

Report to:	EXECUTIVE CABINET
Date:	23 March 2022
Executive Member:	Councillor Oliver Ryan – Executive Member (Finance and Economic Growth)
Reporting Officer:	Ian Saxon – Director of Place Gregg Stott – Assistant Director, Investment, Development & Housing
Subject:	LEVELLING UP FUND: DENTON BID
Report Summary:	The report seeks approval for the preparation of a bid to the Levelling Up Fund for Denton Town Centre and approval for the procurement of specialist external consultancy support for the preparation and submission of a bid by Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council.
Recommendations:	That Executive Cabinet be recommended to : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Agree that a bid to the Levelling Up Fund for Denton Town Centre is prepared for submission and referred back for consideration prior to the bid submission date (once confirmed). (ii) Agree on the procurement and appointment of Specialist external support through STAR to assist in the preparation and submission of a bid to the Levelling Up Fund for Denton Town Centre. (iii) Approve a budget of up to £50,000 (via £125,000 grant awarded to the Council from the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in October 2021 to support Round 2 funding bids) to appoint the aforementioned external support. This budget is approved for all professional fees and costs associated with the preparation and submission of a bid to the Levelling Up Fund for Denton Town Centre.
Corporate Plan:	Key aims of the Corporate Plan are to provide opportunities for people to fulfil their potential through work, skills and enterprise and to ensure modern infrastructure and a sustainable environment that works for all generations and future generations. The interventions that will be supported by the proposed bid to the Levelling Up Fund will deliver against these aims in the areas of job creation, modern infrastructure and a sustainable environment.
Policy Implications:	The interventions that will be supported by the proposed bid to the Levelling Up Fund will support the policy aims of the Council's Inclusive Growth Strategy 2021, the emerging Tameside Town Centres Framework, the Tameside Climate Change & Environment Strategy, the Council's growth priorities agreed at Council February 2020 and the draft Greater Manchester Places for Everyone joint development strategy.
Financial Implications:	The report requests approval for a sum of up to £ 50,000 to support the submission of a Levelling Up Fund bid for Denton. Section 2 of

**(Authorised by the
statutory Section 151
Officer & Chief Finance
Officer)**

the report provides the supporting rationale for the town. It is expected that the bid process and date for submission will be announced in Spring 2022.

Members should note that the Council was recently successful in a Levelling Up Fund grant award of £19,870,000 for Ashton and will be re-submitting a bid for Stalybridge which is the subject of a separate report.

The Council was awarded £125,000 from the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in October 2021 to support the Round 2 funding bids. £50,000 of this grant will support the Levelling Up Fund bid for Denton. The remaining £75,000 will contribute towards a Levelling Up Fund bid, development prospectus and next stage studies for Stalybridge Town Centre which is subject to a separate report.

The related benefits of a successful bid will be realised within the town and across the borough with the supporting details quantified within the bid. In addition the interventions supported by the proposed bid will support the delivery of the Council's strategic priorities as set out in the Tameside Corporate Plan, the Tameside Inclusive Growth Strategy, and the emerging Tameside Town Centres Framework

It is essential that the specialist support required to submit the bid is procured in accordance with the Council's financial regulations and procedures with the provision of related advice via STAR where appropriate and that value for money is clearly evidenced.

It is noted that the bid will be subject to a separate report for consideration by Members once the submission date to Central Government is known.

Legal Implications:

**(Authorised by the
Borough Solicitor)**

As set out in the main body of the report Tameside has been identified as a category 1 in terms of prioritisation for the funding. Despite this the funding will be oversubscribed. Therefore, Members need to be content that the case for Denton is strong enough to warrant the investment required to prepare this particular submission.

This report is only seeking permission to undertake the preparatory work for the submission with the bid being returned to Cabinet for consideration.

The external support should be appointed with advice from the STaR procurement to ensure that a compliant procurement process is undertaken.

This report has been prepared on an urgent basis but it would be helpful if it could include the lessons learned from the round 1 bids which can be used to strengthen this bid.

Risk Management:

- a) Potential for loss of external funding opportunity to support future growth and diversification of the Tameside Economy, improved infrastructure, housing growth and the securing of investment in the Borough and act as a catalyst for further investment and regeneration.
- b) The work recommended in this report will minimise the risk of an unsuccessful bid to the Fund by ensuring the timely

preparation of robust business cases for submission utilising expert advice and additional capacity.

Background Information: The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Mike Reed – Head of Major Programmes



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 As part of the March 2021 budget, the Government announced £4.8 billion of 'Levelling Up Funding' ('The Fund') over four years (up to 2024-25), committed to a holistic, place-based approach to funding projects and programmes across the country. The 'Fund' is a joint venture between the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), Department for Transport (DfT) and the Treasury and is open to single tier Councils and District Councils in two tier areas, Counties and Combined Authorities. The Fund will provide investment in projects that require up to £20,000,000 of funding. However, there is scope for the Fund to invest (between £20,000,000 and £50,000,000) in larger high value transport projects, by exception. Bids to the Fund under round one closed in June 2021; it is anticipated that the process for bids to round two of the Fund will be announced in Spring 2022.

1.2 The Fund is focused on three themes:

1. **Transport Investments:** including public transport, active travel, bridge repairs, bus priority lanes, local road improvements and major structural maintenance, and accessibility improvements. Request for proposals for small, medium and by exception larger transport schemes that improve the environment, support economic growth and experience of transport users.
2. **Regeneration and Town Centre Investment** to enhance buildings and infrastructure, acquire and regenerate brownfield sites, invest in secure community infrastructure and crime reduction, and encourage public services and safe community spaces into towns.
3. **Cultural Investment:** maintaining, regenerating, or creatively repurposing museums, galleries, visitor attractions, and heritage assets as well as creating new community owned spaces to support the arts and serve as cultural spaces.

1.3 Projects should also be aligned to and support the Government's Net Zero Carbon goals.

1.4 The assessment process is focused on the following key criteria:

- **Characteristics of the Place:** Places have been put into priority categories 1, 2 or 3 based on their alignment with the objectives of the Fund. Tameside is part of Category 1 and within the highest level of prioritisation.
- **Deliverability:** bids should be able to demonstrate they are supported by a robust finance, management and commercial case. To ensure projects are delivered to programme and budget, bids are encouraged to include a local financial contribution representing at least 10% of total costs.
- **Strategic Fit with Local and Fund Priorities:** including how the proposed investment supports relevant local strategies and their objectives as part of the strategic case for improving infrastructure, promoting growth, enhancing the natural environment and making their areas more attractive places to live and work. The investments should represent the highest value local priorities.
- **Value for Money:** a range of benefits will be assessed as part of the economic appraisal of projects including potential to boost local economic growth, environmental benefits, greater employment opportunities, reduced travel times, increased footfall in town and city centres, crime reduction and social value to local communities.

1.5 Members of Parliament are expected to back one bid that they see as priority for their constituency. For Tameside this means there is scope for three bids to the Fund in the

constituencies of Ashton Under Lyne (Angela Rayner MP), Denton & Reddish (Andrew Gwynne MP), and Stalybridge & Hyde (Jonathon Reynolds MP).

- 1.6 In round one of the Fund for the constituency of Ashton Under Lyne a bid was submitted for Ashton Town Centre, and for the constituency of Stalybridge & Hyde a bid was made for Stalybridge Town Centre. For the constituency Denton & Reddish a bid for Reddish was promoted by Stockport MBC. The awards under the first round of the Fund were made in October 2021, in which Tameside was successful in securing £19,870,000 for Ashton Town Centre.
- 1.7 It has been agreed with Andrew Gwynne MP that a bid for Denton & Reddish focused on Denton Town Centre will be progressed by Tameside Council for round two of the Fund. A request for the Council to resubmit a bid for Stalybridge Town Centre to round two of the Fund is the subject of a separate report.

2. DENTON TOWN CENTRE BID

- 2.1 The Council has identified Denton Town Centre as one of its growth priorities, supporting delivery of the Tameside Inclusive Growth Strategy 2021-26 in making our town centres hubs for living, culture, employment and services supporting a sustainable retail sector.
- 2.2 Denton Town Centre has benefited from significant investment in recent years, including delivery of the Tameside Wellness Centre, new housing development and the growth of the evening economy. Despite this investment, the Town Centre has been negatively impacted by national market trends in the retail sector, increasing vacancy rates, the poor condition and/or underutilisation of prominent buildings, varying quality of public realm and a disconnection between key assets.
- 2.3 It is proposed that a bid to the Fund and specific interventions be prepared for Denton Town Centre in the context of an emerging wider strategic vision for the Town, consistent with the Council's emerging Tameside Town Centres Framework, supporting existing and planned investment. This will in turn help to deliver a catalytic economic and social impact to the local community. Interventions for the bid will be developed to provide public realm improvements, walking and cycling facilities, enabling infrastructure and support for heritage and townscape enhancements. This will help the Town Centre to reach its full potential and deliver further comprehensive regeneration, attracting additional investment.
- 2.4 The bid to the Fund will be designed to be an economic driver that delivers a genuine levelling up opportunity supporting national, GM and Tameside strategic policies. Contributions will accrue from enhancing sustainable travel and the continued regeneration of Denton as a modern hub that more effectively serves its local catchment.
- 2.5 There is now potential for a strong LUF bid to be compiled for Denton particularly focussing on public realm and active travel to further strengthen the links across the town centre. This will also ensure all of the benefits from the significant new investment and development that is taking place in Denton such as new residential and the Denton Wellness Centre to name a few are captured.
- 2.6 There are other key emerging developments in pipeline such as those relating to the former baths site. The Council has been successful in securing Brownfield Homes Grant into Denton and is seeking investment from TfGM via the Active Travel Fund for the Crown Point A57 scheme providing an improved environment for walking and cycling (details of which will be subject to a separate report).
- 2.7 There is now a significant opportunity in bringing all of the above together as part of a comprehensive emerging vision for Denton which will seek to capitalise on and develop

further the growing evening economy in the Town Centre and further explore the full potential of Council assets, such as the Town Hall, to provide a wider mix of uses. It is considered that a competitive LUF bid can be prepared for Denton as part of the national LUF round two process.

- 2.8 It would be helpful to have an extra paragraph in here providing the analysis as to why Denton meets the key criteria and key themes so as to justify the spend on pulling the bid together.

3. NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 The Government has announced there will be a second bidding round of the Fund; anticipated in Spring 2022. All bids irrespective of bidding round will be part of a competitive process and only those bids that score highly, including on deliverability, will be successful.
- 3.2 There will be significant competition for the Fund across England and funding requests will be far in excess of funding availability. It is imperative that any bids that are submitted are the strongest they can be, including on delivery certainty. Bids will be assessed as part of Green Book process/appraisal criteria.
- 3.3 In order to ensure a competitive submission it will be necessary to bring in additional resource, capacity and independent and professional advice/input. This will also give the bid further weight and justification of having sought external advice and as a normal course of any major bid preparation. The Council will utilise its own internal capacity and expertise to facilitate and drive the bids but it will be necessary to ensure the internal team have access to the resource and independence as required to ensure both a robust bid is put together but also one that can address all technical and compliance requirements.
- 3.4 It is estimated that a budget of up to a maximum sum of £50,000 is required to support a robust bid for Denton Town Centre. The budget will be used to support bid preparation and associated due diligence required to prepare a robust bid for submission to the Fund.
- 3.5 Funding is requested to cover external/professional/due diligence costs associated with preparing a Green Book submissions. The costs are associated with that of putting together a detailed comprehensive bid and that of further due diligence costs that will be required in parallel to the submission itself and for purposes of the bid and other requirements as needed. The procurement of specialist support will be undertaken via STAR procurement to ensure the most appropriate and compliant route to market that ensures value for money is secured.
- 3.6 The Council was awarded £125,000 from DLUHC in October 2021 to support the Round 2 bids to the Fund. This is funding via a Section 50 transfer to the Council which is none ring-fenced. It is proposed to utilise £50,000 to support the submission of a round two Levelling Up Fund bid for Denton. £75,000 will contribute towards a Levelling Up Fund bid, development prospectus and next stage studies for Stalybridge Town Centre. Members should note that the related details for Stalybridge are subject to a separate report.
- 3.7 An internal Council cross service working group will be established to focus on the coordination and development of the bid led by the Place Directorate. In the preparation of the detailed bid it will be necessary to consult with a range of local stakeholders to support the strategic case for investment.
- 3.8 The Council will now commence the work required to support the development of robust and deliverable bid to the Fund for Denton Town Centre. Further updates will be provided as the bid to the Fund is prepared.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The interventions supported by the proposed bid to the Fund will support the delivery of the Council's strategic priorities as set out in the Tameside Corporate Plan, the Tameside Inclusive Growth Strategy, and the emerging Tameside Town Centres Framework.
- 4.2 If successful, the bid would provide a significant financial contribution to Denton Town Centre and provide a proactive and positive response to the impact of the recent COVID-19 pandemic in terms of economic recovery and future inclusive growth.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 As set out at the front of the report.