

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date:** 17 July 2024

**Title:** Levelling Up Fund Projects and Long-Term Plan for Towns

**Report of:** Ian Fitzpatrick, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning

**Cabinet member:** Councillor Stephen Holt, Leader of the Council and Cabinet member for Community Strategy, Local Strategic Partnership, the Corporate Plan, Performance and Staff

**Ward(s):** All

**Purpose of report:** (1) To provide an update on the Levelling Up Fund Projects and the Long-Term Plan for Towns and to secure the necessary delegations to enable the various projects to be delivered.

**Decision type:** Key decision

**Officer recommendation(s):** (1) To note the updates on the Levelling Up Fund Projects and the Long-Term Plan for Towns.

(2) To authorise the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Leader of the Council to carry out all necessary actions to facilitate the delivery of the Levelling Up Fund Projects and the Long-Term Plan for Towns programme of works including feasibility, financing, appointment of professional services, development, contract award(s), lettings, grant agreements, and determining the terms of and authorising the execution of all necessary documentation in accordance with the funding parameters, including authority to submit the three year Investment Plan and authorise all Grant Funding Agreements. The Council is anticipating that DLUHC will require either a Memorandum of Understanding or a Grant Funding Agreement to be signed between the Council and DLUHC in respect of the Long-Term Plan for Towns.

**Reasons for recommendations:** (1) To enable Officers to deliver in an effective and timely manner, the necessary delegations to Lead Members and Executive Officers are required to ensure that the Council can deliver the projects and programmes in accordance with the funding parameters.

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## **1      Introduction**

1.1      In October 2021, the Government announced that the Council's bid for £19.8m of Levelling Up Funding had been successful. The funding is being used to deliver the following three transformational capital projects that will cement the town's place as a prestigious all year-round tourist destination benefitting local residents and attracting new visitors.

### **Victoria Place**

1.2      Victoria Place will be transformed into a vibrant, pedestrianised cultural district, with excellent independent cafes and restaurants serving high quality food and drink all year round.

### **Towner Centenary**

1.3      Last year Towner celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of it being given to the people of Eastbourne and hosted the Turner Prize, the world's leading prize for contemporary art. To celebrate these incredible events, the Towner will be curating a number of art works to be installed across the town, including a major sculpture on the seafront.

### **Black Robin Farm**

1.4      This project will create a world-class culture and education centre at Black Robin Farm, a former dairy farm set on the Downs above the town, connecting the South Downs National Park with the Town Centre and Seafront.

## **2      Levelling Up Fund (LUF) Project Updates**

### **Victoria Place**

2.1      Proposals for Victoria Place are progressing following the public consultations at the end of 2022. East Sussex County Council are working with Balfour Beatty Living Places, as part of the new East Sussex Highways contract to develop the detailed design. Advance works for Trial Holes and Shallow Cellar Surveys have now been completed.

### **Towner Centenary**

2.2      Capital improvement works at the Towner were completed in May 2023. Two of the public art commissions are on track with the two artists completing community

participation workshops in Shinewater/Langney and Seaside with the final installations scheduled for March and May 2024. Both public artworks build on the legacy of the Turner Prize in Eastbourne. The third commission is underway with the selection committee due to commission an artist shortly for delivery of the commission this Financial Year.

### **Black Robin Farm**

- 2.3 The project was presented to the South Downs National Park Authority's (SDNPA) Planning Committee in February 2024 and approval was delegated to the Director of Planning subject to a Section 106 Agreement being agreed. The planning process took longer than originally forecast and is being applied for in both detail and outline. The SDNPA required extensive supporting information, impacting on time, cost and site functionality. The Stage 4 design period and construction programme have been adjusted to allow for the planning delay. Alongside planning, work has taken place on the cost plan for the project, and the project delivery will need to be phased as a result of rising costs. The Council continues to work with the intended site operator to ensure any phasing requirements are adequately allowed for in their business plan and educational programme. The Project Team are in the process of arranging the procurement of the project. During the last quarter Towner has secured funding allowing them to increase the level of match funding to £750,000 which will be used to provide the internal fit-out of the gallery.
- 2.4 Updates on the progress of the LUF projects are reported to the Council's Strategic Property Group as well as the Local Partnership Group. The overall aim of the Local Partnership Group is to provide strategic oversight and governance to the delivery of the LUF Programme.
- 2.5 The role of the Partnership Group is to:
- Co-ordinate resources and influence stakeholders
  - Consult and engage with local residents, businesses and organisations throughout the delivery of the Programme
  - Champion Eastbourne at every opportunity
  - Provide strategic oversight of the three projects being delivered within the LUF Programme
  - Ensure the Programme is being true to the vision and objectives set out in Business Case
  - To monitor the progress, milestones, budget, risks and issues throughout the delivery of the EBC LUF Programme
  - To celebrate the achievements of the Programme
  - To provide regular updates and reporting to DLUHC's Levelling Up Team.
- 2.6 The Local Partnership Group consists of representatives from each of the following organisations:
- Eastbourne Borough Council
  - Local Member of Parliament
  - East Sussex County Council
  - Eastbourne Chamber of Commerce

- The Eastbourne BID
- Towner Eastbourne
- Eastbourne Hospitality Association
- East Sussex College Group
- South Downs National Park Authority
- Victoria Place Traders

### **3 Long-Term Plan for Towns (Town Board)**

- 3.1 On 6<sup>th</sup> March the Minister for Levelling Up, confirmed that the Chancellor had extended the Government's Long-Term Plan for Towns Programme to include Eastbourne.
- 3.2 Eastbourne will receive up to £20 million to deliver projects over the next 10 years. The aim is to make towns places where people and businesses want to invest, creating new jobs and breathing new life into the high street and town centre. There are three main intervention themes:
- Safety and Security
  - High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration
  - Transport and Connectivity.
- 3.3 Eastbourne Borough Council will be the accountable body for funding and executing plans. A Town Board must be established by 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024 comprising of a range of community leaders (such as community groups, faith groups and local charities), businesspeople, and local bodies. The Board will be responsible for drawing up the Town's Long-Term Plan comprising a 10-year Vision and a 3-year Investment Plan, which needs to be submitted to Government by 1<sup>st</sup> November 2024.
- 3.4 Interviews for the role of Chair of the Town Board have recently taken place and the successful candidate will be convening with partners to select other Board members prior to 1<sup>st</sup> June.
- 3.5 The Council will receive funding and support worth up to £20 million to deliver projects over the 10-year lifespan of the programme and the flexibility to invest in interventions based on local needs and priorities.
- 3.6 The Council received £50,000 of capacity funding in April 2024 to begin community engagement, support the establishment of the Town Board, support the Board in developing the Long-Term Plan and provide technical expertise for project development including feasibility studies and business cases.
- 3.7 From 1 June, once the Town Board is in place, the Council will receive the next £200,000 of capacity funding to support the development of the Long-Term Plan and assist with further community engagement. Decisions as to how this money is allocated and spent are the responsibility of the Town Board, supported by EBC.

### **4 Consultation**

- 4.1 Extensive consultation was undertaken as part of the LUF bid development.

- 4.2 For the Long-Term Plan for Towns, the Government guidance confirms that Town Boards should be community-led institutions that build civic capacity in the town. Community engagement is at the heart of the Long-Term Plan for Towns, so plans should reflect local priorities and be co-designed with communities, businesses and residents, drawing on available evidence and data.

## **5 Corporate Plan and Council Policies**

- 5.1 The Levelling Up Fund Projects and the Long-Term Plan for the Town align strongly with the Council's Corporate Plan (2024 – 2028). The delivery of the interventions will build upon existing investments to help create a prosperous, thriving and sustainable economy, that provides new opportunities for businesses whilst enhancing learning, employment and skills prospects for our communities.
- 5.2 The projects will accelerate and broaden delivery of the vision for tourism, leisure, art, culture and the environment to be key drivers of Eastbourne's future economic success.

## **6 Financial appraisal**

- 6.1 The report highlights that the Council received £19.8m from the Government's Levelling Up Fund and will receive up to £20m over the next 10 years as part of the Long-Term Plan for Towns.
- 6.2 The Long-Term Plan for Towns funding is 75% capital and 25% revenue. There will be £250k capacity funding (revenue) provided this financial year.

Going forward the following grant payments will be made:

2025/26 - £672k revenue and £2,096k capital  
2026/27 - £449k revenue and £1,605k capital  
2027/28 - £449k revenue and £1,605k capital  
2028/29 - £449k revenue and £1,605k capital  
2029/30 - £449k revenue and £1,605k capital  
2030/31 - £454k revenue and £1,605k capital  
2031/32 - £467k revenue and £1,605k capital  
2032/33 - £467k revenue and £1,605k capital  
2033/34 - £467k revenue and £1,605k capital

## **7 Legal implications**

- 7.1 The Council is the accountable body for both the Levelling Up Funding and the Long-Term Plan for Towns Programme. The Council has Grant Funding Agreements in place with our delivery partners for the Victoria Place and Towner Centenary Projects.
- 7.2 There will need to be additional Grant Funding Agreements in place for projects to be delivered as part of the Long-Term Plan for Towns. The Council is anticipating that DLUHC will require either a Memorandum of Understanding or a Grant

Funding Agreement to be signed between the Council and DLUHC in respect of the Long-Term Plan for Towns.

- 7.3 The Council will need to consider the application of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and ensure that all projects are capable of being delivered in a compliant manner.
- 7.4 The projects carried out by the Council will be subject to the public procurement rules when it is procuring goods, works or services when spending the funding. Any works, services or supplies will also have to be procured in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. The Council will need to comply with its other constitutional requirements also.
- 7.5 An agreement for lease and lease will be put into place with Towner in relation to Black Robin Farm and ancillary documentation may be required as the matter progresses.

*012960-EBC-KS 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024*

## **8 Risk management implications**

- 8.1 The following risks may arise and it is proposed to mitigate these risks as follows:

**Risk:** Failure to deliver projects within the LUF timescales.

**Mitigation:** Quarterly returns to DLUHC will identify any issues with delivery timescales.

**Risk:** Funding does not meet the needs of Eastbourne's resident and business communities.

**Mitigation:** The LUF bid was informed by engagement undertaken through partner organisations and community engagement is at the heart of the Long-Term Plan for Towns.

## **9 Equality analysis**

- 9.1 An Equalities & Fairness Analysis was prepared in May 2021 as part of the development of the LUF submission.

## **10 Environmental sustainability implications**

- 10.1 There are no environmental sustainability effects as a result of the recommendations in this report.

## **11 Appendices**

- None

## **12 Background papers**

- None