

CHEADLE TOWNS FUND UPDATE

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the Cheadle Towns Fund, including background, progress to date and the next steps.
- 1.2 In the Council's role as accountable body, to request authority to enter into contract and funding arrangements, subject to Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) approval, to deliver the Cheadle Town Investment Plan, the subsequent Town Deal and the Accelerated Towns Fund projects.
- 1.3 To request authority for the Council to support the development and delivery of the Cheadle Town Investment Plan and the subsequent Town Deal.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE TOWNS FUND

- 2.1 In November 2019 the Government launched the £3.6bn Towns Fund prospectus and announced that 101 towns across the country had been selected for support. Cheadle was included in the selection.
- 2.2 The purpose of the Towns Fund is to unleash the long term economic potential of towns. The fund's focus is on projects that are transformational and promote economic growth and productivity. Proposals must be address local priorities whilst being aligned with national and the GM Local Economic Strategy. In scope are:
 - Urban Regeneration: town density, economic assets, land acquisition, remediation, culture;
 - Skill & Enterprise: driving investment, SMEs, addressing skill gaps; and
 - Connectivity: transport, digital.
- 2.3 Funding is predominately capital but can include some revenue. Each town can apply for up to £25m subject to value for money. There is no specific requirement for match funding, however other public funding and private investment would help to support the business case and the wider benefit cost ratio assessment.
- 2.4 Each town is requested to prepare a Town Investment Plan which is then submitted to MHCLG. This is now either before the end of October 2020 or the end of January 2021. Following a review process, if successful, a Town Deal will be entered into which will then release funds to implement the agreed projects over a four to five year period.

3. CHEADLE TOWNS FUND PROGRESS TO DATE

The Towns Fund Board

- 3.1 A Towns Fund Board has been established that comprises key local stakeholders and representatives across a number of sectors as required by Government guidance. The Board is Chaired by Marge Falconer who is the Chief Executive of the BMI Alexandra Hospital. Other Board members include Mary Robinson MP, Cllrs. Meller and Morrison, Viren Mehta from the Cheadle Medical Practice and Rob Munro from the Cheadle Village Partnership. There are also representatives from the Stockport Chamber of Commerce, from Transport for Greater Manchester, the Government's Local City Growth Unit and the Council's Deputy Chief Executive (Place). Observers include GMCA and the supporting consultancy team.
- 3.2 The Board first met in January 2020 and has met monthly since. Minutes are published on the Council's Cheadle Towns Fund landing page. The Board have been actively involved in shaping proposals for the Town Investment Plan and in driving the process forward.

Town Fund Boundary

- 3.3 The Cheadle Towns Fund Board agreed the boundary for the Investment Plan in January 2020. The area represents the local community whilst being large enough to include key investment opportunities. Funding has to be spent within the boundary, whilst the economic impact of investment should be much wider. See Appendix 1 for a map.

Capacity Fund and Feasibility Work

- 3.4 At the end of December 2019 the Council received £140k of Capacity Funding to assist the Board with technical feasibility work. A lead consultant, local economic development specialists SQW, were commissioned to prepare and support the development of the Investment Plan, to assess its economic impact and compile technical appendices.
- 3.5 An early desire of the Board was to assess the opportunity for a new rail station at Cheadle Therefore, rail experts Pell Frischmann were appointed to undertake an Outline Business Case and timetabling feasibility work. This work is near completion.
- 3.6 There is a requirement to demonstrate wide support for Investment Plan proposals. To assist this SQW have undertaken in depth stakeholder consultations with businesses and key representatives. The Cheadle Village Partnership, as a key umbrella organisation in Cheadle, have prepared a Community Consultation Plan. Some elements of this plan have been delayed due to Coronavirus restrictions. However, a fundamental element, the public survey did go ahead (see below for more details). DJS were appointed to advise, co-ordinate and ensure that the questionnaire was objective and met industry standards.
- 3.7 Some Capacity Funding remains for the Board to commission further feasibility work as the Investment Plan and its projects develop.

Delivery Team Support

- 3.8 MHCLG have nationally commissioned Arup to assist Town Fund Boards with their thinking, providing a critical friend role and guidance and support across various subject areas. Arup and their sub consultants are known as the Delivery Team. Stockport is working with Arup to obtain technical property advice from Savills who are part of the Delivery Team.

Public Consultation

- 3.9 An on-line and household public survey was launched on the 1st July and formally closed 4th August. Approximately 1,200 responses were received which is a very strong return rate. Early analysis shows positive support for the proposed themes and projects in the Investment Plan. The findings also show a strong community identity, a desire to improve the area and make it accessible by public transport. A report is in preparation for the Board and will be made public once all comments have been incorporated.

Cheadle Vision & Town Investment Plan

- 3.6 The Town Investment Plan is rooted in the economic issues and opportunities that face Cheadle. These include traffic congestion, the lack of public transport, especially by rail or Metrolink, the changing high street and the scope for local job opportunities building on a skilled and entrepreneurial workforce. The Board have agreed the following long term draft vision which is based on clean growth and connectivity.

Cheadle will be recognised as a successful, diverse and resilient town economy. Positioned at the vanguard of clean growth and built on a solid foundation of excellent connectivity, strong civic pride, a confident, talented and forward-looking community and a pervasive culture of enterprise, Cheadle will thrive as a highly connected knowledge-based economy.

- 3.7 The Town Investment Plan is in preparation. It is identified for a submission in cohort two of the Town Fund submission which is currently scheduled for the end of October 2020. This date may be subject to change. The Cheadle Town Investment Plan comprises four interrelated projects as below:

- A new rail station at Cheadle, likely to be single platform, with associated facilities and parking. This will be future proofed to allow future dualling of the current single track and for tram-train. The station will connect Cheadle into the wider sub-regional transport network, generating trade and job opportunities.
- Enhancing opportunities for cycling and walking. This entails developing key routes that deal with severance and encourage clean modes of travel between Cheadle centre, employment areas and the new station. This proposal also promotes the health agenda.
- Providing a new innovation, digital technology and co-working space in the heart of Cheadle to encourage local working and entrepreneurship. This proposal provides job and growth opportunities, matching new ways of working post-Covid with maximising the opportunities of a skilled local workforce.

- Delivering environmentally sustainable physical developments to support future clean growth. This will provide improved employment land at scale in an attractive location that will stimulate growth in key sectors to the locality and the borough.

3.8 Further feasibility work is being undertaken to develop these project ideas. If proven viable and deliverable, then they can be included within the Town Investment Plan.

Accelerated Towns Fund

3.9 In July 2020 the Government announced that £500k of Accelerated Towns Fund was available to Cheadle. This is in addition to the main grant. The fund is for capital projects that can be delivered by March 2021. Projects need to address immediate challenges and fit with the wider ambitions of the Investment Plan. The Board submitted its proposed package of projects on the 14th August. An announcement from MHCLG is pending.

3.10 The submission focused on projects that can deliver early connectivity, encourage people into Cheadle, raise profile and pilot green and healthy solutions. This includes early access improvements such as new cycle facilities on Ashfield Road and Park Road, installation of a new cycle parklet in the centre of Cheadle and a school street pilot. Other proposals include a High Street community information point, wildlife improvements to Abney Hall Park and fitness improvements such as a Learn to Ride track in Diamond Jubilee Park.

4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 The immediate next steps is to further develop the project ideas for the Cheadle Investment Plan. This includes incorporating the findings of the public survey and undertaking technical feasibility studies on property options and viability and on the rail timetable. This work will feed into the Investment Plan which is then to be agreed by the Town Board before submission. Following submission there will be an appraisal period, and then if successful, a Town Deal contract for the funding.

4.2 In parallel with the above is the need to develop further the Accelerated Towns Fund projects so that they are ready to be delivered, if and when, the funding is approved.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CABINET

5.1 That the contents of this report are noted.

5.2 That delegated authority is given to the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) and the Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate & Support Services), in consultation with the Cabinet Members Economy and Regeneration and for Resources, Commissioning & Governance to:

- a) take all necessary steps to support the Cheadle Town Board to develop and implement the Cheadle Town Investment Plan, the subsequent Town Deal, and the Accelerated Towns Fund projects, reporting back as necessary and appropriate to the Cabinet;

- b) enter into contracts, procurement and funding agreements, as required, to develop and implement the Cheadle Town Investment Plan, and if successful, enter into a Town Deal with MHCLG, and deliver the Accelerated Towns Fund projects;
- c) Subject to MHCLG approval, receive and administer Towns Fund monies, on behalf of the Cheadle Town Board, in respect of the Cheadle Town Investment Plan and Accelerated Towns Fund projects.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Scrutiny Committee is invited to comment on the report.

Background Papers

None

Appendix 1 Enc.

Cheadle Towns Fund Boundary map

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Michael Fisher on telephone number 07800 618202 or alternatively email michael.fisher@stockport.gov.uk