

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Strategic Environment Cabinet Committee

Date: 17 September 2019

Reporting officer: Assistant Director (Communities)

Subject: Future High Streets Fund

Purpose and summary of report:

To report the outcome of the first round of Future High Streets Funding and to request the Committee's views on the next steps for this important area of work.

Recommendations:

1. That the Committee note the outcome of the first round of Future High Streets Funding and give their views on the steps, set out in Section 2 of this report, that are being taken to transform Gravesend Town Centre.

1. Future High Street Funding – Outcome of Phase 1

- 1.1 The council submitted a Phase 1 expression of interest to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for Future High Street Funding for Gravesend Town Centre in March 2019. In July 2019, the Government announced a shortlist of 50 town centres which will go through to Phase 2 and Gravesend is not included in that list (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multi-million-fund-to-revitalise-country-s-high-streets>).
- 1.2 Further to this, the Government made an announcement in August to expand funding to an [additional 50 town centres](#). Again, disappointingly, Gravesend was not included.
- 1.3 Shortlisted town centres will receive £150,000 revenue funding to support the development of business cases and project plans for a Phase 2 submission by the end of the year.
- 1.4 This has been a very competitive round of funding, with over 300 town centres submitting expressions of interest. MHCLG have not given feedback on individual submissions, but reiterated the criteria by which bids were assessed. However, the Government's announcement made clear that a further round of the funding will open next year and that unsuccessful town centres are encouraged to consider renewing their expressions of interest for re-submission.

- 1.5 In response to the Future High Street Fund announcement, a letter has been sent to the Deputy Director Infrastructure and Regeneration, MHCLG, to express the council's disappointment at the outcome of the first round of funding. An invitation has been extended to the Deputy Director to visit Gravesend Town Centre to see the significant opportunities that exist to do so much more to revive the Town.

2. Next Steps

- 2.1 The council is committed to taking forward the potential transformational investments which underpinned its expression of interest for Future High Street Funding, with or without a successful outcome. Those projects were identified in the report to this Committee on [18 June 2019](#).
- 2.2 A number of these projects could be candidates for funding from other sources and they are being progressed to a level of detail whereby the case for funding can be made. It is anticipated that even if a further round of Future High Street Funding was successful, it would not be able to fund all the projects identified and therefore taking them forward in this way will also help to identify priorities.
- 2.3 The criteria for Future High Street Funding placed emphasis on developing a shared strategic vision for the Town. To strengthen this, it is the intention to undertake the following actions:
 - 2.3.1 Preparation of a Town Centre Strategy, supported by a project implementation plan, to build upon the work undertaken in support of the Future High Street Funding application.
 - 2.3.2 Re-forming a Town Centre partnership/investment forum to work with the council to confirm, share and take forward its ambition for the Town Centre. This will be chaired by the Cabinet Member for Strategic Environment and have representation from Town Centre interests, specifically those who are making key investments in the Town Centre.
 - 2.3.3 To make contact with the Government's new [High Streets Task Force](#) at the earliest opportunity to help support transformation of the Town Centre.
- 2.4 It is clear that the future of town centres across the country will remain a national priority given the structural changes that are taking place within retail. They will continue to attract innovative thinking and funding.
- 2.5 In respect of other funding, the Prime Minister made a further announcement on 30 July 2019 about a £3.6 billion [Towns Fund](#) to support an initial 100 'left behind towns' so that they will get the improved transport and improved broadband connectivity. There has been no application process for that Fund, but the Government announced on 6 September 2019 [100 towns](#) that will benefit from this fund. Again, Gravesend is not included in that list.

3. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 3.1 There are no background papers related to this report.

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 direct implications at this stage.
Finance and Value for Money	Business cases are being worked up for projects which have the potential to transform the Town Centre and will be considered on their individual merits for funding.
Risk Assessment	Without a co-ordinated approach to physical investments in the Town Centre, the council's ambitions for its revitalisation will not be met.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<p data-bbox="416 645 1469 741"><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> <p data-bbox="416 763 1485 909">a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links.</p> <p data-bbox="416 931 1469 999">b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice?</p> <p data-bbox="416 1066 1485 1133">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 data-bbox="416 1200 1501 1346">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. No</p> <p data-bbox="416 1368 1437 1480">b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. No</p> <p data-bbox="416 1503 1501 1603"><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></p>
Corporate Plan	Strategic Objective 3 - Sustainable Gravesham
Crime and Disorder	No direct implications at this stage.
Digital and website implications	No direct implications at this stage.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	No direct implications.