

CABINET
11 JUNE 2024

DARLINGTON LONG TERM PLAN FOR TOWN FUNDS

Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Stephen Harker, Leader

Responsible Director – Ian Williams, Chief Executive

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Cabinet on the recently announced allocation of £20m from the Government's Long Term Plan for Towns to cover a 10-year period.
2. To advise Cabinet of the need to increase representatives on the Town Board, including one additional elected member.

Summary

3. The report sets out the guidance for the recently announced funding made available to Darlington through the Long-Term Plan for Towns initiative.
4. A requirement for the funding is that the current Town Board is reviewed to ensure an increase in community representation, and the increase of elected members on the Town Board from one to two.

Recommendation

5. It is recommended that Members note the funding confirmation and the proposed changes to Darlington Town Board.

Reason

6. The recommendation is supported to contribute to the further economic wellbeing and vitality of the Town.

Ian Williams
Chief Executive Officer

Background Papers

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities - Long-Term Plan for Towns - Guidance for Local Authorities and Town Boards.

Mark Ladyman: Extension 6306

S17 Crime and Disorder	This paper supports and complements the actions detailed in the Community Safety Strategy to reduce ASB in the Town.
Health and Well Being	No direct impacts
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	No direct impacts
Diversity	No direct impacts
Wards Affected	As per Built Up Urban Area
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	Long-Term Plan for Towns will bring together community leaders, business people, and local bodies to forge the town's future together, alongside the funding needed to deliver for their communities in the long-term
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
Council Plan	The actions detailed in the report aim to improve the attractiveness of the Town.
Efficiency	The report aims to utilise the Council's and partner resources in a collective more efficient manner.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report does not impact on the Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

Darlington's Town Deal

7. As part of the budget speech in March 2024 it was announced that Darlington would be part of the second tranche of the Long-Term Plan for Towns (LTPT) initiative. The initiative makes available £20m over a 10-year period. LTPT programme expects that town improvements and priorities are 'owned' by local residents, as well as affected business and community organisations. It expects that local people are given the opportunity to identify their needs and hopes for the town, which will then identify which projects the funding will be allocated. This funding presents a unique opportunity for strategic, long-term planning aimed at revitalising local communities.
8. The guidance requires areas to set up a Town Board to administer the funds however as Darlington has already a well-functioning Town Board it is proposed that changes are made to the membership of the current Board in order that it is more inclusive of community and voluntary groups within the town.

9. The relevant Government guidance sets out expectations for any revised Board. They must include:
 - (a) Independent Chair
 - (b) MP
 - (c) Two Councillors
 - (d) Increase in community group representation.
 - (e) Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Rep

10. The current Board has already an independent chair and deputy chair, in addition to the MP and the Leader of the Council. It is proposed that one additional elected member is co-opted on the Board together with a PCC rep and community group representation. This community representation could be from several organisations and groups and from the three thematic areas of proposed interventions identified in the guidance. These will be detailed later in the report. Officers have indicated the proposed Board changes to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUCH), as this was required by 1 June 2024. At the Town Board meeting held on 13 May 2024 it was agreed to include 5 new community representatives and 2 additional business representatives, and that three subgroups with additional community representation would be established to develop the interventions projects for the thematic areas and contribute to the 10-year vision.

11. The three thematic areas are: Safety and Security, High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration and Transport and Connectivity interventions.
 - (a) Safety and security
 - (i) Design and management of the built and landscaped environment to 'design out crime'.
 - (ii) Engage with Police Force and together consider interventions to focus on visible crime prevention in defined areas places.
 - (iii) Measures to prevent anti-social behaviour, crime and reduce reoffending.
 - (iv) Measures to reduce repeat burglary.

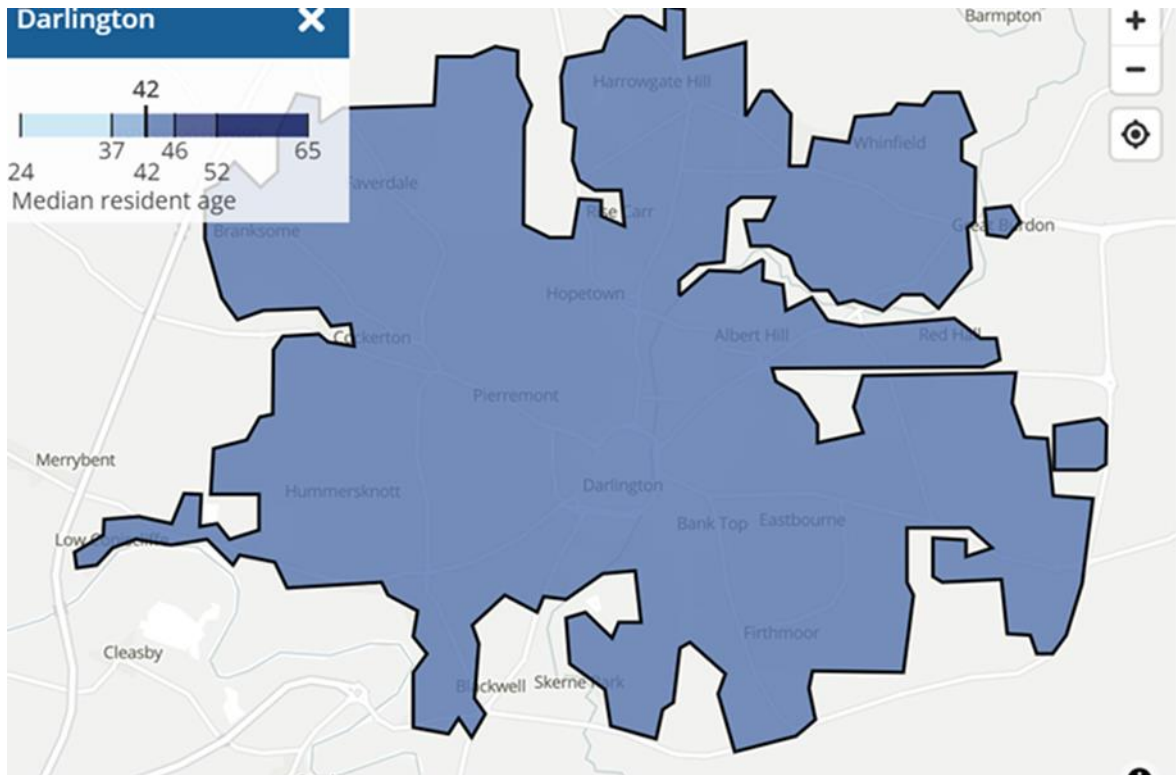
 - (b) High Streets, Heritage, and Regeneration
 - (i) Funding for place-based regeneration and town centre and high street improvements
 - (ii) Funding for new or improvements to existing, community and neighbourhood infrastructure projects and assets including those that increase communities' resilience to natural hazards, such as flooding, and support for decarbonisation of facilities, energy efficiency audits, and installation of energy efficiency and renewable measures in community buildings (including capital spend and running costs).
 - (iii) Funding for the development and promotion of wider campaigns which encourage people to visit and explore the local area.
 - (iv) Investment in open markets and improvements to town centre retail and service sector infrastructure, with wrap around support for small businesses

(c) Transport and connectivity interventions

- (i) Support for active travel enhancements in the local area
- (ii) Funding for bus infrastructure and connections to speed up journeys.
- (iii) Funding for new, or improvements to road networks to improve access within and to the town.

12. By 1 November 2024 the Council will need to submit a high level 10-year vision for the town and incorporate a 3-year investment plan for the Fund. It is important that the vision and intervention plan is fully informed by the views of the communities in Darlington. The Plan will conform to the geographical area that will be covered known as the Built-Up Area defined by the Office of National Statistics and illustrated in Figure 1. There will be £6m available for the first of the three-intervention period with the remainder spread over remaining period of the fund allocated in 3-year periods. Funding can be carried forward into the subsequent 3-year programme period but cannot be brought forward.

Figure 1. Built Up Area



Forward Funding

13. The Council will be the accountable body for this funding. This is the current arrangement with the Town Deal Fund. The Council received £50,000 forward funding in April to commence the necessary preparatory work and will receive a further £200,000 in June to fund the development of a town vision and the initial 3-year intervention programme and to assist in capacity building within the community and voluntary sector.

Financial Considerations

14. The Council will be the accountable body for the LTPT and therefore the funding will come to the Council. The final terms and conditions of the funding are yet to be received. There should be no financial implications for the Council as the programme of works and initiatives will be funded entirely from the LTPT and approved by the Towns Board.

Consultation

15. Due to the timeframe set out to review the Town Board, and the relatively tight deadline for the submission of the visioning document and first 3-year investment programme, officers have commenced early dialogue and engagement with community and voluntary groups. A meeting with the Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Group was arranged and four representatives for the Board have been identified, together with a representative from the PCC, town business representatives and two additional community members. It is proposed that this Board remains in place for 12 months with a further review once a full appreciation of the requirements of the new Board are established.