

**UPDATE ON COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL'S PROGRAMME IN RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S TOWNS FUND OPPORTUNITES FOR CLEATOR MOOR AND MILLOM**

**LEAD MEMBER:** Mayor Mike Starkie  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Pat Graham, Chief Executive  
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**WHAT BENEFITS WILL THESE PROPOSALS BRING TO COPELAND RESIDENTS?**

Copeland Borough Council has been invited by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to develop Town Investment Plans to secure funding for Cleator Moor and Millom from the Towns Fund, as part of the Governments agenda to drive sustainable economic regeneration of towns for long-term economic and productivity growth.

The benefit to Copeland residents from the development of an evidenced case for investment in both Cleator Moor and Millom is potential significant funding into the town (up to £25 million in each town) through Government, with support from public and private sector partners. The regeneration of our town centres will bring improved economic prosperity with a knock-on increase in jobs, new businesses and visitors to the area.

**WHY HAS THIS REPORT COME TO THE EXECUTIVE?**

**(e.g. Key Decision, Policy recommendation for Full Council, at request of Council, etc.)**

The report has come to Executive to note the Town Investment Plans Cleator Moor and Millom for submission by 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Executive are requested:

- a) To note the core themes of the Town Investment Plans and related Town Fund ask agreed by the Cleator Moor and Millom Town Deal Boards.
- b) To agree the submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government of both Town Investment Plans, with final sign off delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with Mayor, the Council's Section 151 Officer and the Council's Monitoring Officer.
- c) To recommend to Council that it supports the Town Investment Plans and to note its future role in accepting the accountable body role.
- d) That a further report be made to the Executive once the outcome of the Town Investment Plans are known and dealing with any heads of terms/memorandum of understanding received and associated issues; and,

- e) To agree that the remaining funding available under the Pride of Place scheme is allocated across the four towns in Copeland with the allocations used to support investment into derelict and vacant buildings, noting that this will provide match funding to the Town Investment Plans for Cleator Moor and Millom.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 MHCLG requires all Town Deals to have a Council as Accountable Body through which funding will flow. Lead Councils have a seat on the Board and take responsibility for ensuring that decisions are made by the Town Deal Board in accordance with good governance principles. The Executive agreed in August 2020 its nominated Board members – Cllr Hugh Branney on the Cleator Moor Town Deal Board and Cllr Felicity Wilson on the Millom Town Deal Board – and agreed the provision of secretariat support to ensure good governance.
- 1.2 The front page of the Council’s website holds a direct link to Towns Fund content with coverage on each Town Deal Board, including uploaded information on Board members, governance and meeting information.
- 1.3 Towns Fund criteria requires that Cleator Moor and Millom Town Deal Boards develop a well evidenced Town Investment Plan (TIP), which sets out a clear understanding of their areas, focussing on their assets, opportunities and challenges. The amount of investment from the Towns Fund will be based on the strength of each Plan and how the Town Investment Plan aligns with the Towns Fund objectives. The Government will consider proposals to invest up to £25 million in each town.
- 1.4 On acceptance of the TIP, Heads of Terms will be drawn up to agree selected projects for business case development. The Heads of Terms will be signed by Government, the Lead Authority (Copeland Borough Council) and the Town Deal Board Chair. It is anticipated that it will take up to 12 months to develop detailed projects and business cases towards agreeing a Town Deal for Cleator Moor and Millom by the end of 2021.
- 1.5 In 2017, the Council agreed the Capital Programme budget which included the Council’s Pride of Place scheme to support regeneration in Town Centres. The funding was targeted to a successful Building Facelift improvement scheme across Copeland. The building facelift scheme closed at the end of March 2019 with £168,812 remaining. In addition, a further £150,000 of the capital budget remains unallocated, providing a budget of £318,812 that the Council can commit as match funding to support town centre regeneration and the re-use of vacant buildings in the four Copeland towns.

## **2 DISCUSSION**

- 2.1 As accountable body, the Council holds the following responsibilities:

- Developing the delivery team, delivery arrangements and agreements, including supporting the development of agreed projects in detail and undertaking any necessary feasibility studies;
- Supporting the development of detailed business cases and liaising with potential private investors in identified local projects and schemes;
- Ensuring that decisions are made by the Town Deal Board in accordance with good governance principles and ensuring transparency requirements are met;
- Monitoring and evaluating the delivery of individual Towns Fund projects, including receiving and accounting for each Town's funding allocation and submitting regular monitoring reports to Towns Hub;
- Undertaking any required Environmental Impact Assessments or Public Sector Equalities Duties;
- Upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles);
- Signing the Head of Terms Agreement with government and overseeing compliance with government and the Town Deal Boards.

2.2 As part of the ongoing delivery of the Town Investment Plans, the Council will need to continue to resource and deliver against its accountable body role and maintain a Towns Fund presence on its website.

2.3 In Cleator Moor, the Town Investment Plan vision is:

*Cleator Moor will offer an exciting opportunity to live with a world heritage site on your doorstep and work in world class companies in a range of sectors, exporting to customers across the globe. Local people will be able to access a diverse range of employment, education and training opportunities.*

*Cleator Moor will be a contemporary 'campus' town embracing its rich past and vibrant future, committed to the pursuit of inclusive and clean growth.*

*The town's high-quality environment will offer an exceptional standard of living to all ages with an expanded cultural and leisure provision within a revitalised town centre.*

2.4 Cleator Moor Town Investment Plan is seeking £24.6 million to support investment into the following five themes:

- **Enterprising Town** – developing an enterprise campus on the Leconfield Industrial Estate aimed at leveraging the economic growth potential of the Sellafeld supply chain through a cluster approach to growing and diversifying the West Cumbria economy
- **Revitalised Town** – creating an enhanced focal point to increase activity and footfall around the Town Square through bringing vacant and under-utilised buildings back into active use, set with an attractive new public realm. Uses will include a cultural community hub and enhanced business space.
- **Campus Town** – providing flexible, fit for purpose student accommodation to facilitate planned growth at the University of Central Lancashire's

Westlakes Campus using vacant or derelict sites in Cleator Moor. This will support vitality and footfall in the town centre.

- **Healthy Town** – enhanced sports and leisure provision through the redevelopment of existing provision to provide a modern multi-purpose centre including an indoor sports hall, flexible studio space, gym and café, alongside wider health and well-being provision, and targeted youth activity.
- **Connected Town** – delivering a programme of transport and related public realm interventions to facilitate a high-quality integrated and sustainable transport network which improves connections between employment, education, amenities and leisure, and transforms the accessibility and attractiveness of Cleator Moor.

2.5 In Millom, the Town Investment Plan vision is:

*A revitalised and better-connected town built on inclusive economic growth, maximising our natural landscape and heritage. We will be recognised as a welcoming, peninsular town, with thriving independent businesses and a distinctive culture, arts and tourism offer. Locals and visitors will enjoy active, healthy and sustainable lifestyles.*

2.6 Millom Town Investment Plan is seeking £24.01 million to support investment into the following four themes:

- **The Iron Line** – transforming the unique coastal lagoon into a major visitor attraction through the creation of a new linear park, fusing ecology, heritage and art into a fully inclusive recreational space incorporating walking and cycling within an inspirational environment.
- **Reactivating Heritage Buildings** – significantly enhancing the physical environment of the town centre by bringing derelict, vacant and underutilised heritage assets back into active use, set within an attractive new public realm. Enhanced uses such as community, arts and culture, housing, retail, education and employment will increase town centre vitality and footfall.
- **Activating Community Health** – a new multi-purpose community and leisure hub will provide fully accessible sports and community facilities, including a swimming pool and 3G pitch, in addition to investment in outdoor amenity space at Millom and Haverigg parks. The project will improve health and well-being, quality of life and encourage more people to visit and spend time in Millom, helping to enhance vitality, drive footfall, dwell time and spend.
- **Connecting Millom and Haverigg** – improving the town’s transport network through developing the railway station as a hub and gateway to the town, transforming cycling and walking around Millom and Haverigg, and improving junctions to support safe and better-connected movement. The

project will facilitate sustainable and safe travel and maximise opportunities for town centre dwell time.

- 2.7 The Town Investment Plans in both Cleator Moor and Millom prioritise their town centres and bringing vacant and derelict buildings back into use. The remaining funds sitting in the Council's capital programme under Pride of Place have the potential to provide £79,703 for each town – Cleator Moor and Millom – to use as grant support/match funding to support the town centre investment that is proposed under each Town Investment Plan.
- 2.8 Remaining funds are proposed to be held against Whitehaven to provide match funding in support of a future bid to the Levelling Up scheme and held against Egremont to provide match funding in support of proposals under the Borderlands Place Programme.

### **3 CONCLUSIONS**

- 3.1 The basis for development of the Town Investment Plans is embedded in the Towns Fund Guidance. This will ensure that the Plans focus on sustainable economic growth, which will support the levelling up agenda, including:
- The productivity challenge – both towns need to capitalise on their strengths and assets to unlock new economic opportunities and fuel growth;
  - The demographic challenge – Cleator Moor needs to diversify and grow the economy to retain talent while Millom needs to retain and attract working age residents to fuel growth;
  - The commercial challenge – both towns need to repurpose and revitalise their town centres;
  - The inclusive growth challenge – enabling investment to support quality of life and social mobility to match need in both towns to opportunity.
- 3.2 Cleator Moor Town Deal Board agreed and signed off their Town Investment Plan for submission to government on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021.
- 3.3 Millom Town Deal Board agreed and signed off their Town Investment Plan for submission to government on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021.
- 3.4 The Pride of Place scheme provides the Council with an opportunity to match fund strategic funding applications against their towns programme.

### **4 STATUTORY OFFICER COMMENTS**

- 4.1 The Legal / Monitoring Officer's comments are:  
Submitting a bid is an executive function by law. However the acceptance of any subsequent grant has been reserved to Council by financial regulations which state that 'accountable body status can only be accepted if the following approvals are in place...external funding over £200,000 – Council'. Equally the receipt of such substantial grants will require an in-year modification to the approved budget. The ideal situation would have been for Council to agree the

accountable body status and the Executive to then agree the submission at the same time. However the tight timescales and the very recent approval of the bids by the Town Boards (21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> January) has meant that this is not possible. Council should be updated at the next meeting to support the current position and to note its future involvement in agreeing the accountable body status.

The process town investment plans (TIPs) follow is different from other applications. The next stage will be for MHCLG through its own internal Towns Hub team to review the submitted TIP against set criteria. If the TIP meets the set criteria MHCLG through its hub, will then assess the proposed projects. At this stage it could recommend in-principle agreement to projects, which can then be developed into a full business case; or it could recommend in-principle agreement but with specific conditions attached which will need to be met before a full business case can be developed, such as progressing the business case through MHCLG; or the hub could recommend that ministers do not agree to projects considered unviable.

If the TIP is of the required standard and the projects viable MHCLG will offer 'heads of terms' which are an 'agreement in principle for funding and will be in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed by the Chair of the Town Deal Board, the Lead Council and by Ministers. The relevant MOU would also be attached to any funding that is allocated to each town. The Heads of Terms will include: allocated Towns Fund budget and financial profile; list of projects to receive funding and recommended assurance route for business cases; list of support agreed by other government departments [where applicable]; key conditions and requirements'. It will be at this stage that there is more certainty to projects proceeding and at this point, following an evaluation of the heads of terms/MOU Council can approve the accountable body status and the Executive can approve the heads of terms/MOU and deal with matters relating to agreeing the assurance route for emerging fully costed project business cases and agreeing a forward plan with expected timescales for each business case.

With regard to legal issues none arise at this stage. Issues will inevitably arise should individual projects progress particularly where the Council has a landholding and these will be dealt with at the appropriate stage

## 5.2 The Section 151 Officer's comments are:

The Governance and resource implications relating to the submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government of both Town Investment Plans are set out in the report. Executive approval is sought to allocate the remaining capital funding available under the Pride of Place across the four towns in Copeland to support investment into derelict and vacant buildings, noting that this will provide match funding to the Town Investment Plans for Cleator Moor and Millom. The use of this capital funding should ensure there is no revenue implications for the Council above the budgeted level unless additional revenue resources can be identified.

- 5.3 EIA Comments:  
Detailed Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken as part of the business case development following TIP agreement.
- 5.4 Policy Framework:  
The Council's Corporate Strategy, Growth Strategy and underpinning suite of Plans, Policies and Strategies shape our work on the local economy and its impact to our residents and our responsibilities and role as a District Council. The Corporate Plan states the Council's ambition to deliver town centre regeneration which is reflected in the existing Economic Development Service Plan.
- 5.5 Consultation:  
The Town Investment Plans include an overview of the engagement programme undertaken in the development of the Plans, plus the Stakeholder Engagement Plan going forward as part of the submission. Our approach ensures that the development of the business cases have engagement and consultation throughout.

## **6 RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS**

- 6.2 The current funding from MHCLG covers the development phase, including Phase 1 to develop the TIP and Phase 2 to develop the Business Cases. Any additional required funding will be subject to external funding applications. All external funding is held within Economic Development cost codes and overseen by the Steering Group and reported within existing council systems and performance frameworks. Other teams in Nuclear, Property, Legal, Member Services, Communications, etc are supporting development of projects and delivery of the Council's accountable body role.

## **7 HOW WILL THE PROPOSALS BE PROJECT MANAGED AND HOW ARE THE RISKS GOING TO BE MANAGED?**

- 7.2 The development phases are being project managed by the Council's Economic Development team who all hold APMP qualifications, with capacity support brought in through partner organisations and technical support from specialist consultancies as required. The Business Cases will be produced to Treasury Green Book standards and will be aligned with the corporate project management framework.
- 7.3 Resources from Democratic Services are supporting the Town Deal Board governance and meetings to ensure compliance with Council standards and policies, as well as the Towns Fund Guidance.
- 7.4 The Communications team are supporting the publication of information from both Town Deal Boards on the Council's website and acting as conduit for information from the #MyTowns website.

7.5 A Risk Register and Issues Log are held against the programme, which is being regularly updated and reported through Council monitoring and reporting processes.

**8 WHAT MEASURABLE OUTCOMES OR OUTPUTS WILL ARISE FROM THIS REPORT?**

8.2 Town Investment Plans for Cleator Moor and Millom.

**APPENDICES**

None