

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Strategic Environment Cabinet Committee

Date: 18 June 2019

Reporting officer: Assistant Director (Communities)

Subject: Future High Streets Fund

Purpose and summary of report:

To update the Committee on the council's expression of interest for Future High Streets Funding.

Recommendations:

1. That the positive transformational opportunities presented by the Future High Streets Fund be noted;
2. That Members of this committee discuss and give their views on the council's aspirations for the Town Centre and potential areas for investment, with or without a successful outcome for Future High Streets Funding.

1. Future High Street Fund

- 1.1 The Government announced a £675 million Future High Streets Fund within the 2018 Budget as part of "*Our Plan for the High Street*". This also comprised the following actions:
 - 1.1.1 cutting business rates by a third for up to 90% of retail properties for two years;
 - 1.1.2 consulting on planning reform to make it simpler to create more homes, jobs and choice in town centres;
 - 1.1.3 setting up a High Streets Task Force to support local leadership with expert advice; and
 - 1.1.4 strengthening community assets, including the restoration of the historic buildings.
- 1.2 The objective of the Future High Streets Fund is to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability.

- 1.3 Local authorities were asked within a Phase 1 Expression of Interest to define the specific challenges faced by their Town Centres, to set out their overarching strategic ambition for what their Town Centre should become and to identify what needs to be done to make this possible.
- 1.4 The Government received over 300 expressions of interest from local authorities and these are currently being assessed against the published criteria. Places moving to Phase 2 will be announced in Summer 2019.
- 1.5 During this second phase, shortlisted places will receive some revenue funding to support the development of their town centre strategies which shall include specific project plans and associated business cases setting out how they shall regenerate these places. These will need to be submitted by Late 2019 for assessment and announcement of funding confirmation in Spring 2020.
- 1.6 It is anticipated that a second round of the Fund will be made in due course.
- 1.7 An expression of interest for Gravesend Town Centre was submitted by the council by the 22 March 2019 deadline. The challenges facing the Town and a vision and ambition for change are summarised in Appendix 2. The expression of interest was accompanied by a series of letters of support from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership and other partners, including KCC, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership; development partners, such as Reef Estates; and, community and local business interests.

2. Potential Areas for Investment

- 2.1 Government guidance indicates that they expect any identified needs for investment to be developed within Phase 2 of the application process to fall under the following themes ([Source: MHCLG, Dec 2018](#)):
 - 2.1.1 Investment in physical infrastructure;
 - 2.1.2 Acquisition and assembly of land including to support new housing, workspaces and public realm;
 - 2.1.3 Improvements to transport access, traffic flow and circulation in the area;
 - 2.1.4 Supporting change of use including (where appropriate) housing delivery and densification;
 - 2.1.5 Supporting adaptation of the high street in response to changing technology.
- 2.2 Submissions need to be co-funded from other public and/or private sector funding.
- 2.3 A Phase 2 application for the Town Centre could include the following investments:
 - 2.3.1 Viability gap funding to overcome barriers to housing development with the aim of quickening the pace of **new residential communities** in and around the Town Centre.
 - 2.3.2 Physical infrastructure to support the potential for a **Thames Fast River Service** from Gravesend to strengthen its locational benefits through added transport connectivity.

- 2.3.3 Physical infrastructure in the form of a **‘Creative Hub’** to assist in the development of a creative cluster in the Town Centre. Potentially, complementary to new **‘co-working spaces’** and/or a **‘digital hub’** to help small business growth within the Town, attracting more jobs into the Town Centre.
 - 2.3.4 Co-ordinating public services effectively within the Town Centre to create a **‘public service hub’**, accessible to more people from the Borough, bringing them into the Town.
 - 2.3.5 New **leisure/entertainment experiences**, creating compelling reasons for people to be in Town.
 - 2.3.6 Enhancement of **Gravesend’s Waterfront**, incorporating public realm improvements to St Andrew’s Gardens and reconnecting the riverside with the Town Centre.
 - 2.3.7 Enhancement of **Harmer Street** to encourage investment in properties, raise the quality of residential accommodation, ground floor uses and air quality issues.
 - 2.3.8 Replacement of car park and traffic signage around the Town Centre with new and enhanced **Variable Message Signage** which make it easier for people to arrive in the Town, easing traffic flow.
- 2.4 Alongside these physical investments, complementary work is being undertaken to identify options for incentivising business growth and property improvement in the Town; together with projects related to place branding & marketing, promoting the evening & night-time economy, events programming and business support, especially in respect of digital technology.
- 2.5 Future High Streets Funding is an opportunity to quicken the pace and co-ordinate investment in the Town. At this stage there is no guarantee that the expression of interest will be successful and, whilst it is the intention to progress all these projects, the Committee’s views on what the council’s priorities should be would be helpful.

3. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Future High Streets Fund Prospectus, Application Form and Bidding Guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-high-streets-fund-call-forproposals>.

Anyone wishing to inspect background papers should, in the first place, be directed to Committee & Electoral Services who will make the necessary arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
Legal	No implications at this stage.
Finance and Value for Money	Indications are that successful bids for Future High Street Fund could receive between £5 million and £10 million to support Town Centre renewal. The Expression of Interest included an assessment of the revenue funding required to work up a Phase 2 bid if successful at Phase 1.
Risk Assessment	The Future High Street Fund is an opportunity to make a positive case for funding to support the revivatisation of Gravesend Town Centre, without which much needed investment in the Town may falter or not take place.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i>
	<p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data?</p> <p>A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner’s Office website via the above links.</p>
	<p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice?</p>
	<p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk.</p>
Equality Impact Assessment	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer.</p> <p>No</p>
	<p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer.</p> <p>No</p>
	<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>
Corporate Plan	Strategic Objective 3 - Sustainable Gravesham
Crime and Disorder	No direct implications at this stage.
Digital and website implications	None at this stage.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	None at this stage.