

**CABINET  
4 FEBRUARY 2020**

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**TOWNS FUND**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Heather Scott  
Leader and all Cabinet Members**

**Responsible Director - Paul Wildsmith, Managing Director**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To update Cabinet on the potential for the Council to receive up to £25m of government funding to improve the economy in Darlington and to approve the establishment of the Darlington Town Deal Board.

**Summary**

2. The report sets out the potential for the Council to receive up to £25m to improve the economy of Darlington and the need to establish a Towns Deal Board. The report sets out early thinking on bid content.

**Recommendation**

3. It is recommended that :-
  - (a) Cabinet note the potential government funding of up to £25m to improve Darlington's economy.
  - (b) Approve the establishment of the Darlington Town Deal Board.
  - (c) Receive further reports on the bid.

**Reasons**

4. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
  - (a) To meet the requirements of guidance and to engage partners in the development of the bid.
  - (b) To allow Cabinet to contribute to the bid development and approve the bid.

**Paul Wildsmith  
Managing Director**

## Background Papers

- (i) Towns Fund prospectus

Paul Wildsmith : Extension 5428  
TAB

S17 Crime and Disorder	None at this stage
Health and Well Being	None at this stage
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	None at this stage
Diversity	There are no specific proposals that impact on diversity issues.
Wards Affected	None affected at this stage
Groups Affected	None affected at this stage
Budget and Policy Framework	Funding to develop bid received – no impact at this stage beyond the grant funding.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The bid will take the priorities of ODPP in to account.
Efficiency	None at this stage
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

5. The government has invited a number of towns to apply for funding of up to £25m to improve their economies, Darlington is one of the invited towns. As part of the invitation to bid, the Council has been awarded £173,029 to assist in the development of the bid to the Fund.
6. The government has produced a Prospectus for the Fund (**Appendix 1**) which gives general and specific guidance on issues relating to the process, one is the requirement to establish a Town Deal Board which is required to meet before 31 January 2020. The Leader and Managing Director have constituted a Board of relevant partners and individuals (**Appendix 2**) to ensure it meets the deadline and Cabinet are asked to approve retrospectively the establishment of the Board.
7. The Board will assist in the development of the bid but all final decisions on the bid and implementation, if successful, will be the responsibility of the Cabinet. However, it is anticipated and hoped that the board will have significant input and influence in shaping the bid.
8. The Board had its first meeting on 27 January 2020.

### Initials Thoughts on the Bid Development

9. Officers' initial views is the bid should be seen as an opportunity to enhance and speed up existing plans and be a mix of capital schemes including things such as acquisition and building improvements, together with revenue expenditure in areas

such as education and skills and community capacity building.

10. In terms of locations, initial thinking is to work on two main corridors into the town that already have considerable plans and challenges and the Town Centre. The first area would be working to deliver the vision around the Bank Top station area including the Cattle Mart site. There is great potential to regenerate the area around the station and the Victoria Road corridor to enhance the town's economy, both directly and indirectly. Any funding from the Towns Fund would enhance the £25m Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) funding for Bank Top Station, hopefully Government funding for the transport network and the £1m TVCA funding to improve Victoria Road plus private sector investment.
11. The second area is the North Road corridor from the town centre to the Railway Heritage Quarter site. TVCA funding of £20m has been secured for the site and some of the bid could involve enhancing the site and the surrounding area, looking at shop front schemes and some acquisitions and developments such as infill housing. Bringing heritage assets back life will be key to the bid.
12. Finally, the Town Centre may feature in the bid but as the Council has set aside £10m from the TVCA funded Indigenous Growth Fund for the town centre, and is in the process of submitting a bid to the Futures High Street Fund of approximately £7m, it is not envisaged that the financial contribution to the Town Centre, if any, will be large.
13. In addition to physical interventions, it is anticipated that the bid will include the enhancement of work already underway on the Northgate initiative and the Mutual Gain work at Bank Top. Funding could speed up and/or increase the reach of these initiatives.
14. As part of the bid development, it would be appropriate to look wider at skills and employability within the Borough and look to work with partners including TVCA, to see how better outcomes for residents could be delivered.
15. These are early thoughts and engagement with Government officials will no doubt shape thinking but the key principal is to concentrate on enhancing what we already have in place.

### **Financial Implications**

16. The Council has received a capacity revenue grant of £173,029, to support the establishment of the Town Deal Board and development of the investment plans required as part of the bid to the Fund. There are no other implications at this stage.

### **Legal Implications**

17. Governance arrangements will need to be agreed and finalised at the next meeting of the Town Deal Board.

### **HR Implications**

18. There may be some realignment of officer responsibilities to deliver the bid within the timescales and some secondments to the bid team.