

REPORT TO:		Cabinet	
DATE:		13 February 2024	
PORTFOLIO:		Cllr Mohammed Younis – Levelling Up	
REPORT AUTHOR:		Steve Riley, Executive Director (Environment)	
TITLE OF REPORT:		LUF project and other funding submission updates	
EXEMPT REPORT (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A)	No	Not applicable	
KEY DECISION:	No	If yes, date of publication:	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on recent progress with the LUF funded Accrington Town Square projects and confirmation of the recent success with regards to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Long-Term Plan for Towns, (LTPT) High Street Accelerators Pilot Programme, (HSAP) and National Lottery Heritage Funding (NLHF) submissions.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the recent progress on the LUF projects.
- 2.2 Acknowledges the recent funding announcements and grants delegated authority to the Executive Director (Environment), following consultation with the Executive Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Executive Director (Legal & Democratic Services) to accept in accordance with the relevant terms and conditions of each of the following funders:
- Long-Term Plan for Towns - £20m over a 10 year period, plus £250k revenue capacity funding split over 2023/24 & 2024/25, for Accrington Town Centre
 - High Street Accelerator Pilot - £237k revenue funding split over 2023/24 & 2024/25, plus the potential for an additional £500k of capital funding for 2024/25, for Great Harwood
 - National Lottery Heritage Fund - £463k revenue funding split over 2023/24 and 2024/25 for Accrington Market Chambers
- 2.3 Approves expenditure of the LTPT, HSAP and NLHF funding and grants delegated authority to the Executive Director (Environment) to take all reasonable steps to deliver each of the funders required project outcomes subject to the financial amounts highlighted in paragraphs 3.2.2, 3.2.3, 3.3.2 and 3.4.2 of this report.

2.4 Agrees that due to the extremely tight deadlines required by the funding agreements for each of these funding streams, the procurement strategy previously agreed to deliver the LUF funded Accrington Town Centre projects is applied to the HSAP, LTPT and NLHF funded projects

3. Background

3.1 LUF funded projects

3.1.1 Cabinet have received regular updates on progress of the Accrington Town Square projects and this report provides a brief update on progress to date. The Council has created a dedicated Accrington Town Square website where all relevant information about the projects, latest news and documents are available to view. Key recent outcomes to note are:

- Submission of all planning applications for Burtons Chambers, Market Chambers, the Market Hall / Trader Decant and listed building consent for the Market Hall. At the time of writing this report, planning permission has been approved for Burtons Chambers and the Market Trader Decant. The remaining applications are due to be determined in February and March 2024.
- Appointment of Delivery Partner – Morgan Sindall have initially been appointed to undertake the enabling works, which includes liaising with the existing project team on the relocation of the market traders to the new temporary market on the town square, although the contractual arrangements give us the ability to extend the scope of their appointment subject to satisfactory performance.
- Procurement of operators for both Burtons Chambers and the Market Hall commenced and identification of a preferred operator is likely to be March for the Burtons Chambers and May for the Market Hall, with signing of the legal agreements following afterwards.
- Nineteen temporary market trader cabins have been erected on the town square and traders have been relocating in groups. There are two other traders and two businesses who are decanting into other Council owned properties in the town centre. These properties require some remodelling works, which is likely to be completed in March, along with some improvement works needed to reopen the toilets on Peel Street whilst the market hall is closed.
- Plans are being drawn up to allow for a small number of casual traders to utilise gazebos erected along Broadway. All existing businesses along Broadway have been consulted and raised no objections.
- Property acquisitions continue to progress, with the Council likely to achieve the fourth freehold interest and vacant possession of a ground floor unit in Market Chambers during February. Discussions are continuing with the other leaseholders in Market Chambers and the remaining tenant in Burtons Chambers, who has identified their preferred relocation property within the town centre and is in discussions with the owner.

- The fifth and final freeholder in Market Chamber has now engaged with the Council's property acquisition consultant.
- The Council continues to progress a CPO on both Burtons Chambers and Market Chambers, as an alternative way forward if sale by agreement and vacant possession / surrender of lease by agreement cannot be not achieved within the project timescale.
- Plans are in place for a 'Getting Connected' event with Morgan Sindall, the main contractor, for Friday 8 March 1pm-3pm in Accrington Town Hall (See appendix).

3.2 Long-Term Plan for Towns funding (LTPT)

3.2.1 On the 18 December 2023, the Government announced 55 towns, (which included Accrington) will each receive funding and support as part of a £1.1 billion levelling up investment to enable towns to develop their long-term plan.

3.2.2 The LTPT funding will ensure local people can develop plans that deliver their community priorities and are given the tools to change their town's long-term future. The published guidance sets out that the 55 towns will:

- receive up to £20 million of endowment-style funding and support for local people's priorities, like regenerating local high streets and town centres, or securing public safety, over a 10 year period;
- be required to set up a Town Board by 1 April 2024 which brings together community leaders, employers, local authorities and the local MP who will develop and deliver the Long-Term Plan for their town following consultation with local people; and
- make use of a suite of new regeneration powers and interventions currently progressing through the legislative process to boost pride and unlock private sector investment, for example, by auctioning empty high street shops, creating and maintaining parks/green spaces and / or improving heritage sites.

3.2.3 The Government has also confirmed £13.75 million of additional capacity funding for each of the benefiting local authorities. An initial £50k was immediately made available and a further £200k will be paid once the appointment of an Independent Chair and Town Board is in place to begin community engagement. The published guidance requires the new Town Board to develop and submit its long term plan by 1 August 2024 at the latest.

3.2.4 The published guidance also confirms the Town Board should be led by an independent chair, who will act as a champion for the town. The chair can be anyone who holds a prominent role in the community, such as heads of charities, education establishments or football clubs and who will provide leadership to ensure the Town Board community-led and embedded within the local area.

3.2.5 The Town Board must include the relevant local MP, alongside a senior representative from the police. Other members should be respected local figures with an obvious passion for their area and can be drawn from community partners such as local businesses/property owners, health, cultural, arts, heritage and sporting/leisure organisations. In order to successfully deliver the funding requirements a project team with the following skills will be required:

- Communications, consultation and engagement
- Regeneration and place making
- Economic advisory
- Procurement
- Programme management

In addition, wider design and project team services will be required to support the review and development of the existing TCIP into a long term plan for areas such as town centre master planning and programme management.

3.3 High Street Accelerators Pilot Programme (HSAP)

3.3.1 In March 2023, the Government published its Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan, setting out an ambitious new approach to working with local agencies to tackle the blight of anti-social behaviour facing communities across England and Wales. The action plan recognised that significant levels of vacancy on the high street can make people feel unsafe and that, as our town centres continue to transform following the growth of online shopping, it will require leadership from the public, private and third sector to make sure our high streets regenerate successfully, and in a way that appeals to the people living, working, and visiting the area.

3.3.2 As part of this action plan, the Government has committed up to £2.5 million of funding to launch the High Street Accelerators in 10 pilot areas across the Country. The objective of the High Street Accelerators Pilot Programme is for local stakeholders to work in partnership to empower and incentivise residents, businesses, community groups and other stakeholders to work together with the local authority to develop and deliver a long-term vision to revive and regenerate the high street. The published guidance sets out that each pilot authority:

- will receive £237,000 revenue funding split between 2023/4 and 2024/25 until March 2025, with funding available from the date the specific high street is agreed and grant agreements are put in place; and
- can submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) for additional funding to build parklets and green spaces on their high street by 1 March 2024. This additional funding is part of the Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan announced investment in green spaces which will allocate up to £5 million between the 10 pilot authorities.

3.3.3 At the launch event on 6 December, the 10 pilot areas participating were informed of the following mandatory elements:

- they must form a partnership with a precise geographical boundary, develop a vision and a financial plan for the partnership, and identify and start to deliver projects to revive and regenerate the high street; and
- the new partnership must include representatives from the local authority, business, community, and property owners. The partnership is required to invite the Member of Parliament representing the area to be involved in some way – potentially in a consultative capacity. Although not mandatory, it is encouraged that additional partners be involved in the partnership, although these partners may vary depending on the characteristics of the area; and
- the Chair must be a non-Local Authority person; and
- the partnership must develop a terms of reference, governance structure, and meet regularly; and
- the partnership must have a project delivery plan and clear plans for the monitoring and evaluation of progress and results and the partnership is strongly recommended to use Key Performance Indicators to evaluate its work.

3.3.4 The Council reached out to Peter Holden (President of the Great Harwood Civic Society and Secretary of the Great Harwood Community Action Group) who agreed to be the independent chair of the new partnership. With his agreement, the Council has also reached out to representatives from four local businesses, a youth organisation, two community groups, two local councillors and the Cabinet Member for Levelling Up. Further discussions are ongoing to secure a representative from the Police and health sector.

3.3.5 The first meeting of the new partnership was held on 22 January in Bank Mill House Community Centre and further meetings have been planned during February.

3.4 National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)

3.4.1 Whilst the Council is acquiring the Market Chambers building and undertaking external façade restoration and roof repairs through the LUF funding, at its meeting on 21 June 2023, Cabinet approved a £5m funding bid submission to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This application was submitted on Wednesday 16 August 2023 to transform the internal space of the building into a heritage, culture and arts space.

3.4.2 On 29 November 2023, the Council was informed it had been successful and would receive development stage funding to the value of £463k, with an agreement that a further £370k of match funding would be provided by the Council. This development stage will last for approximately 15 months and requires the Council to undertake community engagement, develop the designs and project costs further, and to submit a Delivery Stage submission by a deadline date of 30 November 2025. If the Council is successful with its submission, it would then unlock the remaining circa £4.5m NLHF funding to undertake the capital and revenue element of the project.

4. Procurement / Appointment of Consultants

- 4.1 With the Council's externally funded town centre square projects progressing in parallel, there is limited capacity within the existing project management team's structure and additional resource will be required to deliver the other projects referred to above.
- 4.2 Due to the extremely tight timescales involved with the three funders highlighted in the report, many principles of the existing procurement strategy developed for the Levelling Up funded Accrington Town Square projects, (agreed by Cabinet in July 2022) are appropriate. This includes the recommendation that frameworks are likely to be the route that is most suitable for procuring the project teams, some examples being the use of SCAPE, NHS SBS, CCS etc. The frameworks, (direct appointment and/or mini tender appointment) will be carefully considered for each consultant procurement to ensure the most appropriate framework or Dynamic Purchasing System for that particular work requirement is selected, whilst giving due consideration to achieving value for money, project continuity and deliverability within the required timescales.

5. Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The Council could choose not to use existing government compliant frameworks and simply operate open tenders. This has been discounted due to the tight deadlines set by the funders and need to appoint resources and commence work quickly.

6. Consultations

- 6.1 Whilst not applicable for this specific report, public, resident and business consultation is part of the Council's project plans for the LTPT, HSAP and NLHF funding.

7. Implications

Financial implications (including any future financial commitments for the Council)	The match funding requirement for the NLHF is to be allocated from the Council's next UKSPF allocation or the Long Term Plan for Towns funding.
Legal and human rights implications	<p>The use of Government approved frameworks are recommended and approved as an appropriate route for procurement by external funders.</p> <p>Appropriate governance arrangements will need to be put in place for the HSAP and LTPT projects so that there is clarity about the role, rights and liabilities of the participating organisations and individuals. These arrangements will also need to ensure that potential conflicts of interest are</p>

	<p>identified, declared and dealt with appropriately.</p> <p>When specific projects are identified and approved for funding pursuant to each of these funding streams, subsidy control will be considered to ensure that legal compliance is achieved. In addition, procurement using established frameworks should ensure that the Council, as accountable body, remains compliant with the public procurement regime. Most of these frameworks have standard contract terms, which makes procurement quicker and reduces legal costs.</p>
Assessment of risk	Not applicable for this report.
Equality and diversity implications <i>A Customer First Analysis should be completed in relation to policy decisions and should be attached as an appendix to the report.</i>	Not applicable for this report. Equalities will be considered as each of these projects are delivered and impact assessments will be carried out as appropriate as individual projects are developed for approval and funding.

8. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985:**
List of Background Papers

LUF Procurement Strategy to Cabinet

<https://democracy.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MId=2695&Ver>

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HLHF Submission to Cabinet

<https://democracy.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MId=2795&Ver>

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