

Loughborough Town Deal
Member Reference Group
18th November 2020

Agenda

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| 1. Welcome and Apologies | Cllr Bokor |
| 2. Notes of Previous Meeting (p2) | Cllr Bokor |
| 3. Cohort 1 Submissions and Outcomes (p7) | Chris Grace |
| 4. Loughborough Town Investment Plan (p11) | Eileen Mallon / Chris Grace |
| 5. Town Deal Next Steps (p15) | Chris Grace |
| 6. Upfront Funding Update (p18) | Eileen Mallon / Chris Grace |
| 7. Any Other Business | Cllr Bokor |
| 8. Date of Next Meeting | Cllr Bokor |

Timings

5pm	Item 1	3 mins
5.03pm	Item 2	7 mins
5.10pm	Item 3	15 mins
5.25pm	Item 4	15 mins
5.40pm	Item 5	10 mins
5.50pm	Item 6	10 mins
6.00pm	Items 7&8	10 mins
6:15pm	Close of meeting.	

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PROJECT	Town Deal – Member Reference Group		
DATE	21 September 2020	LOCATION	Virtual meeting using Zoom

Attendees

Councillor Bokor (Chair)	Lead Member Loughborough
County Councillor Max Hunt	Loughborough North West
County Councillor Betty Newton	Loughborough North
County Richard Bailey	Loughborough Outwoods
Councillor Sandie Forrest	Loughborough Storer
Councillor Alice Brennan	Loughborough Shelthorpe
Councillor Colin Hamilton	Loughborough Hastings
Councillor Christine Harris	Loughborough Lemington
Councillor Geoff Parsons	Loughborough Nanpantan
Councillor Emma Ward	Dishley and Hathern
Eileen Mallon	Strategic Director of Housing, Planning, Regeneration and Regulatory Services
Richard Bennett	Head of Planning and Regeneration
David Marlow	Third Life Economics (Consultant)
Sally Watson	Minute Taker (Charnwood Borough Council)

Apologies

County Councillor Jonathan Morgan	Loughborough South West
County Councillor Jewel Miah	Loughborough East
County Councillor Ted Parton	Loughborough South
Councillor Kat Goddard	Loughborough Ashby
Chris Grace	Town Deal Project Manager
Sylvia Wright	Head of Leisure and Culture
Mike Roberts	Communications Manager

Meeting Type (Team, Board or other)

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1. Welcome and Apologies

Members confirmed that they were able to see and hear the proceedings and apologies were given as outlined above.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th July 2020 were confirmed as a correct

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record and there were no matters arising.

3. Project Overview and Update

Richard Bennett provided an overview of the status of the project including information on timelines and deadlines, Board decisions, the Investment Plan, the Upfront Capital Projects Funding and an updated risk register.

It was confirmed that the funds provided within the upfront capital scheme would need to be depleted by 31st March 2021, however it was not clear at the meeting whether projects funded would need to be complete by this date. The Council had assessed the feasibility of projects concerned and it was anticipated that the funding would be depleted by the deadline set. It was not clear at the meeting whether there were penalties for the failure to deplete funds allocated. Chris Grace as Project Manager would provide clarification on this.

The projects selected for the upfront capital scheme included a Careers and Enterprise Hub, the Limehurst Depot, the Rectory Wildlife Garden and Queen's Park. These projects were considered to be reflective of the principals identified as part of the consultations which had taken place, Town Deal aims and also the ability to deliver within the timescale set. It was highlighted that the Council was working to a tight deadline and that further consultation on the individual projects themselves would not have been feasible. There was potential within the likely Investment Plan portfolio that a number of projects would be interested in developing the Limehurst Depot site, following completion of the demolition of the current structure.

The allocation of funding had been proportionated to population and Loughborough was considered to be a medium-sized town, regardless of the student population.

The Careers and Enterprise Hub would be an accessible resource to all residents within Loughborough and would be a staffed facility, providing a range of series, such as training and assessments. Loughborough College would provide the revenue required to maintain the project.

The Limehurst Depot project would receive funding for the demolition of the current structure on the site. There were currently no plans for the site following the completion of this work, although as the site was Council-owned, there would be an opportunity to influence the use of the site following the completion of the current project.

Recommendation Agreed: That the Member Reference Group noted the content of the report.

Action: Chris Grace, as Project Manager would provide clarification on whether projects funded as part of the upfront capital scheme would need to be complete by 31st March 2020 and whether there would be penalties incurred by Government for the failure to deplete the funding allocated by the deadline of 31st March 2020.

4. ARUP 'Check and Challenge' Report

Richard Bennett provided Members with an overview of the feedback obtained from ARUP, the lead consultancy, on the part 1 Town Investment Plan for Loughborough, which covered vision

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and strategy only, not the projects themselves.

The natural boundaries of Loughborough University campus which were referred to in the report included infrastructure such as roads, which prevented connection with the Town. The ARUP report advised better integration of the University with the town would be beneficial. It was recognised that it was not uncommon for University Towns to adopt a culture which was distinct from the Town itself. The 'Civic University' concept was highlighted, which referred to the responsibility of Universities within University Towns to provide a level of growth, development and success. Encouraging more University integration was likely to improve the economy, culture and inclusion within Loughborough.

It was acknowledged that there was a disparity between the vision for Loughborough for some groups within the community, particularly in terms of the prospect of a modern, 'technopolis' town or a traditional market town. The TIP could be an opportunity to overcome these disparities, although it was noted that a clear theme throughout the projects would be beneficial in terms of establishing a clear direction for Loughborough.

It was difficult to establish capital projects to support Loughborough post-Covid as it was not clear when this would be. Currently, groups were separate, and students would be required to remain on campus as much as possible.

The project had been subject to a considerable amount of engagement with the public and with various groups and many of these channels were continuous, such as the Member Reference Group, the Community Engagement Group and through social media. It was noted that some hard to reach communities may have been negatively impacted by Covid and their ability to engage.

Concerns were raised regarding environmental issues such as flooding on any sites developed as part of the Loughborough Town Deal. It was stated that planning applications associated with the Town Deal would be subject to the usual risk assessments. It was agreed that Richard Bennett liaise with Councillor Christine Harris via email to discuss any further planning concerns.

Recommendation Agreed: That the Member Reference Group notes the content of this report.

Action: Richard Bennett liaise with Councillor Christine Harris via email to discuss any further planning concerns.

5. Town Deal TIP – Project Prioritisation Process

Richard Bennett introduced the report providing an update on the progress which has been made towards the production of Loughborough's Town Investment Plan. A presentation was delivered by Consultant David Marlow, providing an update on project proposals which had been received from stakeholders and the wider public and outlined the arrangements for prioritising projects.

The deadline for project submissions was 31st August 2020 and on 4th September 2020, 25 submissions had been received, amounting to £57.4m of capital and around £3m of revenue.

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The total package with leverage was £116m. A new submission template had been devised by Government and project owners had been asked to resubmit their bids using this new template. following this. It was anticipated that an appraisal and prioritisation process would be required and that the Town Deal Board would need to endorse this. There was also an expectation that capital and revenue asks would need to be significantly reduced.

Projects that had been submitted included the following;

Project	Outline	Project	Outline
Charnwood Campus	Refurb and equipping three buildings. No real match. Needs a lot of work and scaling back	POD ZERO4	BID scheme – driverless cars in TC. Could go with Electric or Living L’boro. Needs legislation
Cattlemarket	Redevelopment of Sital and Ashe House(s) sites. Needs a lot of further work - possible Developer Accelerator contribution?	Employability & Life Skills	Youth Services Trust. Strong proposition to connect Sports Park tenants with local disadvantaged YP
Sports Park 4	LUSEP building – possibly now funded by LLEP Getting Building Funding	Observatory	LU evidence and policy hub. Liked a lot by Govt Delivery team. May be able to increase UKRI match
CBC Asset rationalisation	CBC redevelopment of Limehurst, Southfields and Town Hall – possible Developer Accelerator contribution?	LU Wayfinder	LU Business Accelerator – related to TC Careers & Jobs Hub – revenue ask unclear
Nottingham Rd Corridor	CBC application but may need LCC delivery	Public Realm	Canal Path (C&RT applicant), Lanes, Bedford Square, Queens Park and Rectory Garden (CBC)
Connected Loughborough	LU application for smart sustainable corridor – but may need LCC delivery. Revenue requirement tbc	Heritage Quarter	Bell Foundry, Generator and GCR – 1 st two very HF match dependent
Living Loughborough	BID-led TC improvements – needs budget breakdowns and revenue clarity	Early Wins 2020/21	Limehurst demolition and TC Careers & Jobs Hub (College applicant)
College Digital Skills Hub	Strong scheme with good match. Highly deliverable	SUB-TOTAL	
Flood Protection	Environment Agency – strong, deliverable scheme and important for town resilience	DEVELOPER ACCELERATOR	Balancing item/device to pump prime devts like Cattlemarket, EVOLVE, CBC Asset rat’n etc
Electric Loughborough	EVs, charging points etc. Might include CBC Granby scheme. Electric Blue applicant.	MICROPROJECTS	A small grants scheme for community projects, retail repurposing and SME relocations

Some of the themes identified through the projects submitted included;

- Enterprise projects (Charnwood Campus, Sports Park 4)
- Urban regeneration development projects (Cattle market, CBC Asset Rationalisation)
- Transport and corridor projects (Nottingham Road Corridor, Connected Loughborough)
- Town Centre revitalisation projects (Living Loughborough, POD ZERO4)
- Skills projects (College Digital Skills Hub, Employability and Life Skills)
- Foundation projects (Flood Protection, Observatory)
- Green projects (Electric Loughborough)
- Heritage and Culture projects (Heritage Quarter)
- Public Realm projects (Public Realm)

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A Developer Accelerator grant had also been considered in order to encourage private sector schemes to participate.

It was suggested that projects were assessed by Charnwood Borough Council Officers against the criteria set by Government. These assessments would then be reviewed by the Board Co-Chairs and the Chairs of the Member Reference Group and the Community Engagement and Consultation Group and the LLEP and County Council Board representatives.

With regards to 'exceptional' bids for higher funding, it was stated that some Towns were more suited to this level of funding due to population sizes. It would be communicated to Government that there had been a substantial appraisal and prioritisation process, and should the Board consider the projects to be suitable, then a higher level of funding could be requested. However, there would be no certainty that this request would be facilitated.

Recommendation Agreed: That members note the progress made so far on the TIP and the proposed arrangements for prioritising projects.

6. Any Other Business

It was noted that the student community was an asset within Loughborough, despite the acknowledgement that there could be improvements in the integration of the University.

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Item 3 – Town Deal Cohort 1 Submissions and Outcomes

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents an overview of outcomes from Town Deal Cohort 1 submissions to date and the characteristics of those Town Investment Plans where the Government has announced in-principle funding allocations.

Recommendation:

That Members note the content of this report.

2. Background

- 2.1 Town Deal locations have been permitted to submit their Town Investment Plans [TIP] in one of four cohorts: 1 (by the end of July 2020), 2 (by the end of October 2020), 2a (by 11th December 2020) and 3 (by the end of January 2021). Cohort 2a was announced in revised Towns Fund Guidance when it became apparent to the Government that many towns which had confirmed their intention to submit a TIP in Cohort 2 would not be able to meet the October deadline.
- 2.2 Loughborough Town Deal Board submitted its TIP on 26th October 2020 within the Cohort 2 deadline. Further information is provided at Agenda Item 4.
- 2.3 On 27th October 2020 the Government announced that it and seven Cohort 1 Town Deal locations had agreed Heads of Terms for a Town Deal and the associated funding allocation for the Heads of Terms. It is understood that a further six locations are awaiting the outcomes of their Cohort 1 TIP submission.

3. Town Deal Cohort 1 Outcomes

- 3.1 Whilst Loughborough awaits feedback from the Government on its TIP, it is useful to observe the characteristics of the TIPs from the towns in Cohort 1 which have so far been successful in achieving a funding allocation. Throughout the town deal process, Loughborough has and will continue to learn from the outcomes and experiences of other town deal locations across the country. Officers maintain dialogue with peers in other towns.

3.2 The information below summarises how much funding the seven successful town deal will receive and the characteristics of their respective TIPs.

3.3 **Barrow-in-Furness**
ASK: £29.9m AWARD: £25m

TIP Theme(s): Brilliant Barrow – inclusive economy; clean growth; healthy places.

Projects:

HE / FE campus; Community resilience hubs; Business support programme; Events and festivals programme; Housing renewal; Cycling and walking infrastructure; Marina Village land assembly / clearance.

3.4 **Blackpool**
ASK: £49.3m AWARD: £39.5m

TIP Theme(s): A Place with a Buzz – creating jobs; tackling deprivation; improved reputation and visitor numbers.

Projects:

Town centre regeneration; Enterprise Zone infrastructure; HE / FE facilities; Innovation partnership; Sports village; Illuminations; Youth Hub; Art gallery extension.

3.5 **Darlington**
ASK: £25m AWARD: £22.3m

TIP Theme(s): Building on heritage – town centre regeneration; skills.

Projects:

Town centre regeneration / land assembly; new park by the river; walking and cycling route; town centre adult learning hub.

3.6 **Norwich**
ASK: £25.2m AWARD: £25m

TIP Theme(s): Historic City – urban regeneration; better skills and enterprise.

Projects:

Hub for digital businesses; refurbishment of a cultural centre; Digi-tech skills hub; construction and engineering skills centre; city centre

regeneration; public realm improvements; investment fund for brownfield sites; inward investment marketing.

3.7 **Peterborough**

ASK: £24.97m AWARD: £22.9m

TIP Theme(s): Distinctive place to live, work and visit – strong visitor attractions; green city; enterprise and skills infrastructure.

Projects:

Town centre regeneration; new library and cultural hub; station quarter regeneration; enterprise and business incubation hub; green technology skills programme; greener public realm.

3.8 **Torquay**

ASK: £25m AWARD: £21.9m

TIP Theme(s): Heart of English Riviera – better town centre experiences; tourist destination; building on sectoral strengths.

Projects:

Town centre regeneration; new walking and cycling routes; new rail station; Torquay Pavilion refurbishment; public realm improvements.

3.9 **Warrington**

ASK: £26.56m AWARD: £22.1m

TIP Theme(s): [the Council's Corporate Strategy] – healthy living; thriving economy benefits all; safe communities; clean and green.

Projects:

Health and social care academy; health and wellbeing hub; construction training centre; electric bus fleet depot; active travel programme; digital enterprise hub; improved cultural hub.

4. **Conclusion**

- 4.1 To date, no town deal location has been awarded the full amount that was asked for in its TIP. Unsurprisingly, the types of projects put forward in the various locations reflect both the requirements of the Towns Fund Prospectus and Guidance along with the specific circumstances of each town.

- 4.2 It is worth observing outcomes from Cohort 1 as Loughborough now moves through the next phase of the town deal process (see Agenda Item 5).

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Item 4 – Loughborough Town Investment Plan

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report updates Members on the submission of the Loughborough Town Investment Plan.

Recommendation:

That Members note the content of this report.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) requires Towns Deal locations to submit a Town Investment Plan (TIP) in accordance with its Guidance. Any town which does not submit a TIP will not be able to receive Town Deal funding from the Towns Fund.
- 2.2 Loughborough's TIP, led by the Town Deal Board, has been evolving since the spring of 2020 and was produced by Third Life Economics in consultation with the Board, this Member Reference Group, the Community Engagement Group, stakeholders and the wider public.
- 2.3 On 26th October 2020 the TIP was submitted to MHCLG following approval of the content by the Board and a decision to give delegated authority to the Board's Co-Chairs to make final amendments, subject to a subsequent 'check and challenge' session led by consultants ARUP and Grant Thornton.

3. Loughborough Town Investment Plan

- 3.1 Following an audit of governance arrangements, MHCLG confirmed in October that Loughborough's arrangements were fully compliant with guidance and therefore the way was clear to submit a TIP within the Cohort 2 deadline of 30th October 2020.
- 3.2 The TIP complies with guidance and consists of two parts. Part 1 of the TIP is presented in a style bespoke to the location yet and consisting of sections included within the MHCLG guidance. Part 2 is an MHCLG Excel spreadsheet of data and information relating to the technicalities of individual project proposals. Due to commercial confidentiality Part 2 is not published.

3.3 The information below summarises the key elements of Loughborough's TIP. A Summary document was emailed to this Group on 27th October and the full version of Part 1 of the TIP is available to read on the website www.loughboroughtowndeal.co.uk.

3.4 The TIP stresses Loughborough's characteristic as an area of innovation and proposes that moving forward a town deal can help facilitate more active, healthy living in the town. The latter is something which benefits individuals and has positive economic impacts too. The TIP's projects relate to seven thematic areas:

- Transport & Digital Infrastructure
- Urban regeneration, planning and land use
- Arts, Culture and Heritage
- Skills & Employability
- Enterprise
- Microprojects
- Foundation and cross-cutting interventions

3.5 Outlined below are the projects contained within the TIP.

Transport & Digital Infrastructure - £3.6m

Connected Loughborough

The Town Deal proposes to make it easier and more enjoyable to move from the east side of town where the railway station is through town, on to Loughborough University and Loughborough College and then out to The Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park in the west. The public realm would be improved and made more attractive and walking and cycling would be made more of a priority.

The power of digital technology will be harnessed to communicate with people in those areas.

Electric Loughborough

We will invest in electric vehicles and charging points to contribute towards the town's drive to be cleaner and greener with net-zero carbon footprint.

Urban regeneration, planning and land use - £14.6m

Development accelerator - £8.2m

A fund will be created to unlock the potential of at least four sites in town which can be developed for housing, commercial and leisure uses and help drive the recovery of Loughborough in a post-pandemic world, creating jobs and opportunities

Living Loughborough - £4.3m

Led by Love Loughborough, this project looks to invest in creating a rejuvenated town centre with more people living there as well as shopping and spending their leisure time. Technology would be integral to a modern town centre with the ambition to have automated transport systems such as driverless vehicles. Investment will be made in infrastructure which facilitates more and better-quality events as we move away from the pandemic and come together again as a community.

Gateways to the town centre - £2.1m

It is imperative the town centre is a welcoming and inviting place for people to live, work and visit. Therefore, it is proposed to invest in making sure the gateways into the centre are attractive, accessible and link the urban with open spaces such as the award-winning Queen's Park.

Arts, Culture and Heritage - £3.6m

Taylor's Bellfoundry and Great Central Railway

Loughborough is proudly home to two unique places – Taylor's Bell Foundry, the UK's last remaining bell foundry, and Great Central Railway, the UK's only double track, main line heritage railway. By supporting these visitor attractions to grow we can attract more visitors to the town which has beneficial impacts for all businesses in the leisure and hospitality sectors.

The Loughborough Generator

This project is about creating a vibrant inclusive centre for creative sector enterprise in Loughborough town centre utilising a historic building in Frederick Street.

Riverside Regeneration

The Grand Union Canal flows through the heart of Loughborough and the Town Deal proposes to invest in upgrading this historic national corridor which links the town centre and railway station and make it a more attractive place to visit.

Skills & Employability - £3.8m

Careers and Enterprise Hub

Loughborough College will operate the Hub in a town centre location, already funded by £750,000 of Towns Fund support (see Agenda Item 6). The Hub will offer guidance and support to people who want to boost their careers or get in to work. Loughborough University will also be involved by providing advice and mentoring to people wanting to start up their own businesses.

Loughborough College Digital Skills Hub

The Digital Skills Hub will offer T-Levels, apprenticeships and Kickstart job placements to skill-up local people as Loughborough moves into a more digitally focussed future.

Generation Loughborough

This project will seek to improve job and life skills for 5,000 young people with a focus upon supporting people from disadvantaged backgrounds and communities. The scheme will promote learning and a healthier, more active lifestyle.

Enterprise - £1.8m

Sportpark Expansion and Wayfinder Scheme

Sportpark on the Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park houses the UK's highest concentration of sports governing bodies and national sports organisations. The Town Deal is proposing to jointly fund an expansion to Sportpark and bring further sports-related businesses to the region.

Investment is also sought to support a business accelerator scheme to help local companies link in with the University's incubation and innovation services to help them adapt for a post-Covid world and move more into the knowledge-based sector.

Microprojects - £1.1m

Community and Business Capital Grants Scheme

These grants would help businesses and community groups to access capital funding for micro or small projects which add value to the community or local economy.

Foundation and cross-cutting interventions - £3.2m

Loughborough University as an Anchor Institution

The TIP identifies Loughborough University as an Anchor Institution for the area and its knowledge, skills and capabilities should be harnessed to bring about social, economic and environmental improvements to the town.

The University will play an integral role in the creation of a Loughborough Observatory which will gather data and evidence to further develop the Town Deal proposals and ensure they are evidence-led and comprehensively evaluated. This has the potential to benefit other Towns Fund locations.

Flood defence scheme

The TIP would co-fund a necessary Environment Agency programme to reduce the risk of flooding in the town

- 3.6 The TIP will be subject to appraisal by MHCLG now that it has been submitted. Further information on the forthcoming remainder of the Town Deal process and next steps is contained within Agenda Item 5 below.

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Item 5 – Town Deal Forthcoming Process and Next Steps

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report explains what is expected to happen now that the Town Investment Plan has been completed and describes some of the next steps that the Town Deal Board and its supporting team will need to take.

Recommendation:

That Members note the content of this report.

2. Background

- 2.1 Item 4 of this Agenda explains that Loughborough has submitted its Town Investment Plan to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).
- 2.2 In order to achieve a Town Deal for Loughborough and for funding to be released in order to enable delivery of projects there are further phases of activity which the Town Deal Board should follow, in accordance with MHCLG guidance.

3. Achieving a Town Deal via 3 phases

- 3.1 The process which determines whether funding will be released to facilitate implementation of a Town Deal's projects and programmes can be viewed as having 3 phases according to MHCLG guidance:
Phase 1 - completion and submission of the Town Investment Plan (TIP)
Phase 2 – appraisal of the TIP and agreement of Heads of Terms
Phase 3 – development of full business cases leading to release of funding.
- 3.2 Beyond cohort deadlines for the submission of TIPs, MHCLG has not committed to specific timelines for the remainder of the town deal process. However, based on the experience of towns which submitted TIPs in Cohort 1 and dialogue with MHCLG officials it is envisaged that it is likely that Loughborough will have received appraisal of the TIP and hopefully be in a position to achieve Heads of Terms (completion of Phase 2) by the end of March 2021. Development and sign-off of full project businesses cases and project delivery plans (Phase 3), followed by the release of funding for each project could then begin and take place during April 2021 and beyond.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 Based on MHCLG guidance and dialogue with peers from Cohort 1 towns it is expected that there will now be a significant number of tasks which the Town Deal Board will need to oversee and which will need to be carried out by its supporting officers and those organisations which are leading on the projects proposed within the TIP. These are as outlined in paragraphs below.
- 4.2 Short term (Phase 2 November to March?)
- Liaising with MHCLG on its appraisal process and dealing with queries; facilitating new or any required further information about projects / the TIP
 - Preparing for and dealing with the 'exceptional status' checks and challenges (this is likely to happen because Loughborough's TIP proposes over £25m of funding)
 - Negotiations as we move towards Heads of Terms
 - Potentially, if MHCLG 'rejects' Loughborough's TIP at this stage (i.e. it were to achieve very low scoring during appraisal), there would be work to be done to re-submit the TIP in Cohort 3 (by the end of January 2021).
- 4.3 Medium to Longer term (Phase 3 April 2021 and beyond)
- developing projects [both CBC and non-CBC] in detail following agreement of Heads of Terms
 - completing comprehensive business cases
 - development and implementation of an overall Town Deal Delivery Plan
 - submitting a detailed projects' 'Summary Document' [which is substantive and detailed] to MHCLG
 - Developing legal agreements between the Council and organisations leading on the delivery of projects
 - Developing and submitting a full Engagement Plan to MHCLG
 - Communications and public consultation exercises
 - Linking the Town Deal to other funds, strategies and programmes
 - Project management [delivery] of CBC led projects
 - Providing monitoring data on all projects to MHCLG every 6 months
 - Preparing for and producing an Annual Review with the Towns Hub
 - Liaison with other TD locations to share best practice.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 There is still much work to be done to reach a point where projects funded by a Town Deal can be implemented in Loughborough.

- 5.2 The Member Reference Group will be kept updated on progress with the town deal process and views of the Group will be welcomed as the town moves through the next two phases of the process.

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Item 6 – Upfront Funding Update

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report updates Members on the use of £750,000 ‘upfront’ Towns Fund funding which was awarded to Loughborough in order to ‘kickstart’ the town deal process.

Recommendation:

That Members note the content of this report.

2. Background

- 2.1 As part of the Government’s response to the impacts of Covid-19 on the economy it announced that town deal locations should benefit from upfront funding which could help kick-start recovery and enable the delivery of ‘shovel-ready’ schemes.
- 2.2 In August 2020 the Council confirmed that it wished to accept the £750,000 available to Loughborough (based on population size). It is a requirement of the Government that any project(s) on which the funding is spent must be delivered by 31st March 2021 and be part of the town’s Town Investment Plan.
- 2.3 The Town Deal Board received a briefing and confirmed that 4 projects related to the emerging Town Investment Plan could be implemented by 31st March 2020. These were:
- a) Careers and Enterprise Hub in the town centre,
 - b) Limehurst depot site demolition and clearance,
 - c) Rectory Wildlife Garden,
 - d) Queens Park improvements.

The projects were prioritised with the Careers and Enterprise Hub as the top priority and put forward for approval by MHCLG. MHCLG subsequently confirmed to the Council’s S151 Officer that it would release the £750,000 to be spent on one or more of the named projects.

- 2.4 The Careers and Enterprise Hub project will require all the £750,000 funding and therefore the other projects have now been included as part of bigger projects with the main TIP.

3. Careers and Enterprise Hub

- 3.1 The Hub will be a town centre physical portal for skills and enterprise. It is a joint project between Loughborough College and Loughborough University in partnership with Charnwood Borough Council. Loughborough College is leading the project which will have a “Skills Wedge” and an “Enterprise Wedge”.
- 3.2 The skills wedge will provide a compelling and accessible offer to those who are not traditional participants in learning and development. It will provide flexible (including weekend and evening) access to skills advice, learning related employment opportunities, including apprenticeships and the Government’s new Kickstart initiative and involve the direct delivery of bite size and introductory units of learning to all audiences on a structured and drop in basis. The Skills Wedge will comprise:
- A welcome desk, and spill over area, with hard copy and online learning and careers resources,
 - Four idea booths where individuals can meet and interact around skills and development opportunities with college employability advisers,
 - Open and flexible workshop and event space for teaching, delivery, business meetings.
 - Team room for staff,
 - Kitchen and toilets.

The Enterprise Wedge will bring together problem solvers, innovators and aspiring entrepreneurs into one space. It will provide the inspiration and tools to rapidly design and test new business solutions, connect and collaborate with people from a range of backgrounds and learn the latest methods for building new, resilient businesses with potential to scale. As ideas are developed it will provide routes to connect with more specialist expertise and facilities at Loughborough University, and provide access to more advanced specialist equipment through LU Inc., the University’s business incubator, for founders to prototype their innovative products and services. The space will also provide an anchor for collaborative enterprise activities, facilitating interaction and engagement between the university and local communities, for example through student groups like Enactus (which focuses on social enterprise formation) or community focussed initiatives led by Loughborough University Student’s Union. The Enterprise Wedge will comprise:

A workshop space for training, events and ideas generation,

- A meeting room for ideas interaction,
- Workbenches for staff and aspiring entrepreneurs,
- Specialist equipment (e.g. AR/VR, 3D print devices) to enable learners to design and build their ideas.

- Display area to showcase products and innovations

4 Progress

- 4.1. Good progress is being made in the implementation of the project. A key element was identifying a suitable town centre building. After discussion with the College and University, Charnwood Borough Council purchased 20 Market Place on 20th October 2020. This gives the Council a commercial investment and enables the college and University to operate from a prominent town centre building which is easily accessible to the public. 20 Market Place is the building which was last occupied by Crawshaws butchery.
- 4.2 A planning application for Change of Use will be submitted by the Borough Council and applications for any alterations to the building will in due course be submitted by Loughborough College.
- 4.3 Following a meeting due to take place on 9th November it is expected that the College will formally agree a licence with the Council for use of the building and then commence fitting out of the building subject to appropriate planning permission(s) being granted.