

CHEADLE TOWNS FUND UPDATE

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (PLACE) AND DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the Cheadle Towns Fund work, including the Town Investment Plan and Accelerated projects.

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 focus is on projects that are transformational and promote economic growth and productivity. Proposals must address local priorities whilst being aligned with national and local economic strategy. In scope were:
- Urban Regeneration: town density, economic assets, land remediation, culture;
 - Skill & Enterprise: driving investment, SMEs, addressing skill gaps; and
 - Connectivity: transport, digital.
- 2.3 Funding is predominately capital, and each town can apply for up to £25m subject to value for money. There is no specific requirement for match funding, however other public and private investment helps to support the business case.

3. THE TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN

- 3.1 Each town was requested to prepare a Town Investment Plan (TIP). Cheadle's TIP was submitted in October 2020. It sets out 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 agreed a long term vision based on clean growth and connectivity.
- 3.2 The TIP requested £24.89m for four integrated projects. Namely, a new rail station, an innovative eco-business park, an active travel package and a High Street Innovation Zone (to repurpose empty properties). The TIP was submitted by the Cheadle Towns Fund Board with the Council acting as accountable body. A summary of the schemes can be found by following the link under 'supporting papers'.

- 3.3 In the 2021 spring budget the Government announced forty five successful Town Deals. Cheadle received an offer of £13.9m, which excluded support for the High Street scheme. The allocation of the Towns Fund across the remaining three projects was delegated to the Cheadle Town Board.
- 3.4 Since the funding offer, a Heads of Terms agreement has been entered into in April 2021 with the funder, and a Project Confirmation process was submitted in May 2021, for all the three supported projects. In July 2021 a Town Deal Grant offer was received. This formally marks the start of Stage 2 of the process. This entails project development and the preparation of detailed business cases for each project. These are to be submitted by March 2022.
- 3.5 The strategy agreed by the Towns Fund Board was to ensure that the Cheadle Station is fully funded and to scale back resources for the other projects and / or seek alternate funding sources. Town Fund resources are currently allocated as follows:
- Rail station £8.26m - subject to DfT / MHCLG approval
 - Low Carbon Eco Business Park - £4.44m subject to local assurance
 - Active Travel - £1.20m subject to local assurance
- 3.6 It should be noted that during the Stage 2 feasibility process there is a mechanism to adjust these grant allocations, if required. However, the total grant offer cannot be exceeded.
- 3.7 Currently consultant teams are being commissioned to support the development of the business cases for each project. This will include further consultation and public engagement. Progress is regularly reported to the Cheadle Towns Fund Board. The Council is required to undertake its own assurance of each business case. BEIS (Department for Business, Energy Industrial Strategy) will review the Business Case Summaries with the Transport Department fully reviewing the Station submission.

4. TOWNS FUND GOVERNANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

The Towns Fund Board

- 4.1 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 currently Chaired by Marge Falconer who is the Chief Executive of the BMI Circle Health 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 is also representation from the Stockport Chamber of Commerce (Sharon Seville) and Transport for Greater Manchester (Simon Elliot), and the Council's Deputy Chief Executive (Place). Observers include GMCA, the Government's Local City Growth Unit and supporting team members as required.
- 4.2 The Board first met in January 2020 and minutes are published on the Council's Cheadle Towns Fund web page. The Board have been actively involved in

shaping proposals for the Town Investment Plan and in driving the process forward.

Town Fund Boundary

- 4.3 The Cheadle Towns Fund Board agreed the boundary for the Investment Plan in January 2020. The area represents the local community whilst being of sufficient size to include key investment opportunities. Funding has to be spent within the boundary, but the economic and social benefit will be much wider. See webpage for details.

Capacity Fund and Feasibility Work

- 4.4 At the end of December 2019, the Council received £140,000 of Capacity Funding to assist the Board in preparing the Investment Plan and with technical feasibility work. A lead consultant, local economic development specialists SQW, were commissioned to prepare and support the development of the Investment Plan. Rail experts Pell Frischmann were appointed to undertake an Outline Business Case and timetabling feasibility work for the new station. CBRE were commissioned to develop the eco business park scheme.

Public Consultation and Engagement

- 4.5 There is a requirement to demonstrate wide support for Investment Plan proposals. To assist this process in depth stakeholder consultations with businesses and key representatives were undertaken. 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 was able to go ahead.
- 4.6 An on-line and mail out household public survey was launched in summer 2020. Approximately 1,200 responses were received which is a very strong return rate. This helped to shape the TIP's objectives and analysis showed positive support for the proposed projects. The findings also show a strong community identity, a desire to improve the area and to make it accessible by public transport. A summary report is available on-line.

5. ACCELERATED TOWNS FUND PROJECTS

- 5.1 In July 2020 the Government announced that £500,000 of Accelerated Towns Fund was available to Cheadle. This is in addition to the main grant. Projects need to address immediate challenges and opportunities. Approval to the package of projects proposed by the Board was received in September 2020.
- 5.2 There are ten Accelerated Fund projects. These deliver early connectivity, encourage people into Cheadle, raise the profile locally and pilot green and healthy solutions. Over half have now been delivered. They include three new cycle facilities on Ashfield Road and Park Road, installation of a new cycle parklet on the High Street and a school street pilot. Other proposals include a Digital Information Point on the High Street, wildlife improvements to Abney Hall Park and junction and safety measures on Councillor Lane. Diamond Jubilee Park is benefitting from health and

fitness equipment, path improvements, a new Learn to Ride track and an innovative urban drainage system to help control flooding.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 That the contents of this report are noted.

Supporting Papers

Cheadle Town Investment Plan Summary

<https://www.stockport.gov.uk/cheadle-town-fund/cheadle-town-investment-plan>

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Michael Fisher, Robert Goulsbra by email on michael.fisher@stockport.gov.uk or robert.goulsbra@stockport.gov.uk