD PLAN REF NO. | GENERAL EXCEPTION Not included on the Forward Plan therefore, to be considered under the General Exception provisions of the Constitution |

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The scheme will contribute to the Council's 'Stronger Economy' and 'Stronger Communities' priorities by creating a high quality, well maintained natural and built environment which will revitalise the town centre through the development of Riverhead Square. The scheme aligns with the ambitions of creating a stronger economy by ensuring the town centre offers the 'right' environment to attract and sustain private investment. The Local Plan, the Town Deal Prospectus (2018), and the principles of the emerging draft Grimsby Masterplan acknowledge the importance of creating open public spaces in and around the town centre which are safe and attractive for both residents, visitors and businesses.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2020, Government announced the launch of an Accelerated Towns Fund, available to those towns chosen for the Towns Fund programme, which includes Grimsby. The objective is to help accelerate town centre improvements in response to the impact of COVID-19. North East Lincolnshire Council (NELC) has an indicative offer of £1m of accelerated funding for capital projects within the town centre, which must be spent by 31 March 2021.

The Council was asked to respond urgently to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) with a project proposal which could be delivered within this financial year. The emerging Grimsby Masterplan work identifies that an improvement scheme for Riverhead Square is an important town centre project therefore Phase1 of this wider scheme has been submitted to MHCLG. In addition, some complimentary infrastructure works built into the current public realm development at St James Square have been submitted, and if funds permit, water and connectivity improvements to the River Freshney.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approve the proposal for the Council to act as Accountable Body for the Accelerated Towns Fund from MHCLG when the grant is formally awarded and agrees receipt of these funds.

2. Authorises the Director of Economy Growth and Environment, in consultation with the Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer, and the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Skills and Housing to negotiate and finalise appropriate legal agreements between the Council and MHCLG.
3. Authorises the Director of Economy, Growth and Environment in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Skills and Housing, to take all actions necessary to progress this scheme to ensure it can be implemented within the permitted timescale.

REASONS FOR DECISION

To enable the Council to accept the grant when formally awarded and to begin work on the design of the scheme. Further detail of the full Riverhead scheme will be presented to Cabinet following the design stage.

1. BACKGROUND

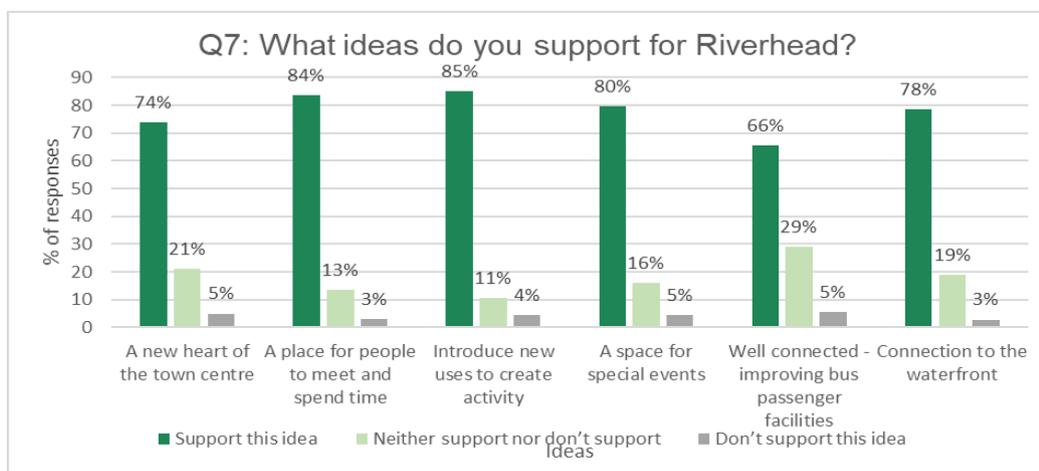
- 1.1 In 2018 Grimsby's pilot Town Deal positioned the town at the start of a journey of regeneration and future investment. The positive impacts of this early agreement with Government are now evident as several major town centre schemes are well under way, for example: Garth Lane developments, public realm at Frederick Ward Way and the regeneration of St James square.
- 1.2 The town is now part of a wider national Towns Fund programme and can bid for a further £25m of Government investment over the next five years. In preparation of this next phase of investment plans the Council commissioned the development of a new Grimsby Masterplan to set a framework for the town centre which identifies its short, medium, and long- term opportunities.
- 1.3 The masterplan focuses on Grimsby town centre and is centred on three main areas
 - a) St James and surrounding area (Freshney Place, Cartergate and the train station)
 - b) Alexandra Dockside
 - c) Riverhead
- 1.4 The master planning reviews the earlier 2009 Masterplan, the Grimsby and Cleethorpes Town Investment Plans (2016), the Local Plan and the Towns Fund Prospectus (2018) to determine which aspects remain valid and should be progressed and what new ideas or changes were needed for the town. Following significant stakeholder and public consultation the refreshed Masterplan is currently being drafted and will be presented to Cabinet at a forthcoming meeting.
- 1.5 The next stage of the Towns Fund programme requires NELC and the Greater Grimsby Board to submit a Town Investment Plan (TIP) outlining its regeneration plans and priority projects for the next five years. The finalised Masterplan will help inform the TIP by identifying town centre projects which can be progressed through this funding route.

- 1.6 Ahead of this, and as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government announced in June it was offering some additional Accelerated Towns Funding to help kick-start town centre interventions. Grimsby has been indicatively offered £1m, which is in addition to the ring-fenced £25m on offer through the Towns Fund programme.
- 1.7 This funding opportunity comes with a very short development and delivery window, as MHCLG expect the £1m grant to be spent by the end of this financial year. NELC was asked to submit their proposal by the 14th August in the form of a letter from the S151 Officer, confirming value for money and deliverability within the permitted timescale.

2. THE PROPOSED SCHEME

- 2.1. The scheme NELC is presenting as its accelerated project has two strands which will introduce environmental improvements to public areas in the town centre with the main intervention at Riverhead Square, (plus potential water and connectivity enhancements to the River Freshney) with a smaller scale intervention at St James Square.
- 2.2 Riverhead Square public realm improvements have been submitted as Grimsby’s accelerated project as this site has been highlighted within the emerging Grimsby Masterplan as an important civic area for development with the town centre. Transformation of the Square into a safe open communal space with flexible use was clearly supported by the participants of the recent Masterplan consultation, see extract from the survey results shown below:

2.3



The approach will be to design the whole regeneration scheme for Riverhead Square and then introduce a phased element to cater for a maximum of £1m spend. The smaller intervention at St James Square is a maximum £50k enhancement, used to install additional events infrastructure which will add value to the current public realm improvements. This will allow greater activation of this important open space. Additionally £50k of Humber High Street Covid-19 Recovery Grant Scheme (HHSCRG), which was redirected to respond to Covid-19 impact in town centres, is being used as match funding for the Accelerated Town Fund, as there is an expectation these monies are used for public realm expenditure too.

- 2.4 Due to the need to respond promptly to this funding opportunity and begin delivery at pace once the grant is released, the Council plans to design out the whole scheme and put the right phasing plan in place. If this does not perfectly align to £1m, the Council will look to expand the scheme to include some environmental improvements to the River Freshney thus complimenting the Town Deal (1) funded Garth Lane works and emerging masterplan principles where a key objective is to activate the waterfront and provide greater connectivity in and around the town centre. This approach will offer MHCLG some assurance the full £1m can be defrayed within the allowable time while being aligned to clearly defined strategic objectives that add value to the town centre.
- 2.5 Initial designs will be complete during September, with detailed designs in place by the end of November 2020. Construction is planned for early new year with completion by March 2021. The second much larger phase of public realm works for the square is expected to feature in Grimsby's Towns Fund TIP so these accelerated works will naturally compliment the overall regeneration scheme planned for the square and the wider town centre. Sundry water and connectivity works have a short lead-in time and can be programmed into the overall delivery window if there are available monies within the grant allocation. This will become apparent when detailed costs are available. The additional infrastructure works at St James Square will be a small extension to a much larger regeneration scheme currently being undertaken and will add additional features to the square to extend the range of outside community events which can be held. These additional infrastructure works are expected to take six weeks and can be completed by Quarter 3, 2020/21.

3. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 3.1 Opportunities – the Accelerated Towns Fund provides an opportunity to secure an initial investment of grant funding to kick-start improvements to Riverhead Square and begin the installation of a revitalised open civic space for the town. The later phase of Riverhead works will be presented within the TIP as a priority project with funds sought from the next stage of Towns Fund programme.
- 3.2 If Government decide not to award the accelerated funding Phase 1 will be delayed until the full scheme can be presented in the TIP. Towns Funding would then be sought to finance the whole regeneration scheme.
- 3.3 Part of our assurance to MHCLG that the scheme can be delivered within this financial year, is to use appointed contractors who are currently working on other public realm schemes within the town centre. As the Council has scope to increase the value of these contracts it can significantly shorten the lead in time required prior to commencing the works, whilst still being assured of value for money. Discussions have already taken place with the contractors to confirm their capacity to deliver this additional work within the permitted timescale which they are confident is achievable.

4. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. Do nothing – this would be an option which would not achieve the Council's key strategic aims for the regeneration of the town centre, as described in the Local Plan, Grimsby and Cleethorpes Town Centre Investment Plan and emerging Grimsby Masterplan.
- 4.2. Development of an alternative scheme – due to the very short development and delivery window attached to this funding there was little opportunity to develop an alternative scheme as other dependencies like planning permission and procurement exercises could not have been achieved.
- 4.3. The Preferred Option – following an assessment of deliverable options the conclusion was to select a scheme which has been given recent support through the public consultation and is emerging as a priority project within the Grimsby Masterplan. The scheme requires a short lead in time therefore the Riverhead scheme, adjacent to current public realm work was the preferred option, along with an extension to the works currently being carried out at St James Square. Both can be mobilised quickly by extending current on-site contractors.

5. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1. A successful award of grant funding for Phase 1 of Riverhead Square will generate positive reputational and communications impacts for the Council and the Greater Grimsby Board in terms of the visible investment that will be made in Grimsby town centre and the associated benefits for local residents, investors, businesses and visitors.
- 5.2. There will be some reputation/communication risks associated to the project delivery if the scheme faces any delays and is not achieved within this financial year. These risks will be managed through the established governance and/project management arrangements that will be put in place. A further report detailing the design plans and the full scheme programme will be presented to Cabinet when we receive confirmation of the grant from MHCLG.

6. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1. The proposal as outlined within the report supports the Council's key financial objectives for a stronger economy and stronger community.
- 6.2. The funding is Capital and no Council match is required.

The funding available for the proposal is: -

- £1m from MHCLG Accelerated Towns Fund
- £50k of NELs allocation of Humber High Street Covid-19 Recovery Grant Scheme (HHSCRG)

7. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This proposal will make an overall positive contribution to the Councils published commitments on climate change and the environment. The design of the improvements to Riverhead Square will consider environmentally friendly construction features and low carbon technologies. The square will be developed to create an attractive open civic space which contributes positively to the natural environment. Additionally, if funds permit the river Freshney water improvements to be carried out these will improve the biodiversity and the conditions for wildlife.

8. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY

- 8.1 Due to the quick response required by MHCLG this proposal has been developed at pace to meet Government deadlines and was fast tracked through the governance process. The scheme has not been presented to Scrutiny due to the tight timescales however the full scheme will be presented to Scrutiny following the design stage.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The recommendation to agree receipt of these funds and act as accountable body does not bring with it any significant financial implications or risks. The Council has worked closely with MHCLG and the scheme are considered deliverable thus mitigating any risk of clawback.
- 9.2 As detailed within the financial considerations above, the funding is of a capital nature and does not require any Council contribution or match. Whilst there is always the risk of overspends, as long as any delivery risks are appropriately managed this remains low.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The appointment of the Council as Accountable Body as outlined in this report will be achieved through a contractual relationship and signature of a funding contract. The recommendations sought are consistent with this approach.
- 10.2 Legal Service colleagues are available to advise on and support the completion and signature of the funding contract and ensure that risk to the Council is fully understood and mitigated through appropriate governance. Further, they will offer support in the delivery of the project as and when required.
- 10.3 The appointment to Accountable Body status will enable the Council to be directly and indirectly involved in the delivery of the objectives stated within this report.

11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no direct HR implications

12. WARD IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The Scheme is expected to benefit all Wards as the economic and social benefits

resulting from this regeneration will reach across those using the town centre.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1 There are no background papers.

14. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

Clive Tritton
Interim Director of Economy, Growth and Environment
01472 323901

Damien Jaines-White
Acting Assistant Director of Regeneration
01472 324674

COUNCILLOR PHILIP JACKSON
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL