

DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE	PLANNING COMMITTEE	13 FEBRUARY 2019	5

FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND – PROPOSED EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have recently issued a call for proposals from those local authorities interested in developing bids for funding from the Future High Street Fund. In each of the bidding rounds, bids are limited to one per local authority area. As there are three separate town centres in the borough, Members are asked to identify their priority for the submission of a bid in the initial 2019 bidding round.

Details of how these bids are to be assessed have yet to be announced. Any information that is published ahead of the committee meeting will be provided to members as an update in order to assist in the selection of an appropriate centre.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Members determine which, if any, of the three town centres within the borough (St Annes, Lytham or Kirkham) should be put forward as potential bids for the 2019 round of the Future High Street Fund.
2. That officers be authorised to develop an expression of interest for the identified town centre.
3. That officers be authorised to seek partners and opportunities to co-fund the selected project.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

On 27 June 2012, Cabinet considered a report relating to an announcement by the Minister of State for Housing and Local Government that Fylde Borough Council would receive £100,000 through an initiative known as the High Street Innovation Fund (HSIF).

Cabinet RESOLVED:

1. To approve the use of HSIF for the purposes of supporting and enhancing the economic prosperity of all businesses in the borough but with a particular emphasis on the town centres of the Borough.
2. To approve the Business Support option and commence detailed considerations involved such as timescales, scoping and criteria.
3. To report back to Cabinet in due course with the details of the selected initiative for final agreement and implementation.
4. To introduce a monitoring framework to assess progress on a regular basis.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES	
Spending your money in the most efficient way to achieve excellent services (Value for Money)	√
Delivering the services that customers expect of an excellent council (Clean and Green)	
Working with all partners (Vibrant Economy)	√
To make sure Fylde continues to be one of the most desirable places to live (A Great Place to Live)	√
Promoting Fylde as a great destination to visit (A Great Place to Visit)	√

REPORT

1. The enhancement and improvement of the borough's town and village centres is a key objective of the Council's Corporate Plan. Accordingly, a number of initiatives have been implemented over the years in order to help maintain the vitality and viability of those centres.
2. Nationally there have been rapid changes in consumer patterns over recent years with spending increasingly moving on line. The speed of this change has meant that many high streets have not had sufficient time to adapt to meet these challenges with many places across the country struggling to transform in response to these structural changes.
3. In response to these changes, as part of the 2018 Budget, the Government set out a 'Plan for the High Street', which includes support for the transformation of the high street by creating a £675 million Future High Streets Fund intended to help local areas make their high streets and town centres fit for the future.
4. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has now issued a "Call for Proposals" which seeks expressions of interest from local authorities. Full details of the Fund are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-high-streets-fund-call-for-proposals>
5. The Fund is intended to help local areas to respond and adapt to these economic changes through offering support in preparing long-term strategies for high streets and town centres (including funding a new High Streets Taskforce to provide expertise and hands-on support to local areas); and to co-fund with local area's projects including:
 - investment in physical infrastructure, including improving public and other transport access, improving flow and circulation within a town/city centre, congestion-relieving infrastructure, other investment in physical infrastructure needed to support new housing and workspace development and existing local communities, and the regeneration of heritage high streets; and
 - investment in land assembly, including to support the densification of residential and workspace around high streets in place of under-used retail units.
6. The Future High Streets Fund is particularly seeking projects that will deliver the regeneration of town centres through innovative proposals around transport, housing delivery and public services. The overall objective of the Fund is to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability.
7. In the first phase of the programme, Government are looking for local authorities to define the specific challenges faced by their high streets, to set out their overarching strategic ambition for what the high street or town centre should become and what needs to be done to make this possible. They expect any identified need for investment to fall under the following themes:
 - Investment in physical infrastructure
 - Acquisition and assembly of land including to support new housing, workspaces and public realm
 - Improvements to transport access, traffic flow and circulation in the area
 - Supporting change of use including (where appropriate) housing delivery and densification
 - Supporting adaptation of the high street in response to changing technology

8. It is intended that there will be two rounds of the Future High Streets Fund. The first-round application phase aims to co-fund projects and places that have already started to formulate a vision for the future of their town centres. The date of the second round will be confirmed in due course, but it will not open before 2020.
9. The Fund is intended to operate via a full competition over two phases, with the first acting as a light-touch process in order to reduce the burden on places and minimise wasted resource. The launch of Phase 1 invites local authorities to come forward with Expressions of Interest setting out their challenges and strategic approach.
10. During Phase 2 shortlisted places will receive some revenue funding to support the development of their high street strategies and the business cases for their proposed projects. The High Streets Task Force, once established, will provide support to places in developing their cases. Places will also receive some support from within the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. It is expected that the full business case development phase will take 6 to 12 months, with some places taking less time and receiving decisions on capital funding at an earlier stage.
11. The timetable for the bidding is as follows:
 - December 2018: Phase 1 opens and Expressions of Interest invited
 - 22 March 2019: deadline for Expressions of Interest
 - Summer 2019: announcement on places moving to Phase 2
 - Late 2019: first round of final business cases to be submitted
 - Spring 2020: all remaining final business cases to be submitted
 - Not before 2020: Second round of applications opens
12. As stated above, Government expect projects to be co-funded by public and private sector additions and this will be taken into consideration as part of the assessment of projects. This co-funding could either be public (e.g. from local areas' own budgets) or private finance (e.g. co-financing housing infrastructure).
13. The prospectus makes it clear that bids covering town centre areas that are not facing significant challenges will not be accepted. It is expected that the places that come forward with proposals will cover high streets or town centres as defined as areas that exhibit high levels of social and economic activity, that contain a variety of uses and functions and that act as important service centres for extensive catchment populations. It is also expected that the Expressions of Interest that come forward will include proof of engagement with, and support from, a number of stakeholders including Mayoral and non-Mayoral Combined Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, other tiers of local government in the area, Business Improvement Districts, the private sector and community groups
14. Government expect bidding local authorities to put forward **a single, transformative submission covering one high street or town centre in their area**. It is expected that any identified need for investment to fall under the following themes:
 - Investment in physical infrastructure
 - Acquisition and assembly of land including making improvements to the public realm
 - Improvements to transport access, traffic flow and circulation in the area
 - Supporting change of use including (where appropriate) housing delivery and densification
 - Supporting adaptation of the high street in response to changing technology
15. Funding will not be provided for surface-level projects that only make a difference to the appearance, rather than the use, of the area or those that would not have a long-term impact.
16. Government had previously advised that the scoring criteria to be used in the assessment of bids would be published by end of January 2019. However, at the time of writing this report, the details had still to be published. Without this information, it is not possible to establish the likelihood of success of any bid that may be submitted, but given the emphasis that is set out in the call for proposals, it is clear that Government are expecting bids only from those centres that are facing significant challenges.

17. If the initial bid is successful, a further report will be presented to Committee that outlines the nature of the bid and the partners that have been identified to assist in delivering the bid. The success of any bid put forward for the first round will also help inform whether a further bid should be entered into round 2.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	There are no direct financial implications at this stage in submitting an expression of interest. If the initial bid is successful, a further report will be presented to Committee that outlines the nature of the bid and the partners that have been identified to assist in delivering the bid.
Legal	There are no direct legal issues raised by the report, but if the bid is successful, the council will need to adhere to any terms and conditions attached to the award.
Community Safety	None
Human Rights and Equalities	None
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	None
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
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