

## BARNSELEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has been included in the relevant Forward Plan

### REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PLACE TO CABINET ON 6 OCTOBER 2021

#### Principal Towns and Local Centres Investment Programme

##### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To brief Cabinet on the proposal to create a network of economically viable High Streets and promote inter connectivity between our towns throughout the Borough by developing Investment Plans to attract further investment into and helping to level up our Principal Towns and Local Centres.
- 1.2. Plans will cover a range of areas such as business growth, environment, transport links and employment & skills as appropriate providing a 5-year investment strategy aligned to the unique needs of each area.
- 1.3. In addition to the 6 Principal Towns, the programme will also set out the strategy for all local centres based on key priorities identified through a consultation process.

##### 2. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 Cabinet agrees to the concept of developing and associated consultation on the proposed Principal Towns Investment programme.**
- 2.2 Cabinet agrees the approaches for developing the priorities for all the Local Centres inclusive of associated engagement leading to the development of a local centre investment plan.**
- 2.3 Cabinet notes that a further report will be provided in relation to the formal adoption of investment plans inclusive of a supporting funding strategy that stimulates private sector investment.**

##### 3. Introduction

- 3.1 The Principal Towns Investment Programme was established in recognition of the key role of high streets and urban centres across Barnsley. The programme was specifically established to develop initiatives at local level in line with the priority of each area. Principal Towns investment has been focused on ensuring the future vibrancy and economic sustainability of high streets and centres across the borough and the places that they support.  
Each of our towns has its own micro-economy, sector strengths, centres for business, work and employment opportunities and moments where communities to come together to celebrate their unique identities. If the economies of our principal towns and urban centres are healthy, this will have a positive impact on the

economy of the borough. The programme is now recognised as a national exemplar of best practice as reflected by being shortlisted for the LGC awards 2021.

- 3.2. Sustained investment in our Principal Towns and Local Centres is a critical component of delivering our Barnsley 2030 aspirations and ensuring that good growth is realised throughout the borough. A hyper localised focus directly compliments the ongoing investment that is currently taking place in our Town Centre and strategic growth clusters. The development of investment plans is fundamental to the overarching long-term levelling up agenda within Barnsley and will create a set of propositions that will be utilised to prioritise future investment within the borough. This could include national opportunities such as UK Shared Prosperity / Levelling Up / Towns Funding, regional capital gainshare programme and use of local resource within Barnsley.
- 3.3 Our investment plans will uniquely reflect local priorities; they will be ambitious yet realistic and deliverable. It is envisaged that our plans will have a 5 year lifecycle and will be supported with an annual Principal Towns Investment Programme which sets out strategic priorities to be delivered in year and outcomes achieved to date. Additionally, they will ensure that all our communities benefit from good growth and will lead the way and set the standard for localised place based regeneration. They will bring together initiatives supporting vibrant high streets, SME business support, employment and skills initiatives and capital projects to improve the quality of place and develop/retain local cultural, sporting and social amenities for the benefit of each place.
- 3.4. Following the successful approval of the Goldthorpe Town Investment Plan through Stronger Towns Fund a similar approach is needed for the remaining 5 Principal Towns to ensure we have robust investable growth plans to secure the economic future of our localities. Additionally, key priorities for local centres will be identified to include in a separate local centre investment plan.
- 3.5 Phase 1 of the Principal Towns Programme is still currently in delivery but has seen a number of successes many of which are aligned/support local priorities. A summary of high-level outcomes achieved to date include:
  - Development of 5 feasibility studies highlighting short- and long-term priorities
  - 26 projects completed at a value of £800,336
  - 35 schemes currently in delivery at a value of £2,764,336
  - Creation of 2 active business forums within Principal Towns helping to drive forward high streets in those areas
  - 4 new community groups created
  - 5 community art projects
  - 14 existing community groups supported
  - Over 2,000 volunteer hours delivered equating to a monetary value of £27,000
  - £606,500 match funding secured which equates to 8.5% of the overall programme value

- 67% of all spend has directly supported local Barnsley businesses
- 5 Investments Plans in development
- 451 shop front grants completed/agreed

The investment in Principal Towns to date has provided a robust platform acting as a robust base for the wider development of investment plans.

#### 4. Proposal and Justification

##### 4.1 **Principal Towns**

Existing evidence base information such as the PRAGMA retail impact report commissioned by Barnsley Council and the recently adopted Barnsley Economic Renewal Plan, clearly show that High Streets are expected to see significant decline and transformation following the Covid-19 pandemic. Intervention is therefore needed to ensure our local areas remain vibrant, attractive and sustainable for the future. A significant scale of investment is required to unlock the potential of our urban centres which is realistically outside of the resources available to the Council.

- 4.2 The proposal is to develop robust Investment plans for the 5 remaining Principal Towns (modelled on the Goldthorpe Town Investment Plan), to outline local priorities, projects and set out a strategic context to deliver a truly inclusive economy across the Borough. Outline draft plans have been completed for each of the remaining 5 Principal Towns. These plans will be further developed based on a robust evidence base and shaped through extensive consultation with elected members and the wider community. Feasibility Studies undertaken as part of Principal Towns Phase 1 and local area-based plans will also directly inform the plans.
- 4.3 Further engagement will continue throughout the programme and will include consulting elected members as a priority task, utilising existing events, Ward Alliances and Social Media platforms. It is anticipated consultation will be completed by December 2021, and subsequently plans with a supporting investment strategy will be brought back to cabinet for formal adoption.
- 4.4 The plans will be directly aligned to the Barnsley 2030 vision priorities including Healthy Barnsley, Learning Barnsley, Growing Barnsley, Sustainable Barnsley and enabling Barnsley and will be developed through a coproduction model with local residents, businesses and stakeholders. These plans will enable areas to pursue and secure funding opportunities to deliver the aspirations and reflect the unique local needs of the individual communities and form the backbone of a wider Barnsley SCR Gainshare Capital Programme bid in the future.
- 4.5 The forthcoming proposals to implement additional environmental and cleansing resource supported by a new services schedule across our Principal Towns directly compliments the investment plan strategy contained in this report and will act as a further catalyst for sustained future growth.
- 4.6 Identified projects within the investment plans are expected to deliver the interventions that best achieve the overarching aspiration of thriving and

sustainable high streets. These may be different in each of the principal towns but are likely to include a mix of the following:

- Development of mini Business Centres inclusive of business support activity
- Repurposing of key buildings/ land where appropriate to deliver good growth and a sense of place
- Diversification of skills, and types of business in the towns
- Transport improvements, connecting people with employment opportunities and with their social networks, including active travel routes
- Cultural celebrations, as well as participation in cultural events and projects
- Employability
- Development of open and welcoming public and green spaces
- Development of amenities and facilities for community use where these are genuinely sustainable and community-owned and managed
- Capacity-building programmes, including developing the skills of community organisers and facilitators, and the community and voluntary sector
- Digital connectivity projects – to tackle digital exclusion and build resident's digital skills.
- Contribution to Zero 40/45 low carbon/sustainability

4.7 This list is not exhaustive but is intended to give a focus to the type of bids the Principal towns Investment Plans expects to support.

4.8 The draft plans will be subject to extensive consultation, they will be 'living' documents that can be adapted as situations dictate and to align with potential funders.

#### 4.9 **Wider Local Centres**

4.9.1 The Phase 1 work has demonstrated how even small levels of investment can have a significant local impact. Principal Towns invested £160k in to Darton Park, this attracted a further £230k external investment and has had an extremely positive impact on residents in relation to open space enhancement, health and wellbeing. The investment in Darton has also acted as a catalyst to secure additional active travel funding.

4.9.2 Likewise the shop front scheme in Local Centres has had a significant impact based on the level of investment particularly in areas such as Mapplewell, this has also supported businesses both during the pandemic and has been a key component of Covid Recovery.

4.9.3 An overarching local investment plan will be developed to cover all other areas outside of the Principal Towns which will look at priority projects at a ward level to further enhance the local economy and sustainability. It is proposed Elected Members will be consulted initially in order to identify local priorities which can then be developed in advance of further consultation with Ward Alliances residents and the wider community.

#### 4.10 Summary

Our Principal Towns and Local Centres provide the overarching vehicle to deliver long term growth across Barnsley. Establishing place-based investment plans will directly underpin the 2030 aspirations for Barnsley.

The plans will be a catalyst in creating a supporting annual Principal Towns Investment Programme. They will create a set of propositions that will be utilised to prioritise and secure future investment within Barnsley from a range of sources potentially including;

- National opportunities such as
- UK Shared Prosperity
- Levelling Up
- Towns Fund
- Regional capital gainshare programme
- Use of local resource within Barnsley.

4.10 The plans will provide a strategic framework which facilitates the alignment of other strategic place based programmes including activity such as:

- Section 106
- Discover Dearne
- Housing Growth
- CCG
- Sheffield City Region
- Active Travel
- Public Health
- Area Councils

4.11 The Principal Town and Local Centres programme provides a unique opportunity to be a key component of the wider growth priorities for Barnsley delivering community focussed interventions to ensure inclusive economy throughout the borough.

#### 5. Consideration of Alternative Approaches

Option 1: Do Nothing

5.1 If the Principal Towns and Local Centres investment programme was not further developed, this would mean that there is no dedicated way of supporting economic regeneration away from the town centre.

Option 2: Barnsley Council investment

5.2 Whilst initial investment has had significant impact on our Principal Towns and Local Centres it has now become clear from indicative costs that a further £30m (approx.) investment is needed to achieve the ambitions of the areas which would require securing national and regional external funding sources.

## 6. Implications for Local People/Service Users

- 6.1 As outlined earlier there are significant positive implications for residents of the impacted Principal Towns and Local Centres from the Principal Towns Programme. As with Phase 1 the scheme will continue to involve residents, communities and local businesses enabling them to build capacity and shape the future development of their communities. Significant efforts will continue to be made to ensure the majority of any funding is spent locally.

## 7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 Consultations have taken place with representatives of the Service Director – Finance (S151 Officer).
- 7.2 The proposal is to develop robust investment plans for the 5 remaining Principal Towns and local centres modelled on the Goldthorpe Town Investment Plan, to outline local priorities, projects and set out a strategic context to deliver inclusive economy across the Borough.
- 7.3 Whilst there are no direct financial implications from the approval of this overarching strategy / approach, there are wider implications that may present themselves in the future, that must be considered at this stage.
- 7.4 The future cost of the works associated with the programme is currently estimated at approximately £30M. Though it should be noted that this estimate is prior to the detailed investment plans being formalised and therefore should be considered indicative at this stage.
- 7.5 The Council has not currently set any resources aside for this investment. Therefore, these investment proposals will be considered against the external funding opportunities that present themselves in the short to medium term, in line with the Council's approved External Funding Strategy.
- 7.6 Specifically, in respect of external funding, one opportunity that would be appropriate to the proposed investment would be the Council's share of the Gainshare monies from Sheffield City Region.

## 8. Employee Implications

- 8.1 If a 5-year strategy is approved current staffing would need to be extended, staff are currently in post until end March 2023 this will be addressed in a future report.

## 9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 There are no immediate legal implications arising directly from this report.

## 10. Communications Implications

- 10.1 The Principal Towns Programme will be promoted effectively to the interest groups associated with the Principal Towns and Local Centres to engage them with in the

programme. The scheme will be supported by a strong communications campaign promoting this exciting growth opportunity to residents and communities.

## 11. Consultations

11.1 There will be ongoing engagement and collaboration with local elected members, community groups, local businesses, residents in shaping the priorities and interventions in the investment plans. Consultation will continue throughout the programme and will include utilising existing events, Ward Alliances and Social Media platforms. It is expected main consultation will be complete by December 2021 however some projects will have continued consultation/involvement throughout.

## 12. Equality Impact

12.1 Full EIA has been developed for Principal Towns degree of inequality was mostly categorised as medium with some level of improvement being attainable, this will be further developed throughout this phase of the project.

## 13. The Corporate Plan and the Council's Performance Management Framework

13.1 The proposals in this report are consistent with Council's Corporate Plan as all Investment Plans will align to Future Council ambitions of:

- Healthy Barnsley
- Learning Barnsley
- Growing Barnsley
- Sustainable Barnsley
- Enabling Barnsley

## 14. Tackling the Impact of Poverty

14.1 Impact of poverty has been highlighted as challenges in the relevant Investment Plans on an area basis. Where evidence base for individual areas highlights issues opportunities and projects will be developed.

## 15.1 Tackling Health Inequalities

15.1 Health inequalities has been highlighted as challenges in the relevant Investment Plans on an area basis. Where evidence base for individual areas highlights issues opportunities and projects will be developed.

## 16. Reduction of Crime and Disorder

16.1 Principal Towns programme continues to contribute to the development of safe and welcoming communities. Investments will continue to explore how it can further add value to this theme.

## 17 Risk Management Issues

17.1 Major risk will be lack of securing suitable funding, Investments Plans will provide a strong starting point for attracting funds and cross cutting bids will be explored.

17.2 Following approval of the scheme in principal, more detailed risk identification activities will take place, resulting in the development of a project / scheme risk register which will contribute towards the broader governance arrangements for the programme as a whole.

18. Health, Safety and Emergency Resilience Issues

18.1 There are no immediate implications arising directly from this report.

19. Compatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights

19.1 The proposal is fully compliant with the European Convention on Human Rights.

20. Conservation of Biodiversity

20.1 All projects to date have been developed with assistance from the biodiversity officer where appropriate, this will continue throughout the development and implementation stages.

Officer Contact: Fiona O'Brien/Teresa Williams

Date 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2021

Financial Implications/Consultation



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*(To be signed by senior Financial Services officer  
where no financial implications)*