

CABINET
8 APRIL 2025

PLAN FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS

Responsible Cabinet Members -
Councillor Stephen Harker, Leader
Councillor Jim Garner, Stronger Communities Portfolio

Responsible Director -
Rose Rouse, Chief Executive

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To Inform Cabinet about the Government's Plan for Neighbourhoods which will provide up to £20 million of funding and support over 10 years to 75 places across the UK including Darlington.
2. To seek approval of recommendations to allow officers to support the Towns Board take on the role of Neighbourhood Board and make the required submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) by 22 April.

Summary

3. A prospectus for Plan for Neighbourhoods was published on 5 March 2025 outlining the new approach and confirming that Darlington is one of the 75 eligible authorities.
4. £20 million will be provided to the Council over the next 10 years.
5. The Council is required to support the restructuring of the Towns Board to become a Neighbourhood Board to develop a 10-year Regeneration Plan and provide oversite of its delivery.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that Cabinet :-
 - (a) Approve a review of the Towns Board membership and structure to enable it to discharge to role of the 'Neighbourhood Board' and for the required submission to MHCLG to be made by 22 April.
 - (b) Support the reconstituted Neighbourhood Board to develop a Regeneration Plan which complements the Council Plan.

- (c) Agree that the Chief Executive review the current support provided to ensure that there is capacity within the Council to deliver the initiative.
- (d) Agree that the Chief Executive is given delegated authority to progress recommendations 6a and 6c in consultation with the Leader and Stronger Communities Portfolio member.

Reasons

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-

- (a) To address the criteria laid down in the guidance.
- (b) In order to secure the grant funding.

Rose Rouse
Chief Executive

Background Papers

Plan for Neighbourhoods Prospectus

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plan-for-neighbourhoods-prospectus-and-tools/plan-for-neighbourhoods-prospectus#neighbourhood-boards>

Seth Pearson : Extension 6090

Council Plan	It is expected that the support the ambitions of the Council Plan
Addressing inequalities	The initiative will address inequality
Tackling Climate Change	The initiative may well support more heat efficient housing
Efficient and effective use of resources	The initiative will augment the Council's resources
Health and Wellbeing	Is a focus highlighted in the prospectus
S17 Crime and Disorder	Is a focus highlighted in the prospectus
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	Council Plan
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	Yes
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	To be determined

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

8. Darlington was included in the second tranche of Long Term Plan for Towns announced in March 2024. With the incoming Government the programme was paused in July and then in November it was announced that it would be replaced with an initiative with a revised focus as part of a wider regeneration programme.
9. A prospectus for Plan for Neighbourhoods was published on 5 March 2025 outlining the new approach and confirming that Darlington is one of the 75 eligible authorities.
10. The intention of the programme is to bring communities together, allocating funding to improve living standards and give people in the 75 recipient locations more of a stake in their future.

Neighbourhood Boards

11. The government will support the establishment of new Neighbourhood Boards, for local people to address deprivation and regenerate their local area.
12. Each board is required, in partnership with their local authority, to develop a 'Regeneration Plan', setting out its vision for the next decade alongside a more detailed 'Investment Plan' for the first four years of the programme.
13. The Government recognises that there are existing 'Town Boards' and governance structures already in place to deliver the previous administration's Long-Term Plan for Towns programme. It is expected that these Boards will form the basis of the new Boards.
14. Governance and boundary guidance will be published in due course which focuses on:
 - (a) Accountable bodies and Neighbourhood Board roles and responsibilities
 - (b) Governance structure requirements for Neighbourhood Boards
 - (c) The process and timelines to confirm their Neighbourhood Board arrangements and boundary to MHCLG
 - (d) Geographical boundaries for places in receipt of funding
 - (e) The associated MHCLG review and approval process
15. Neighbourhood Boards are required to confirm finalised membership and any proposals to alter their place boundaries by 22 April 2025.
16. The prospectus asserts that Plan for Neighbourhoods emulates and builds on the principles of the New Deal for Communities which was designed to close the gaps between acutely deprived areas and the rest of the country, focusing on three 'place' related outcomes and three 'people' related outcomes.

17. The 'place' related outcomes included:

- (a) Crime
- (b) Community
- (c) Housing and the physical environment

18. Whilst the 'people' related outcomes focussed on:

- (a) Education
- (b) Health
- (c) Worklessness

19. There are three core pillars of the programme:

(a) **Community empowerment and collaboration**

- (i) By encouraging local residents to take an active role in the decision-making in their communities, the scheme will foster improved social capital in each place. Bringing together local people with the government agencies, businesses and organisations that deliver change fostering relationships that will last beyond the scheme's lifetime.

(b) **Long-termism**

- (i) By delivering funding over a 10-year period, the programme aims to ensure that communities can focus on long-term solutions that bring sustained change to local areas, rather than quick fixes.

(c) **Holistic outcomes**

- (i) By taking an outcome-based approach, the programme aims to enable each place to address problems holistically. The objective is for Communities to find solutions that addressed multiple themes: housing, education, health and employment.

Regeneration Plans

20. Neighbourhood Boards must work with local people and the local authority to draft a Regeneration Plan. Boards should work in partnership with their local authority and, if relevant, ensure their Mayoral Combined Authority have been consulted on the plan.

21. The Regeneration Plan should outline the community's overarching vision for change over the next decade to deliver the strategic objectives of the programme, developed through grassroots engagement to reflect local people's priorities.

22. As part of the Regeneration Plan, boards will need to provide a more detailed investment plan for the first four-year investment period cycle, which will include the interventions the board would like to pursue over the period and how that activity delivers across the three strategic objectives of the programme.

23. Neighbourhood Board are required to submit their Regeneration Plan to MHCLG for assessment and approval between Spring 2025 and Winter 2025.
24. A list of pre-approved interventions has been published alongside the prospectus under the following headings:
 - (a) Regeneration, high streets and heritage
 - (b) Housing
 - (c) Work, productivity and skills
 - (d) Cohesion
 - (e) Health and wellbeing
 - (f) Transport
 - (g) Safety and security
 - (h) Education and opportunity
25. If activity can be evidenced as a clear priority of the community, the pre-approved interventions can be pursued without the need to provide a lengthy business case.
26. The prospectus asserts that where activities fall outside the scope of the pre-approved interventions but the board, based on their community engagement, believes they are better placed to meet local needs, the board should seek to pursue these. This would require a business case to be agreed with MHCLG.
27. The wide range of preapproved interventions will allow the swift development of the Regeneration Plan. However, the plan will need to articulate a strong vision and objectives to ensure a coherent programme is delivered and that provides a clear rationale for what interventions are included and which are not.

Funding profile

28. Darlington will receive funding and support totalling up to £20 million. The funding will be split 75% capital and 25% revenue.
29. £250,000 has already been allocated to local authorities under the previous programme. The new prospectus confirms a further capacity payment of £200,000 in the 2025 to 2026 financial year. Recognising the differing levels of local capacity and development work required across the 75 communities, MHCLG has provide a wide window for Neighbourhood Boards to submit their Regeneration Plan (Spring 2025 to Winter 2025).
30. The Council will need to utilise a proportion of this capacity funding to enable it to effectively support the delivery of the programme.

Financial Implications

31. The Council will be in receipt of the funds and will be required to manage the spend i.e. the accountable body. Further guidance is expected in due course and a further report will be brought to Cabinet to outline the Councils governance requirements and proposed usage of the funding.

Legal Implications

32. The Council will be required to ensure the fund is deployed legally. The Council will need to support the Neighbourhood Board in relation to this. Further guidance is expected in due course.

HR Implications

33. Posts may need to be revised and or created to deliver the programme.

Estates and Property Advice

34. Advice will be sought as required.

Procurement Advice

35. Advice will be sought as required.

Carbon Impact and Climate Change

36. Advice will be sought as required.

Equalities considerations

37. The Neighbourhood Board will be constituted to ensure that all communities are considered fairly.

Consultation

38. The Neighbourhood Board is the primary means of consultation for the initiative. However, it is envisaged that additional community engagement will be carried out.

Outcome of Consultation

39. To be determined.