

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

16 MARCH 2023

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Regeneration and Housing - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Nigel Cooke

Levelling Up Fund Round 1 Progress Update

SUMMARY

This report provides an update on work undertaken since approval of Round 1 Levelling Up Funding (LUF) and seeks approval for submission of a formal request into Department for Levelling Up Homes and Communities (DLUHC) to reprofile and reallocate funding across the approved programme of interventions.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

To enable the delivery of interventions under the Levelling Up Fund Round 1 umbrella to reflect public consultation and now that a greater level of detail across all approved interventions within the Round 1 programme has been developed and understood.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Cabinet agree to the principle of reallocating of £3million LUF funds previously estimated to be required for Yarm High Street to support a broader range of interventions in Preston Park as set out in paragraph 29
2. Cabinet note the challenges associated with delivering the original scope of cycle infrastructure and approve the delivery of a single route, as set out in paragraph 26
3. Cabinet approve the submission of a formal Project Adjustment Request into DLUHC reflecting the spend profile detailed in paragraphs 29-30
4. Cabinet delegate authority to agree final scheme details and any associated contracts or agreements to enable delivery of the LUF programme to the Director of Finance, Development and Regeneration in consultation with Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing and Director of Corporate Services

DETAIL

Levelling Up Fund Scope

1. Following the report to Cabinet in July 2022, work has been ongoing to develop a greater level of detail around the agreed interventions under the LUF Round 1 programme as well as further engagement with the public to help refine options for Yarm High Street.

2. The approved LUF programme at approval in 2021 saw £20million split across Preston Park, Museum and Grounds (£9m), Yarm High Street (£6.5m) and cycle infrastructure (£4.5m) supplemented by co funding from Council funds and Yarm Town Council.

Yarm High Street - Public Realm Improvement Scheme

3. An initial round of public consultation was undertaken in August 2022, which sought to gather feedback on local priorities and sensitivities relating to how people perceive, use and access Yarm High Street.
4. In-person consultation sessions were held in Yarm Library and an online consultation form was available on the Council's website. Both consultation methods were promoted widely on social media, the Council's website and were included in an invitation that was posted to all households in the Yarm ward. Upon completion of the consultation, feedback was analysed giving a total of 205 respondents, the majority of which were residents of Yarm.
5. The results, published in October 2022, demonstrated that the top five improvements people wanted to see are: improving footpaths, reducing street clutter, adding more planting, improving connections and accessibility to the River Tees and providing more seating and places to rest.
6. The findings from the initial public consultation were analysed and used to shape and develop a package of concept designs for Yarm High Street that were presented for a second round of consultation in December 2022.
7. The consultation provided the opportunity for members of the public to share their views on the concept designs which focussed on a number improvements on the High Street and surrounding areas reflecting the priorities identified from the first round of consultation.
8. The proposals detailed planned enhancements which included new paving along the High Street, new landscaping, seating and improved public spaces, de-cluttering of pavements, new cycle storage and electric vehicle charging points and enhancements to the River Tees and Snaith's Field play area. These improvements result in no loss of parking spaces along the High Street.
9. A range of potential additional improvements were also presented, in addition to the planned works, including extended landscaping, seating and larger public spaces, larger cycle storage areas, more electric vehicle charging points and enhancements to the River Tees and Snaith's Field play area. The additional improvements would bring more enhanced and improved facilities but would result in a loss of some parking spaces along the High Street if all interventions were delivered as shown.
10. As per the first round of public consultation, in-person sessions were held in Yarm Library and an online consultation form was available on the Council's website. Both consultation methods were promoted widely on social media, the Council's website and local media. Upon completion of the consultation, feedback was analysed giving a total of 283 respondents, 71% of which stated they lived in Yarm.
11. The consultation results reveal that overall there is positive support towards the planned improvements. When asked whether the designs have satisfactorily incorporated the consultation priorities into the design options, the five priorities of improving footpaths, reducing street clutter, adding more planting, improving connections to the River Tees and providing more seating and places to rest received a response in excess of 50% in respect of those who agreed or strongly agreed.
12. With regards to the proposed additional improvements and whether they are in the most appropriate locations along the High Street, 69% of people agreed which demonstrates a

positive response towards the proposed placement of the additional improvements. The same positive support was also shown by 64.1% of people when asked whether the proposals identify the right mix and type of additional improvements.

13. Respondents were also asked to consider six proposals at varying locations along the High Street and vote as to whether the benefits of the additional improvements represent an acceptable trade off against the potential loss of parking spaces. The potential loss of parking spaces ranged from one to six bays depending on the specific improvements and support for each additional improvement ranged from 69%-44%. This highlights that whilst the removal of parking bays is an important factor for respondents, the public would be accepting of the loss of some parking spaces depending on the location and what the space would be used for. Full details of consultation responses can be viewed at www.stockton.gov.uk/yarm/consultation
14. In summary, further refinements will be made to the scheme shown at consultation, incorporating some of the additional improvements presented and taking specific characteristics and constraints identified via the consultation into account, delivering a programme of improvements that incorporates the key features and principles of the scheme shown at consultation.
15. Work undertaken as part of the design work to date shows that the scale of interventions presented for consultation can be delivered within a budget of £3.8million, alongside circa £800,000 allocated for Yarm Town Hall works and the relocation of public toilets.

Yarm Town Hall

16. Work to refurbish and repurpose Yarm Town Hall into a new heritage centre alongside Yarm Town Council commenced in early January and will complete in Summer 2023.
17. The Town Hall will have a full external restoration to include the opening-up and reinstatement of its original brick arches with new glazing. Internal improvements include the conversion of the building to provide an open ground floor space for a heritage centre. The first floor of the Town Hall will remain as a meeting space and a new heritage learning area will be developed.
18. Part of the scheme includes the relocation of the public toilet adjacent to Yarm Library, where a new unisex, accessible facility has opened to ensure continuity of public toilet provision on the High Street.

Preston Park Museum and Grounds

19. Initial work on delivering a new exhibition space at Preston Park Museum as extension to the existing museum as well as improvement to the café and toilets, car parking and opportunities for an alternate use for the aviary and the creation of a new feature adjacent to the main entrance to celebrate and highlight the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR) heritage and the original route through the Park is progressing.
20. The development will transform Preston Park Museum and Grounds, strengthening its position as a cohesive, modern visitor attraction that will provide great opportunities for families to come together, play, learn and explore our rich heritage.
21. Based on work undertaken to date, the estimated budget to deliver an exhibition space as well as improvements to the central area to provide a new focal point to the park incorporating the refurbishment of the café, demolition and re-provision of the existing toilet block, reuse of the aviary and S&DR heritage feature as well as improved parking provision is circa £12.4m
22. Emerging proposals for all interventions in the park and museum will be presented to the public through a series of drop-in sessions at Preston Park Museum in the Spring.

Cycleways

23. Detailed feasibility and cost planning has been undertaken across the cycle routes identified within the LUF bid in order to understand the scale and specification of cycle infrastructure required across the extent of the routes identified.
24. Any cycle infrastructure delivered through LUF is required to meet the national LTN 1/20 standard. Meeting the LTN1/20 standard in respect of retro fitting cycle infrastructure onto existing highway and footpaths has proved challenging given the particular characteristics of the routes, spatial constraints of the routes identified in terms of carriageway and footpath width, available space at key pinch points, particularly on approach to the south end of the High Street, north end of Yarm bridge and the impact on existing highway capacity generally.
25. Given the LTN1/20 specification, requirements for cycle infrastructure, the feasibility and cost assessment undertaken has shown that the full extent of cycle infrastructure envisaged at bid submission would cost in excess of £12.5million and is therefore unaffordable within the current budget.
26. The cost estimates show that the Elton Interchange to Eaglescliffe School route would cost circa £3.5m and the Preston Park to Yarm Bridge route would cost circa £4.8m. The allocation of £4.5million LUF alongside £500,000 LTP funding means that only one route in its entirety is affordable within the current budget. In the absence of other funding it is therefore recommended that prioritisation is given to the Elton Interchange to Eaglescliffe School with any remaining funding from the allocation for cycle infrastructure redirected to undertake improvements on other routes achievable within the balance of the budget.

Budget Position

27. As set out in paragraph 2, the LUF funding was split across the three themes within the scope of LUF funding based on estimates at the time of submitting the LUF bid. The body of the report sets out a more detailed view on work undertaken and provides a clearer understanding of costs and deliverability across the interventions.
28. The detail within the report demonstrates that there is a cost pressure on the envisaged scope of interventions at Preston Park and across the full extent of the proposed cycle infrastructure. Given the budget requirement and deficit against approved allocations for Preston Park and the cycle infrastructure, a reallocation of LUF funding from Yarm High Street can enable delivery of the full scope of planned works at Preston Park but would still not enable the delivery of more than one cycle route.
29. Taking the above detail and considerations into account it is recommended that Cabinet agree to the principle of reallocating £3m LUF funding from Yarm High Street to support delivery of interventions in Preston Park Museum and Gardens. The table below summarises the approved position bid and proposed changes.

	Approved Profile (£m)				Recommend Profile (£m)		
	High Street (inc Town Hall)	Cycle Infrastructure	Preston Park Museum and Ground		High Street (inc Town Hall)	Cycle Infrastructure	Preston Park Museum and Ground
LUF	6.5	4.5	9		3.5	4.5	12
SBC	1	0.5	0.4		1	0.5	0.4
Yarm Town	0.1				0.1		

Council							
Total	7.6	5	9.4		4.6	5	12.4

30. Subject to Cabinet approval of the proposed budget changes, a formal Project Adjustment Request (PAR) reflecting the approved changes will be sent to DLUHC to formalise the reprofile of funding into financial year 2024/25 and reallocation of funding within the LUF programme.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

31. Throughout the lifetime of the projects the Council will give consideration to the potential impact on any protected characteristics and the needs of diverse groups when designing and delivering services so that people can access fairer opportunities and equal services.

32. The Council will seek to work with stakeholder groups to ensure that all communications and consultations are targeted at the appropriate groups, including anyone with a protected characteristic, so they are effective and use resources in the best possible way. Where proposals, events or services affect specific individuals or groups, these stakeholders will be kept fully informed and have the opportunity to give their input about issues that affect them.

33. The proposals within the LUF programme are intended to benefit people of all ages and backgrounds, regardless of any disabilities, impairments or socio-economic status and are not deemed to disproportionately affect any group or protected characteristics.

34. Consultation activity undertaken and in the future will be tailored to meet the needs and preferences of different groups of people across the Borough and we will also ensure information is accessible for those with additional needs. From the public consultation undertaken to date, there have been no adverse comments or feedback received that indicates the scheme will result in discrimination towards any protected characteristic.

35. A detailed communication plan has been developed for the project, which will be carefully considered to ensure no form of direct or indirect discrimination occurs.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

36. As part of the town centre development programme there is an ongoing engagement process and one element of this is focused on young people and young adults to ensure that town centres remain fit for purpose for current and future generations. As a corporate parent the Council will exhaust all opportunities to engage with as many young people as possible.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

37. There are no additional financial implication arising from this report. The assumed co-funding is reflected in the current MTFP.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

38. There are no additional legal implications to note in this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

39. Project risk registers have been produced for each intervention and existing management systems and daily routine activities are deemed sufficient to control and reduce risk.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

40. Yarm & Eaglescliffe

BACKGROUND PAPERS

41. Reference should be made to reports considered by the Council's Cabinet in July 2022 and February 2021.

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