REPORT TO:		Cabinet	
DATE:		26 March 2025	
PORTFOLIO:		**Noordad Aziz – Deputy Leader of the Council (Transformation, Education and Skills)** **Kimberley Whitehead – Culture Heritage and Arts**	
REPORT AUTHOR:		Steve Riley – Executive Director (Environment)	
TITLE OF REPORT:		Accrington Town Centre Masterplan Framework	
EXEMPT REPORT (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A)	**No**	Not applicable	
KEY DECISION:	**Yes**	If yes, date of publication:	**25 February 2025**

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To ask Cabinet to consider for approval, the Accrington Town Centre Masterplan Framework (MF) and Delivery Strategy.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Cabinet note and approve the Accrington Town Centre Masterplan Framework which includes a proposed delivery strategy which can be viewed online via the following link: https://www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/download/framework-documents/

2.2 That Cabinet support work by officers to seek external funding for the appointment of a project team to progress further highway design work, land acquisition strategy, valuation advice, advice on engaging development partners etc. Where external funding opportunities do not materialise, Cabinet asks officers to calculate the estimated costs for undertaking this work for consideration by Cabinet in a future report.

3. Reasons for Recommendations and Background

3.1 In 2005, Hyndburn Borough Council created the Accrington Town Centre Strategy. This strategy highlighted that Accrington Town Centre was facing major challenges due to changes in shopping habits. It was also recognised that Accrington has the potential to enhance the quality of the environment in Accrington Town Centre and position itself as a competitive visitor destination.

3.2 The Town Centre Strategy recognised the need for a masterplan which would support the town's regeneration ambitions and create a town centre that better meets the needs of the local community – both existing, and new communities attracted to Accrington in the future.

3.3 Cabinet gave its support to the Accrington Town Centre Partnership Board's recommendation to allocate £150,000 funding to undertake an Arndale Masterplan in the Council's Investment Plan for the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Funding allocation (UKSPF). In December 2023, the Government announced 55 towns (which included Accrington) who would each receive up to £20m from Long Term Plan for Towns funding (LTPfT) and it was considered prudent for the Council to extend the work and undertake a wider town centre masterplan.

3.4 Lancashire County Council have provided £50,000 match funding to expand the masterplan project to enable high level Transport and Connectivity work to also be undertaken. Both authorities have worked together in developing a MF to deliver positive change for Accrington Town Centre. The MF has been developed as a guide to inform planning & development decisions within the town centre and sets a vision for the town centre, identifying the short, medium and long-term opportunities for Accrington.

3.5 The purpose of the MF document is to build upon the vision established within the Town Centre Investment Plan (TCIP). The MF developed a series of key strategic actions and drivers for positive change within the town centre, defining principles which are outlined within the strategic actions. The site and local character were thoroughly investigated in order to develop the illustrative masterplan which complements the historic context. The illustrative masterplan is intended to provide a clear framework to shape and encourage new development and investment into the town within a short, medium and the longer term over the next 10 to 15 years.

3.6 It is important for the MF to remain a flexible tool, which can respond appropriately to market and economic conditions as well as evolving with local and national planning policy. As such the suggested phasing and illustrative masterplan can be reviewed and refreshed over this period, recognising the proposals and interventions put forward will take time to deliver and come to fruition.

3.7 The MF has been developed and finalised under the following key stages:

Stage 1 – Inception and Baseline (June 2024). This work covered the following work tasks:

- Inception Meeting, Study Visit/Lesson Learnt workshop
- Reviewing Existing Technical Baseline Audit
- Townscape/Urban Design Appraisal
- Heritage Appraisal
- Market Insight and Economic Analysis
- Appreciation of Technical Constraints & Opportunities
- Best Practice/Bench Marking

Stage 2 – Prepare the Vision (July to August 2024). This work covered the following work tasks:

- Prepare the Vision
- Initial Stakeholder Engagement
- Early Engagement & Analysis Workshop

Stage 3 – Masterplan & Framework Options and Development Engagement (September to October 2024). This work covered the following work tasks:

- Stakeholder & Community Engagement, Testing the Options
- Building on the Existing Vision Workshop
- Overall Options Appraisal

Stage 4 – Prepare the Final Masterplan Framework – (November 2024 to January 2025).
This work covered the following work tasks:

- Finalise the Preferred Framework
- Prepare the Draft Masterplan Framework
- Develop Delivery Strategy & Plan
- Funding and Delivery Workshop
- Finalise Masterplan Outputs

Stage 5 – Final Masterplan Framework and Delivery Plan sign-off – (February 2025).

3.8 The MF has been developed through understanding Accrington town centre and its wider context, which identified key challenges but also opportunities. The work builds on the success of the TCIP to understand the vision statement and its aims, and details how they might be achieved. This identified areas/aspects of what makes Accrington special, this would be through: celebrating Accrington's unique landscape and rich history of architecture and heritage buildings, encouraging enterprise to stimulate economic growth within the local economy, repopulate the town centre to create a strong local town centre community and promote Accrington as a gateway to the Pennines, Ribble Valley and Forest of Bowland.

3.9 Key spatial design drivers promoted through the MF include:

- Celebrating heritage and character capitalising on the character and assets through creating a patchwork of distinct character areas, (Neighbourhoods) which are defined by existing building and assets. Each area will provide a different land use for the town and key focal areas.

- Defining welcoming gateways to create safe and active streets through rationalising vehicles movement and defining key public transport and vehicular gateways.

- Enhancing green areas and waterways within the town centre and links to outside the town centre by animating surrounding landscape connections and existing waterways of the river Hyndburn and Woodnook Water.

- Optimising development opportunities which could deliver high-quality development over the short, medium and longer term. Providing new homes, businesses community and cultural space to inspire impactful growth.

4. Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

4.1 A number of options were developed and tested by the project team during the initial key stakeholder/Councillor sessions. A preferred MF option was presented at the public consultation exercises, with feedback from these and final elected member comments being heard by the project team.

5. Consultations

5.1 The MF has been subjected to the following consultation events: stakeholder and business workshops, briefing of the Accrington Town Centre Partnership Board (ATCPB), public consultations, Elected Member briefings. Events were promoted through the Council's external and internal comms channels/press releases. The project team comms consultant made direct contact with key individuals, business group representatives, Councillors and the MP. A leaflet promoting the drop-in sessions was delivered by Council staff to all properties within the MF boundary and back up by promotional messages from individual Member's social media channels. Specific dates are highlighted below, with further information provided in the Consultation Report appendix.

- ATCPB Briefing 6 June 2024
- Cabinet Member Briefing 6 July 2024
- ACTPB Briefing 29 August 2024
- Cabinet Member Briefing 9 October 2024
- Stakeholder workshop 16 October 2024
- Business workshop 11 November 2024
- Cabinet Member Briefing 2 December 2024
- On-line consultation survey opened 3 December 2024 and closed 12 January 2025
- Two drop-in events at Market Chambers:
    - 12 December 2024 (3pm to 7pm) during the first drop-in the team handed out leaflets in the town centre, including at Tesco
    - 9th January 2025 (3pm to 7pm) during the second drop-in members of the team took the information boards to the entrance at Tesco to encourage further participation
- Drop-in event at Raza Jamia Masjid Mosque on 17th January 2025 (2pm to 3:30pm).
- Cabinet Member Briefing 3 February 2025

6. Implications

Financial implications (including any future financial commitments for the Council)	Funding for undertaking this MF work has been allocated from: • the Council's 2023-25 UKSPF allocation - £150k, • match funding from Lancashire County Council - £50k • the Council's LUF delivery reserve - £3.5k.
Legal and human rights implications	If the Council was to adopt/approve the MF, it would become a Supplementary Planning Document then being of material consideration for any planning applications coming forward within the town centre boundary. The MF will also be used as a tool to have conversations with potential investors and developers interested in working with the Council to bring forward new high-quality development in the town centre.
Assessment of risk	None arising from this report.
Equality and diversity implications *A Customer First Analysis should be completed in relation to policy decisions and should be attached as an appendix to the report.*	N/A

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

7.1 UK Shared Prosperity Fund to Cabinet – 22 June 2022
https://democracy.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MId=2694&Ver=4

LUF and UKSPF Funding and Delivery to Cabinet – 8 February 2023
https://democracy.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MId=2700&Ver=4

8. Freedom of Information

8.1 The report does not contain exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A and all information can be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.