



B O S T O N

B O R O U G H C O U N C I L

REPORT TO: BOSTON TOWN AREA COMMITTEE

DATE: 5 AUGUST 2020

SUBJECT: ACCELERATED GRANT THROUGH THE TOWNS FUND

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: DEPUTY LEADER

REPORT AUTHOR: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE (PLACE)

EXEMPT REPORT? NO

SUMMARY

To provide an update on the Towns Fund and the allocated accelerated grant funding of £750,000 delivered through the mechanism of the Towns Fund to support the delivery of capital projects in the financial year 2020/21, that meet the Towns Fund Intervention Framework and will have the greatest immediate impact to aid economic recovery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That BTAC notes and supports the following recommendations to be considered by Full Council on 10 August 2020 -

1. Notes the sum of £750,000 Accelerated Grant funding to support capital projects that respond to immediate challenges and support the economic recovery of Boston, and its inclusion in the 2020/21 Capital Programme.
2. Authorises the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) to confirm in writing to Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government by 14th August 2020 of the project proposals and that they are in line with the Towns Fund intervention framework as set out in the Towns Fund further guidance.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The projects selected to benefit from this funding are connected to the emerging Boston Town Deal Investment Plan. These projects are considered to enable our town to restore pride and confidence and build better, stronger local economies for the long term.

The award of this grant funding has provided the Council with an opportunity to work with key partners to accelerate projects that will influence and support the recovery which has not been able to progress as quickly as hoped for due to the covid-19 pandemic.

These projects stimulate economic participation, job creation and investment opportunities, nurtures and influences economic well-being across the whole Borough.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Not providing confirmation to the MHCLG by the deadline of 14 August 2020, would jeopardise the opportunity to create sustainable growth to enable the Council to build a stronger and more resilient economy, and potentially affect the prospects of being included in allocations for further funding rounds.

REPORT

1. Background

- 1.1 On 30th June 2020 the Prime Minister gave a speech and laid out plans for a “New Deal” to support Britain’s recovery putting jobs, skills and infrastructure investment at the heart of a post Covid19 economic growth strategy, and as part of this announced financial support for various sectors, including those capital investment projects, schemes or programmes that will influence and contribute to the ‘levelling up’ agenda.
- 1.2 Included in that speech was the announcement of £5bn accelerated grant funding delivered through the mechanism of the Towns Fund to help expedite projects that will have the greatest immediate impact to aid the economic recovery on towns like Boston.
- 1.3 On the 1st July 2020 the Chief Executive received notification in writing that Boston Borough Council, through the Towns Fund, had been selected to receive £750,000 in accelerated grant funding to support capital projects that will drive jobs growth, create further investment and the ability to look to build a stronger and more resilient economy for all our communities.
- 1.4 The letter from Jenny Dibden, Co-Director Cities & Local Growth Unit at Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) sets out how the grant allocation is calculated, potential project interventions and the requirement to respond by the 14th August 2020 to MHCLG with project proposals.
- 1.5 The letter also reiterates the government’s agenda to ‘level up’ and that the government recognises the Towns Fund is one vehicle that clearly supports local areas to realise and nurture their own ambitions to level up.
- 1.6 The government’s favoured approach to allocating grant funding to areas is by population size data extracted from the 2011 Census, using the Office for National Statistics’ categorisation of small, medium and large towns. Using this methodology, the grant allocation for Boston Borough Council is £750,000 to fund capital projects, which can be delivered this financial year 2020/21.
- 1.7 The MHCLG are particularly keen to see, in collaboration with the Town Deal Board, capital projects that respond to immediate challenges and support the economic recovery including the repurposing of empty commercial buildings, open space infrastructure - parks and green space, improvements to the town centre and where an immediate benefit can be achieved - demolition or site remediation.

- 1.8 The MHCLG has issued a Frequently Asked Questions paper to provide further clarity and definition on the types of interventions, expectations and outcomes. The FAQs are attached for information at Appendix 1.
- 1.9 The Town Deal Board is the vehicle through which the vision and strategy for the town is defined. The board, through a well-evidenced based Town Investment Plan (TIP), will set out a clear programme of projects, collaborating with partners and other public sector bodies to ensure a holistic approach to deliver sustainable long term economic and productivity growth.
- 1.10 There is also an expectation from MHCLG that the Council will consult and engage fully with the Board of the Boston Town Deal when identifying projects, and on 7 July the Boston Town Deal Board were advised of the accelerated grant and encouraged to suggest potential interventions which related to the emerging investment plan.

2. Potential Project Interventions

- 2.1 Consideration should be given to those projects that can facilitate and deliver sustained growth and return the maximum economic Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) for all of our communities in the shortest amount of time.
- 2.2 Again, any project should be in a position to move quickly as funding is only available for this financial year 2020/21. It is also becoming clear that government will be looking more closely at funding projects that will deliver economic returns in the shortest amount of time.
- 2.3 The Town Board has been advised of the Accelerated Funding opportunity and how this can link to the emerging themes of the Boston Town Deal.
- 2.4 Listed below are potential project interventions which meet the criteria set out by the MHCLG:-

(i) Haven High Academy – 3G Pitch Development Project - £120,000

Haven High Academy is applying to the Football Foundation for funding towards a full size floodlit 3G Football Turf Pitch on the site in Marian Road, Boston. Alongside this, the school needs to identify additional capital funding to ensure the project is viable.

The school is an 11-16 secondary school with academy status and is the only secondary school within the eight schools of the Boston Witham Academies Federation. Haven High Academy currently has 1172 pupils on roll. The Federation prides itself on working in partnership to enhance the life experiences and chances of all the children and young people who come through their doors.

The academy is looking to develop their facilities, not only to support their students, but to provide opportunities for the local community groups to continue to access high quality facilities on their site. The new 3G artificial pitch will complement the existing facilities on site and promote the academy as the hub of the local community. Haven High has already shown they can manage and maintain facilities to a high standard and have a clear approach to being a hub for the local area.

During early consultation on the #MyTown campaign as part of the Boston Town Deal, there was a significant amount of public support for increased sports facilities in the Town, specifically 3G and 4G pitches. Boston has one of the lowest provisions in the county.

The cost for a full size flood 3G pitch is in the region of £750,000 (including professional fees and contingency). The school will be using part of their capital reserves towards the project, but will also be seeking other funding to contribute to the partnership funding required. The school hope to apply to the Football Foundation for a large contribution towards the cost of the pitch, but need to explore all other funding opportunities.

Haven High Academy are seeking £120,000 contribution.

**(ii) Boston College Digital, Transport and Logistics Academy –
£182,976**

The Academy is due for completion for November 2020, Boston College's Digital, Transport and Logistics Academy (the DTLA) is proposed to introduce new courses that will provide skills training for Lincolnshire's established logistics and transportation industry with a focus on digital innovation and technologies for the future.

The DTLA's facilities will include a transport workshop, computer rooms, a network and hardware computer room and a student break-out space. This will continue to build upon the success of the Engineering, Manufacturing and Technology centre (EMAT).

The logistics and transport industry provide approximately 40,000 jobs in the South East of Lincolnshire and is a key area of focus, together with the Port of Boston, in the emerging Boston Town Investment Plan.

As part of the work of the Town Deal Board, there is ongoing consultation with the logistics industry and the Port of Boston. This valuable engagement includes working with employers to map the current and future provision to meet skills needs, both locally and nationally, to ensure that the facilities implemented and courses delivered are relevant to the employment opportunities available and enable industries to continue to grow and develop.

As a result of this engagement, Boston College has identified the essential equipment required and this will accelerate the support for skills and employment not just for our young people but also adult learners, many who may need to retrain as a consequence of the impact of Covid19 on the employment market.

The acquisition of the equipment and services would enable the full completion of the DTLA. The DTLA project is GLLEP funded and destined to support the skills acquisition within the key sector of ports and logistics.

(iii) Boston Town Heritage Projects - £277,700

The Boston Townscape Heritage Project will significantly enhance the eastern area of the town's historic market place for the benefit of local businesses, the local community and visitors to the town.

Boston's rich and unique historic environment, dating from the medieval period to the 20th century, will be explored, celebrated and conserved through a scheme of capital works and an innovative activity programme.

The project has been developed through a partnership between Boston Borough Council and Heritage Lincolnshire which aims to build upon the momentum gained from recent heritage led regeneration initiatives in the town through a previous Historic England supported Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas and will also work collaboratively with other local partners on activities relating to the Hanse League membership and Mayflower 2020.

The project to date has successfully bid for match funding to the Heritage Lottery Fund and Lincolnshire County Council and is now putting forward a bid for match funding to the Accelerator Fund as part of the Boston Town Deal, to enable the capital elements of the project to be realised in full.

The scheme area includes the eastern boundary of the market place, Dolphin Lane and Pump Square and individual buildings eligible for grant funding have been identified. Work already undertaken on the project by Heritage Lincolnshire and the Borough Council with local businesses, has resulted in the first three buildings within it, at a point that they ready to be renovated, subject to funding, and be completed by the end of this financial year (2020/21).

Lincolnshire County Council is also in the process of developing its highway development project for the Lane to also be delivered this financial year

Detailed below are the three individual projects the bid to the Accelerator Fund could support totalling £272,250 and the bid also includes an amount for promotional materials and activity in support of the project totalling £5,450.

- 16 Market Place – Has been granted listed building consent and planning permission. It has been out to tender and is currently awaiting a final tender return.
- 17 Market Place – Planning permissions have been granted, the tender process is also complete and the project is currently awaiting a grant offer so works can proceed on site.
- 8 Dolphin Lane – Planning permissions have been granted and it is currently out to tender. Publicity and Promotion for all of the above to include the Accelerator Fund and the Boston Town Deal within the wider project funding partnership.

This project is seeking £277,700.

(iv) Experience Boston: Travel, Trade and Influence - £80,000

With the wealth of assets as a quintessential and visually stunning Historic Market Town and Port Boston is uniquely poised to build on increased local, regional, national and international profile as a quality historic and cultural visitor destination, bringing all the wider benefits to local and visitor economies as well as driving increased opportunities for investment.

The project will enhance our cultural infrastructure to engage and share more effectively these stories as well as Boston's historic trade and maritime associations, and the influence the town has had locally and internationally. Critically it will also orientate users to the wider retail offer of the town and give opportunity for fuller engagement with its businesses.

The project will develop physical interpretation and heritage resources that are focussed on the historic environment of the town and its culture. It will also importantly build on reinforcing the placebrand of the town and orientating people through mapping solutions to the cultural and retail opportunities the town has to offer.

This also having the effect of continuing momentum in the investment and delivery of initiatives in the town which has seen a consistently upward trajectory of improvement and enhancement making it a more compelling destination to consider making a home and place to work and invest. 'Experience Boston' will provide long term benefit within the public realm.

There is significant opportunity to add to current public realm improvements within Boston, helping inform locals and visitors alike to Boston's rich Heritage. This builds on the placebrand, wayfinding and design toolkit developed in the successful HLF project 'Boston: Explore and Discover'. That project was the catalyst for a number of continuing improvements in both the public realm and the visual identity of the town. The project, through its physical legacy will continue to enhance the offer of the town both as a heritage destination and also as a place to live and work in.

The successful 'Boston: Explore and Discover' project acted as a catalyst for continued improvement and the council has invested in the town and the public realm as well as embedding the placebrand throughout the town. The town is now ready for a second phase of investment to expand the interpretative schemes and maximise engagement with the town's heritage and local and visitor economies.

This project is seeking £80,000

(v) PE21 Feasibility Funding - £50K

Boston Borough Council commissioned AR Urbanism to undertake a master planning exercise on a 10-acre under-utilised town centre location to maximise the economic potential working closely with both the public and private sectors. This catalyst place-led regeneration scheme looks to influence real economic benefits, health & well-being and social value opportunities for generations to come.

There are specific sector opportunities identified within the PE21 masterplan that can harness more value added services include a new Well-being and Leisure facility, Transport Hub, hotel, work and learning provision as well as residential and extra care facilities.

However, to test and underpin the interventions, recommendations and the viability of the PE21 Master plan and more recently market demand post Covid-19, a feasibility study needs commissioning to fully understand the sustainable and economic potential the PE21 vision can deliver.

The report will consider current and projected future uses and market demands, which will ensure a more robust assessment on uses, values and deliverability to enable a better and clearer policy on approach and opportunity.

(vi) The Sanctuary, Restore Church - £200,000

Restore Church is passionate about relationships and about the organisations and individuals that it connects with; as a consequence, the Church has a driving ambition to bring forward an exemplar project, The Sanctuary.

The Sanctuary will be an inclusive community hub that will have a focus on supporting homeless and vulnerable people in the broadest sense; it will provide a range of services and opportunities that support people into accommodation, into training, into education and into work.

The Sanctuary project has identified a suitable premise for sale on the open market within the 'PE21' area and has begun discussion with the agent. As a project, it seeks to provide:

- Self-contained accommodation with support.
- Emergency access accommodation to support the most vulnerable within our community.
- A Community Café, that offers training and volunteering opportunities as well as a revenue source to support the wider project.
- A Community Supermarket, that like the café, will offer training, skills development and practical opportunities to the community, residents of the accommodation, as well as providing food schemes to help individuals and families in need.
- Multi-agency space where support, training, advice and advocacy can be delivered.
- Adaptive and inclusive spaces that can be used by small social enterprise and clubs.
- The total cost of the project has been assessed at just under £1.5 million (including contingency).

Of the total projected costs, we are seeking **£200,000** from the Towns Fund towards the purchase cost of the identified premise; the purchase cost is £650,000.

The remaining purchase costs will be funded by social investment from a provider with whom the Church have a strong existing relationship and through whose investment they have already purchased a number of supported housing units within the locality.

In partnership with Restore, the Council is leading a bid to MHCLG under its 'Next Steps Accommodation Programme' (NSAP), to support conversion of the asset to provide both long term and emergency accommodation.

Discussions with MHCLG are at an advanced stage with final bid submission due on 20 August 2020, with a fast turnaround expected. Conversion costs not eligible under NSAP will be funded by social investment and ensure that The Sanctuary can become the inclusive community hub its business case intends it to be

CONCLUSION

The opportunity to access this grant fund gives the Council the immediate ability to address and respond to the economic inequalities, start to drive economic growth that underpins the prosperity, aspirations and quality of life for our residents and businesses. Also by working closely with the Town Deal Board, start to stimulate inter-related projects that will create an environment where Boston becomes a regional destination for living, working, investing and visiting.

The projects that have been selected are seeking to maximise the impact this funding stream can have on the greatest number of residents within the Borough. These include an emphasis on skills and education, the quality of the town centre offer through enhancing the heritage offer, the promotion of Boston as a place to visit, the support of some of our most vulnerable residents and the delivery of a 3G football pitch to improve the quality of the health of the Borough.

This can only happen if both Council agree the identified projects align to or have a relationship with the emerging TIP with written conformation to MHCLG by **14th August 2020** outlining these potential projects in agreement with the council's S151 officer that any spend drawn down from the accelerated grant represents good value for money, can be delivered this financial year and is in line with the Towns Fund intervention framework as set out in the Towns Fund further guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/towns-fund-further-guidance>

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The £750,000 Accelerated Grant award will enable 100% funding to support early deliverable projects within the Towns Fund remit. Should the projects submitted to MHCLG be approved progress will be reported through the Towns Fund Board and the Council's quarterly performance reporting mechanisms.

No further financial support from the Council is anticipated at this stage.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal or equality implications arising from this report. The Accelerated Fund provides the Council to act as the accountable body for funding which must be spent by 31st March 2021.

Any conditions of funding that are imposed on the Council, will form part of the conditions of spend on those whom we are working in partnership together with any performance outcomes that may be required.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

None arising directly from this report.

EQUALITY AND SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

CONSULTATION

CMT

APPENDICES

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report: -

APPENDIX A	Towns Fund Further Guidance – FAQs
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers as defined in Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the production of this report.

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT

This report has not been considered by another Council committee.

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