

**CABINET
8 DECEMBER 2020**

DARLINGTON TOWNS FUND

**Responsible Cabinet Member –
Councillor Alan Marshall, Economy Portfolio**

**Responsible Director –
Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Cabinet on the recently announced allocation of £1m Forward Funding from the Towns Fund and the £22.3m secured through Darlington's Town Deal.

Summary

2. The report sets out the proposed strategic interventions detailed within Darlington's Town Investment Plan to drive the sustainable economic regeneration of Darlington for long-term economic and productivity growth.
3. The Council has been allocated £1m grant for Forward Fund and in the future £22.3m will be allocated once each individual business case has been agreed.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that members support the Darlington's Town Investment Plan and the delivery of the various projects through the established Town Partnership Board.

Reasons

5. To contribute to the further economic wellbeing and vitality of the Town.

**Ian Williams
Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services**

Background Papers:
Darlington Town Investment Plan

S17 Crime and Disorder	This paper supports and complements the actions detailed in the Darlington Town Centre Footfall Strategy to reduce ASB in the Town Centre.
Health and Wellbeing	No direct impacts
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	No direct Impacts
Diversity	No direct impacts
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	This decision does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework. Any works highlighted in the report will be met through Tees Valley Indigenous Growth Fund.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The actions detailed in the report aim to improve the attractiveness of the Town Centre therefore directly impacting on Perfectly Placed.
Efficiency	The report aims to utilise the Councils and partner resources in a collective more efficient manner.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

Darlington's Town Deal

6. In February 2020 Cabinet agreed that the Council should progress the application to the government's Towns Deal Fund and as part of the funding requirement set up a Towns Board to assist in the governance and development of the application to the fund.
7. In June 2020 the Council received new guidance on the Towns Fund. The guidance reaffirmed the aims and purpose of the Towns Fund which is to drive the sustainable economic regeneration of towns to deliver long term economic and productivity growth. This will be done through:
 - (a) **Urban regeneration** - Ensuring towns are thriving places for people to live and work, including:
 - (i) Increasing density in town centres;
 - (ii) Strengthening local economic assets including local cultural assets;
 - (iii) Site acquisition, preparation, remediation, and/or development; and
 - (iv) Making full use of planning tools to bring strategic direction and change.

(b) Skills and enterprise infrastructure

- (i) Driving private sector investment and small business development; and
- (ii) Ensuring towns have the space to support skills and small business development.

(c) Connectivity

- (i) Developing local transport schemes that complement regional and national networks; and
- (ii) Supporting the delivery of improved digital connectivity.

8. Following agreement from the Town Board, Darlington's Town Investment Plan (TIP) was submitted in July 2020. The Board received confirmation that £1m Forward Funding had been allocated by Government and in October 2020 we received confirmation that our TIP had been successful and £22.3m was made available to deliver the various projects detailed in our submission.

Forward Funding

9. Members will recall that presentations have taken place both at Scrutiny Committee and all member briefing on the intervention proposals that relate to the £1m Forward Funding programme. The four project areas are:

- (a) The Yards Phase1 (Clark's and Buckton's Yards) – Transform and improve public space
- (b) Town Centre lighting enhancements
- (c) Town Centre Wi-Fi
- (d) Acquisition of properties along Northgate which contribute to the wider Railway Heritage Quarter project.

10. The above projects have been unanimously supported by the Town Board and the necessary procurement, tender and engagement exercise have commenced. It is important to note that this funding must be spent by 31 March 2021 and we are confident that the direction of travel will ensure this is achieved.

Town Fund

11. In October 2020 the Council were informed they had been successful in securing an allocation of £22.3m to fund the Town Investment Plan. Now this funding is being secured and the Heads of Terms with Government agreed, the process of developing the individual business cases for each of the following interventions need to be completed:

(a) North Road – Enhanced townscape and urban regeneration

- (i) property acquisitions
- (ii) development and alignment with private sector partner
- (iii) mixed housing and commercial space. Improved public realm and green open space
- (iv) public realm improvements

(b) Supporting heritage assets

- (i) Property acquisition
- (ii) Sustainable multi-use space

(c) Linear Park & River Skerne corridor

- (i) linear park- improved public realm, walking and cycling
- (ii) property acquisition
- (iii) residential/mixed use development

(d) Rail Heritage Quarter

- (i) property acquisition to enable linking of elements of the project
- (ii) new and improved Heritage Action Zone 26-mile cycle and walking route, focused on the RHQ site
- (iii) creation of public green spaces
- (iv) remediation and conservation of significant heritage assets associated with the site of the world's first passenger railway

(e) Victoria Road

- (i) public realm/highway improvements
- (ii) shop/property front improvements

(f) Bank Top Station and Cattle Mart

- (i) public realm/highway improvements
- (ii) shop/property front improvements

(g) Skinnergate and The Yards

- (i) Development of historic yards and wynds
- (ii) Public realm improvements
- (iii) Shop front and premises enhancement
- (iv) Skinnergate residential
- (v) Expansion of the mixed-use economy

(h) Adult Learning Space

- (i) Provided within a publicly accessible building in the town centre

(i) T Levels Teaching Space

- (i) Educational/Skills space at the college to enable the teaching of new T Level qualifications

12. The completion of the necessary business cases will be challenging, and full resource analysis is being carried out. Update reports will be presented to Cabinet as the business cases are completed.