

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting7th March 2019

1. Title of Item/Report

Progress on Reshaping Town Centres - Future High Streets Fund bids

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report on Progress on Reshaping Town Centres - Future High Streets Fund Bids.

Further to the report to Cabinet in December 2018 detailing the challenges facing town centres, the report updated Members on activity and interventions across the Boroughs town centres since December 2018.

As detailed in reports to Cabinet and Council in December 2018, the scale of the challenge facing town centres and the retail sector on a national level was unprecedented. The threat posed by the changes in the retail sector and function of town centres was acknowledged by Members and the importance of tackling this change was reflected in the approval of up to £30million prudential borrowing for commercial developments and acquisitions which would seek to address some of the key challenges across the Boroughs town centres.

Since then, the ten year investment plan for Tees Valley had been approved at a meeting of the Combined Authority Cabinet in January 2019. This approval provided the opportunity to access additional funds to support the development of the Boroughs town centres and could be used to supplement already approved funds as well as any potential funds secured through the Future High Streets Fund.

The report to Cabinet and Council in December 2018 articulated how the future of our town centres relied on a fundamental repurposing and reshaping of their function and make up, recognising that whilst retail was still very important, particularly the on-going growth of independent retailers, the centres cannot survive predominantly on that use as they had in the past.

Whilst it was demonstrated that the many initiatives and investment from the Council and its partners across the Borough's Town Centres had

meant that the impact of these drastic changes had been offset in part, it was clear that further intervention was required.

The report updated Members on the recent progress across the Borough's Town Centres at:-

Billingham
Thornaby
Yarm
Ingleby Barwick
Stockton

In late December 2018, details of the £675 million Future High Streets Fund were made available to Local Authorities. The aim of the fund was help local high streets evolve and adapt to the challenges presented by structural changes affecting retail and the function of town centres.

The Minister for Northern Powerhouse and Local Growth, recently visited the high street to personally understand the challenges but also the opportunities the Council was seizing. The Minister saw first-hand the work undertaken by the Council but he also recognised that having six town centres in one Borough placed a very different challenge on the Council which was not common among many other areas and raising this point with the Minister allowed us to successfully lobby to make more than one bid into the future high street fund.

Following lobbying of government, the opportunity existed for the Council to submit two applications to the Future High Streets Fund. As such, bids were being developed for both Stockton and Yarm. Cabinet was asked to note this activity and endorse the two bids that were being prepared for submission.

As previously reported, the aim of the new fund exactly matched what the Council was trying to achieve in the borough. "...to encourage vibrant town centres where people live, shop, use services, and spend their leisure time." The Future High Streets Fund would support and fund local areas' plans to make their high streets and town centres fit for the future." (MHCLG Policy Paper 29 October 2018).

Full details of assessment criteria had been published with applications to the fund only considered for areas facing significant challenges. Applications would be considered for investment in physical infrastructure, public and other transport access, new housing and workspace development, and investment in land assembly, including to support the densification of residential and workspace around high streets in place of under-used retail units.

The Council was working on the details of an Expression of Interest with a view to meeting the stage 1 submission deadline of 22nd March 2019. Successful applicants from stage 1 would be announced in summer 2019 and would be required to produce detailed business cases for assessment thereafter.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The positive update on activity and engagement across the Borough's town centres be noted.
2. The work undertaken to the Government's future high street fund be noted and the submission of two bids for the town centres of Stockton and Yarm be endorsed.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To allow the continued regeneration of the Borough's Town Centres in line with the Council's Economic Growth objectives.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Nigel Cooke declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 11 – Progress on Reshaping Town Centres as the report mentioned the Georgian Theatre which was managed by Tees Music Alliance.

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight, 15 March 2019

Proper Officer
11 March 2019