

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF ECONOMIC COMMITTEE ON 8 JUNE 2021

PART A : REPORT

SUBJECT: Levelling Up Fund Bid

REPORT AUTHOR: Karl Roberts (Director of Place)
DATE: 11 May 2021
EXTN: 37760
AREA: Economy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report seeks the Committee's endorsement to the core elements of the Council's submission to the Levelling Up Fund.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Committee endorses the submission of a bid for funding to the Levelling Up Fund for funding to support projects in Bognor Regis and Littlehampton to this report.
2. The Committee authorises the Director of Place to finalise the bid documentation and make changes as considered appropriate without changing the core messages or details and to seek letters of such from interested parties and partners.

1. BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 In the 2020 Spending Review the Chancellor announced the creation of a new fund entitled the 'Levelling Up Fund'. Details were released at the 2021 budget. The Fund brings together the Department for Transport, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Treasury to invest £4.8 billion in high-value local infrastructure. The prospectus that was published to support the fund advises that (see Appendix A).
- 1.2 "While the Fund is open to every local area, it is especially intended to support investment in places where it can make the biggest difference to everyday life, including ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and coastal communities. It is also designed to help local areas select genuine local priorities for investment by putting local stakeholder support, including the local MP where they want to be involved, at the heart of its mission."

- 1.3 For the first round of the Fund there will be a focus on the following three themes:
- Transport investments including (but not limited to) public transport, active travel, bridge repairs, bus priority lanes, local road improvements and major structural maintenance, and accessibility improvements. We are requesting proposals for high-impact small, medium and by exception larger local transport schemes to reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, cut congestion, support economic growth and improve the experience of transport users;
 - Regeneration and town centre investment, building on the Towns Fund framework to upgrade eyesore buildings and dated infrastructure, acquire and regenerate brownfield sites, invest in secure community infrastructure and crime reduction, and bring public services and safe community spaces into town and city centres; and
 - Cultural investment maintaining, regenerating, or creatively repurposing museums, galleries, visitor attractions (and associated green spaces) and heritage assets as well as creating new community-owned spaces to support the arts and serve as cultural spaces.
- 1.4 A total of up to £20m is available for non-transport projects in each area. However, there is a require for 10% match funding to be provided which the Council will need to identify from its existing capital budgets. Importantly, the prospectus states that funds need to be spent by 31 March 2024.
- 1.5 A working group of Members was established by Full Council to consider the content of any bid. Three meetings were held on the 1 April, 21 April and 11 May. It was agreed at the first meeting that updates of a 2017 Seafront Report prepared by LDA, together with a revised report on potential improvements to the Alexandra Theatre in Bognor Regis should be commissioned. Furthermore, the working group supported the commissioning of specialist consultants to assist in the preparation of final bid document and a supporting economic case.
- 1.6 The proposals that have been developed in these reports have been shaped by the contributions of the working group based on the parameters set by the content of the prospectus.

2. PROPOSAL(S):

- 2.1 This report has been prepared at a time when the substantive work on the emerging proposals has yet to be completed and so a verbal update will be necessary.
- 2.2 The proposals themselves that have emerged are based on the rational as set out below.
- 2.3 The Council believes that post-Brexit and post-pandemic tourism provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to re-establish our best English coastal towns as the holiday destinations of choice for UK residents.
- 2.4 The intention is that the overall project will build on the traditional excellence of two of the south coast's favourite seaside towns, Bognor Regis and Littlehampton, by developing new facilities and attractions to put them in their rightful place as attractive cultural destinations for the 21st Century, appealing to a broad spectrum of visitors throughout the year.

- 2.5 In Bognor Regis the intention is that the Alexandra Theatre on the Bognor Regis seafront will be re-vitalised with:
- additional arts/cultural floorspace;
 - a new façade, improving the building's physical appearance; and
 - improving disabled access including a 'Changing Places' toilet.
- 2.6 Alongside this the proposals include some improvements to the esplanade and the provision of disabled access to the beach.
- 2.7 The long-term vision is for the current leaseholder, Whitbread, to vacate the site and the adjacent pub and build a new hotel and pub on adjoining land, creating further new space for additional attractions and facilities.
- 2.8 For Littlehampton the intention is to improve the seafront offer by:
- Improving the quality of the arrival experience both in terms of the main car park but also in terms of public realm near the station;
 - Providing new facilities on the edge of greensward, the oyster pond and on Banjo Road;
 - Provide new disabled access to the beach; and
 - Provide changing place toilets.
- 2.9 Both projects will attract more day and overnight visitors to the Arun District, enhancing the visitor economy and focusing on the needs of disabled visitors and residents, in particular. They will provide better opportunities to access culture and encourage outdoor activities that strengthen social capital and improve mental and physical health and well-being of visitors and residents.
- 2.10 The presentation to the Committee will include more detail of the specific elements of each project. It is anticipated that the two main reports will be available for circulation prior to the meeting.

3. OPTIONS:

To support the proposed bid, reject it or seek alterations.

4. CONSULTATION:		
Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		x
Relevant District Ward Councillors		x
Other groups/persons (please specify)		x
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)	YES	NO
Financial	x	
Legal	x	
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment	x	
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		x
Sustainability	x	
Asset Management/Property/Land	x	
Technology		x
Other (please explain)		x
6. IMPLICATIONS:		
<p>Whilst this report seeks to secure support to make a bid to the levelling up fund the Committee needs to be aware that a successful outcome will have significant financial implications for the Council and legal obligations to deliver the required outcome. The proposals will have a positive impact upon making both seafront more accessible to all.</p>		

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

To secure agreement to submit a bid with the objective of obtaining up to £20m external funding to deliver significant improvements in both Littlehampton and Bognor Regis.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

[Item 9 - Appendix 1 - Levelling Up prospectus.pdf \[pdf\] 1006KB](#)

[\\$\\$MDocPackPublic - minutes - 1 April 2021.pdf \[pdf\] 143KB](#)

[\\$\\$MDocPackPublic - MInutes - 21 April 2021.pdf \[pdf\] 144KB](#)

[Levelling Up WP Minutes - 11 May 2021.doc \[doc\] 85KB](#)