

22nd June 2022**Agenda Item:5**

REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR INVESTMENT & GROWTH

ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL'S LEVELLING UP FUNDING PROPOSALS

Purpose of the Report

- 1) To provide an update on the Ashfield District Council's Levelling bid for Hucknall and to seek authority to issue a letter of support, as needed.

Information

Funding Background

1. Announced at the Spending Review, the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) is designed to invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK. The £4.8 billion fund will support town centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects, and cultural and heritage assets. The funding is for capital investment and is organised via a series of rounds up to 2024/25. Further to the [Levelling Up White Paper](#) published on 2 February 2022, round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund was released on 23 March 2022.
2. Local authority districts are able to submit one bid for every MP whose constituency lies wholly within their boundary. The County Council has one opportunity to make a submission as a transport authority. Bids can be for one project or a package of up to three, worth up to £20m per bid or for large culture or transport projects between £20m and £50m.
3. Each local authority area has been given a priority ranking between one and three. The rating is based on governments new '[Index of Priority Places](#)', whereby Category 1 has the greatest priority and 3 is the least. The need for investment is based on the scope of the Fund's investment priorities and considers the needs for: economic recovery and growth (considering productivity, skills, and unemployment); improved transport connectivity (England only); and regeneration (considering commercial and dwelling vacancy rates) (England and Wales only).
4. Authorities have from 31 May to 6 July to submit their applications. The full LUF Prospectus (Round 2, March 2022) is available [here](#). The LUF Round 1 successful bids announcement (October 2021) is available [here](#)

Policy background

5. This funding opportunity and the district/boroughs bids to government, if successful, could support the work of The Nottinghamshire Plan in a number of ways:
 - **ambition four** - by providing facilities and training courses that will help people get into work and progress whilst in work;
 - **ambition five** – providing the opportunity to strengthen businesses in the county and to create more good quality jobs;
 - **ambition six** – making Nottinghamshire somewhere people love to live, work and visit;
 - **ambition seven** – helping to attract investment in infrastructure, the economy and green growth;
 - **ambition eight** – improving transport and digital connections; and
 - **ambition nine** – protecting the environment and reducing our carbon footprint
6. Furthermore, the opportunity to deliver part of the Council's Economic Transition Plan is also applicable:
 - **People** – putting our “people” first to ensure they have the right skills and training so that they are ready for work, that they have the support to get into work and then to be achieve and progress in their careers.
 - **Business** – our businesses provide employment, services and facilities which will require our support in this transition plan and to be ready for change and innovate for their future success.
 - **Visitor economy** - one of the worst affected sectors and faces a high level of uncertainty in the future, which will require further support to ensure that visitor numbers and the jobs provided within this sector are supported.
 - **Infrastructure** – essential enabler to ensure the success of the economy and includes the provision of improved/new provision of physical transport infrastructure.
 - **Digital connectivity** – ensuring the technology and digital connectivity provision is in place so the county is well served and best place to maximise the potential future opportunities.
 - **Place** – strategic growth and improvement of place assets, so that funding and investment opportunities are maximised in the future

Work done to date

7. There has been considerable work undertaken to engage with colleagues in the District/Boroughs. Due to the tight timescales associated with this funding opportunity, there is still further engagement and consultation to have on the final proposals in order to support and increase the success of the bids. Therefore, the content of the proposed funding bids may not be known until closer to the bid deadline. The details provided below are accurate at the time of writing for the Ashfield proposal.
8. **Ashfield District Council** is ranked as a Priority 2 area. The Council are currently consulting on their overall town masterplan for Hucknall, available online at: [Hucknall Town Centre Masterplan - Ashfield District Council. Any Levelling Up](#) bid will be within the scope of the investment priorities explained at Para 3 above. The finer detail is subject to change, pending

the final submission of any bid, see paragraphs 10 and 12 below. Current discussions indicate that Ashfield aims to put forward a bid and plans which currently includes

- A focus on the Hucknall Trams Station and Byron Cinema areas of Hucknall town centre:
 - Wayfinding linking the train station to the cinema and town centre,
 - Barrier replacements with bollards, for pedestrian and cycle routes access to high street.
 - Upgrading public realm at the Byron Cinema, with removal of outdated brick planters
 - Review of bus priorities across the town
 - Town centre building frontages improvements or / refurbishments and some residential units.
 - Visual improvements to the bus station area.
9. If any Levelling Up bids require decisions to be made by the County Council, they will be brought forward as appropriate. In finalising this, our position, as with previous towns fund bids, remains that we will not accept any additional liabilities for the County Council, without any offset benefits for residents and overall costs savings. Our approach to share service hubs for example, will need to be considered in light of the capital value property interests, maintenance costs and risk of other partners not committing to a new premises. Likewise, several proposals have the potential to impact travel and transport arrangements, positively or negatively. The County Council does not hold any budget that can pay for feasibility studies required to support bids. We could not propose to support any action that increases traffic flow, displaces traffic into unsuitable areas of the road network, or makes public access to places more restrictive or less safe, such as for elderly and disabled groups.
10. The District/Borough bids will continue to be worked up ready for submission by the deadline of 6th July. Ongoing dialogue will continue with the Districts and Boroughs with a view to the County Council providing letters of support to the Districts and Boroughs as needed, subject to considerations for the County Council in respect of any aspects of the bid as set out at paragraph 9 above.

Other Options Considered

11. The do-nothing option has been considered and is regarded as not preferable as letters of support would help strengthen a district/borough bid and show the County Council's intent to support the delivery of the scheme, if successful but still subject to further consultation and all necessary County Council approvals.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

12. Due to the timescale of the bid, final details of the proposals will not be fully available until very close to the bid deadline of July 6th.

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human

rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment. This will also be a factor for the applicants of these funding bids. However, as the content of the funding bids are uncertain, it is difficult to fully review the implications. Once the award of funding is known and the projects being delivered, a detailed review of the statutory and policy implications will be undertaken (alongside any further approvals required).

Financial Implications

14. The recommendations themselves have no immediate financial impact, as the preparation for the Levelling Up bids will be covered through existing resources (including officer's advice and guidance). If any bid is successful, further County Council approvals may be required, especially if the County Council is to deliver any part of the proposal.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Asset Management:

1. Approves the general support for Ashfield District Council to apply for the Levelling Up funding (as detailed in paragraph 9), subject to being in accordance with the Nottinghamshire Plan and protecting the County from incurring any overall additional financial or legal risks.
2. Approves the submission of letters of support, as needed, to Ashfield District Council for inclusion in their Levelling Up bid..

Matthew Neal
Service Director Investment & Growth

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Joelle Davies, Group Manager 0115 977 4857

Constitutional Comments [CEH 20.06.2022]

15. The recommendations fall within the remit of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Asset Management.

Financial Comments [RWK 01/06/2022]

16. The report proposes submitting letters of support to district and borough for inclusion in their bids for Levelling Up Fund support. Any costs incurring in the preparation of these letters will be funded from existing financial resources. If any of the bids are successful further reports will be presented seeking the necessary approvals to enable the bids to be delivered. Therefore, there are no specific financial implications arising directly from the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- Hucknall North – Councillor John Wilmott
- Hucknall South – Councillor Lee Waters
- Hucknall West – Councillor Dave Shaw

Authorisation

Cabinet Member	Signed	Name	Date
Corporate/Service Director	Signed	Name	Date