

OFFICER DECISION**29 OCTOBER 2019****Liverpool City Region Town Centre Fund****REPORT SUMMARY**

This Officer Decision Notice provides details of the delegated decision of the Director of Economic and Housing Growth to accept a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Town Centre Fund for the sum of £1,000,000.

This decision supports the Wirral Plan in respect of Pledge 11 Thriving Small Business, specifically the priority activity to maximise local/regional and national funding opportunities to provide regeneration and growth support to town centres.

This matter affects Liscard ward and Bromborough ward and is a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Director of Economic and Housing Growth proceeds with providing authority to accept the Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority in respect of the Town Centre Fund for the sum of £1,000,000, and authority to proceed with the activity outlined in the GFA.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 In August 2019, the LCR Combined Authority confirmed that Wirral Council would receive an allocation from the LCR Town Centre Fund for applications submitted in respect of Liscard and New Ferry, subject to a grant funding agreement and approval of Action Plans. A decision is required to accept the external funding and proceed with the agreed activities.

2.0 OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Do Nothing: The Council would not receive the financial resources to take forward the draft action plans currently in development for Liscard Town Centre and New Ferry.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 In July 2018, Steve Rotheram LCR Metro Mayor, announced a new fund to revitalise town centres in the Liverpool City Region allocating £1m each to each of the combined authority's councils. Alongside this he also announced a city region Town Centre Commission that would work with local authorities to produce longer-term investment plans.

- 3.2 On 1 March 2019, Wirral Council submitted two Expressions of Interest to the LCR Town Centre Fund, namely for New Ferry and Liscard Town Centre.

Liscard

- 3.3 The Place and Investment Team led on the development of the Expression of Interest (EOI) for Liscard, engaging and consulting with key stakeholders including Council Officers, Wirral Chamber of Commerce, Cherry Tree Shopping Centre Management, and Liscard Ward Councillors prior to submission.

- 3.4 In summary, the EOI submitted included a number of short-term solutions to some of the current challenges identified, including implementing public realm and streetscene enhancements to improve the look, feel and confidence of the town centre; diversionary schemes to reduce anti-social behaviour; and activity to support the diversification of the town centre including a business grants programme, and a programme of cultural events. An integrated masterplan will also be commissioned to establish a longer-term plan and future vision for the town centre.

New Ferry

- 3.5 The Major Growth Projects & Housing Delivery Team led on the development of the EOI submission for New Ferry and builds on the developing proposals for regeneration through the comprehensive Regeneration Delivery Plan (RDP). It is proposed that the town centre fund will be used to support the development of a Community Land Trust (CLT) for the area. The aim of the newly constituted New Ferry CLT will be to work with a variety of partners – Council, Port Sunlight Village Trust, Wirral Chamber of Commerce and the local traders group to revitalise the town centre. The establishment of a CLT will empower business owners and residents to take ownership of selected retail premises and open spaces in the area, which will

not only help promote social cohesion and well being, but encourage innovative uses. Proposals will also include measures to undertake environmental and public realm improvements and to facilitate seasonal events.

Current Position

- 3.6 In August 2019, the CA provided written confirmation to Wirral Council of an allocation of £1,000,000 to Wirral Council in respect of New Ferry and Liscard Town Centre, subject to approval of applications, detailed action plans and grant funding agreement.
- 3.7 In January 2019 the Combined Authority (CA) provided application details and key milestones for the fund as outlined in the table below. However, the CA's timetable has experienced slippage therefore local authorities are now expected to submit Action Plans for approval by no later than 31 January 2020. It should be noted that the expected completion date of 31 December 2020 remains the same. Wirral Council officers are currently developing more detailed action plans and expect to return to the CA for approval of these by the end of November 2019, to enable approval and subsequent commencement of activity in Liscard and New Ferry.

Table 1: Key Milestones for LCR Town Centre Fund

Milestone	Indicative Date	Revised Date
Town Centres Prospectus and EOI pro-forma issued	January 2019	
Ongoing LA dialogue	January – February 2019	
LA Pro-forma Submitted	By 1 March 2019	
LA/CA workshop(s)	Mid - March 2019	
CA Approval of Programme	May 2019	
Refinement and appraisal of Action Plans	June - July 2019	
CA Approval of detailed Action Plans	July 2019	No later than 31 Jan 2020
Local Authority commencement of activity	July 2019	No later than 31 Jan 2020
Local Authority completion of activity	Dec 2020	
CA Evaluation of activity	July 2021	

- 3.8 The CA also outlined that they would commission a local perceptions survey with members of the public in each of the successful areas, prior to and post award of Town Centre funding in order to support the performance outcomes framework to measure the success and value of the fund. In Wirral, the perception surveys have been undertaken on behalf of the CA by social enterprise 'PLACED' on 30th September in New Ferry, and on 4th October in Liscard. Reports on the surveys will follow from PLACED in due course.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The GFA allows for all eligible costs to be claimed from the CA by Wirral Council. Payments will be made to the Council in arrears on an instalment basis in accordance with the agreed activities set out in respective Action Plans once approved.

- 4.2 Two cost centres have been established to enable monitoring of income and expenditure of grant funding in respect of Liscard and New Ferry, with a budget of £500,000 assigned for each town centre project. Funds will be a mix of revenue and capital funding, managed within the established Scheme of Delegation.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This Officer Decision Notice records the decision of the Director of Economic and Housing Growth to sign the GFA and accept funds to the value of £1,000,000 from the LCR Town Centre Fund and authority to proceed with the activity outlined in the GFA.
- 5.2 The Council will ensure that receipt and use of grant funding is in accordance with State Aid rules where applicable.
- 5.3 Any activity earmarked within the respective Action Plans will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation and Corporate Procurement Rules.
- 5.4 The GFA has been reviewed by Legal Services and the terms of the agreement are acceptable for the Council to enter into.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 Activities outlined in the GFA and associated Action Plans will be managed by existing staff resources in the Economic and Housing Growth Directorate, with officers from other services contributing technical expertise as appropriate in relation to delivery of Action Plan activities.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Risks and mitigations associated with the grant funded activities will be identified and recorded within each Action Plan, and the appropriate departmental risk register, and be subject to regular review.
- 7.2 Officers will seek to avoid or minimise the risk of future financial commitments to the Council materialising from the implementation of action plan activities e.g. maintenance or other longer-term costs.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Engagement/consultation was undertaken with members and key stakeholders in the development of the respective Expressions of Interest for the LCR Town Centre Fund as noted in section 3.
- 8.2 Appropriate governance arrangements will be established during delivery of the Town Centre Fund Action Plans, to include local ward members for Liscard and Bromborough (New Ferry); with further engagement/consultation to be undertaken throughout the process of delivery with local traders groups, community and youth groups and other relevant key stakeholders.
- 8.3 This decision supports the 20 pledges within the Wirral Plan: A 2020 Vision which was developed following full consultation with partner organisations and residents. The

Wirral Growth Plan has also been informed by consultation which has taken place with a number of public and private sector partners and with local businesses.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 (a) Yes and impact review is attached:

The potential impact has been reviewed with regard to equality and links to the existing EIA conducted for Wirral's Growth Plan. <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments/equality-impact-assessments-2014-0>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The content and/or recommendations contained within this report are expected to:

- Have no impact on emissions of CO2

10.2 However, through the proposed activities of the respective draft Action Plans, the Council will have regard for the environment and climate implications. For example, through potential public realm and streetscene activities, officers will aim to improve energy efficiency through replacement street lighting and consider improvements that could impact positively on air quality and better connectivity for cycle and public transport schemes through the masterplan process.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Town Centre Fund Prospectus
Grant Funding Agreement Liverpool City Region Town Centre Fund

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date