

## OFFICER DECISION NOTICE

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>DEVELOPMENT FUNDING FOR BIRKENHEAD CENTRAL GATEWAY</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE</b>

### REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks approval to accept the offer £1,460,900 of grant funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) and to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with the LCRCA to enable the transfer of funds to the Council.

The grant is to facilitate the implementation of essential pre-development works in support of the aim and objectives of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework, specifically in relation to the Birkenhead Central Gateway transport and public realm works.

The Wirral Plan 2025 sets out the Council's vision to secure the best possible future for our residents, defined by the community prosperity we create and supported by our excellent people and services. This proposal directly supports the following key themes within that plan:

- A prosperous, inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations
- A cleaner, greener borough which celebrates, protects and improves our environment and urgently tackles the environmental emergency
- Safe, vibrant communities where people want to live and raise their families

This matter affects Birkenhead and Tranmere Ward, and Rock Ferry Ward.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Director of Regeneration and Place:

- (1) Accepts the LCRCA offer of grant aid and to agree the terms and conditions of the Grant Funding Agreement.
- (2) Approves the commencement of the necessary pre-development work in accordance with the terms of the Grant Funding Agreement.
- (3) Bring to Committee progress reports as the pre-development works are advanced and subjected to public consultation.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 The offer of grant support is a significant endorsement by the LCRCA of the Council's ambitious plans under the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and represents a major opportunity to progress those plans in a tangible way. Acceptance of the grant offer will enable draw down of resources to facilitate pre-development works to progress the Council's vision. The works will have a catalytic impact and will re-connect significant areas of central Birkenhead and strengthen the impact of a number of individual projects beyond.
- 1.2 The central objective of the pre-development works is to remove physical severance and create new linkages between Birkenhead town centre and adjacent key development in locations such as at Hind Street, Wirral Waters and Woodside for example. The Grant Funding Agreement lists these areas under the three project sub-headings; (i) Argyle Street, (ii) Woodside and the (iii) proposed Dock Branch Park. The funding is also targeted to progress an overarching placemaking agenda which will engage with residents and businesses focusing on transport behavioural change and the implementation of active travel measures within the project areas. The aim is to encourage the use of attractive and well-designed active travel corridors to link development areas together.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 The individual projects for which the pre-development grant aid will help to deliver are the product of the Council's Birkenhead 2040 Framework Strategy and will support both the Local Plan and the Wirral 2025 Plan objectives, therefore a do-nothing option can be discounted given the importance of the strategies and the support it will provide for a successful delivery of a number of key brownfield urban regeneration projects in central Birkenhead.
- 2.2 In theory the Council could choose to not accept the grant aid or seek to renegotiate the terms of the agreement however that would not be in the interests of progressing important regeneration projects for which the Council have already agreed to implement. There are no other resources currently available to the Council therefore this option is also not recommended.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 In summary the objective of the projects, for which the grant aid relates, is to reduce the severance created by barriers between the town centre and surrounding developments including Hind Street, a major proposed brownfield housing site to the south. In this location this will be achieved primarily through removal of the two existing flyovers, with related works including preferred highway alignment and a green travel corridor (Dock Branch Park) linking Hind Street to Wirral Waters. The Grant Funding Agreement specifies the Pre-Development Works in more detail and comprise of the following pre-development design work:

## **Argyle Street**

Design of connectivity and public realm improvements at Argyle Street, including widened footways, segregated cycle infrastructure, street furniture and greening. Supports the active travel elements of the Birkenhead Landing programme resulting from the Hind Street Movement Strategy. The design team will also run a consultation exercise with local residents and businesses to inform the design process.

## **Woodside**

Woodside is a key area of opportunity on Birkenhead's Waterfront and pre-development funding is needed to enable design work to progress for:

- Reconfiguration of the Woodside Gyratory;
- Realignment/Relocation of Bus Turnaround;
- Investment in Public Realm and Wayfinding; and
- Delivery of New and Improved Walking and Cycling Infrastructure;

Note: the design work for the recommissioning of the Woodside Ferry Terminal Pontoon is being undertaken concurrently by Merseytravel;

## **Dock Branch Park**

Dock Branch Park is an iconic, catalytic and transformational project for Birkenhead's regeneration. It involves the creation of a new active travel corridor linking three key developments areas: Wirral Waters, Birkenhead Town Centre and Hind Street. It will create a beautiful linear park whilst also strengthening the East-West cultural axis through its links into the existing network, creating new residential and commercial neighbourhoods with opportunities for surrounding sites which will permeate the corridor. Pre-Development Work includes consultancy support to undertake design lead services (including planning) for RIBA design stage 2 & 3.

## **Placemaking**

Funding support vital place-making enabling activity which sits across the transport, infrastructure and movement projects in the Birkenhead 2040 Regeneration programme. Specifically, the funding will deliver skills in transport and movement modelling, resident/business engagement focused on transport behaviour change and active travel design and implementation. This approach will ensure that the portfolio of transport and movement projects will be designed and delivered in order to achieve true place-making transformation for Birkenhead.

Funding will be used to commission the following:

- Transport and movement concept design and modelling for Birkenhead to enable neighbourhood and street design to facilitate the take up of active travel and public transport, taking into account the dynamic environment arising from delivery of a number of major transport and regeneration projects.

- Specialist advice and campaign management to engage Birkenhead residents, businesses and visitors to change behaviour to increase use of active travel and public transport modes, alongside the development of transport and regeneration projects to facilitate and encourage sustainable patterns of movement.

- 3.2 The Grant Funding Agreement specifies the outputs the Council will be expected to achieve and states that all Pre-Development Outputs must be completed by no later than 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.
- 3.4 The Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) itself contains standard provisions normally associated with grant regimes including conditions relating to grounds for reduction, withdrawal and repayment of grant particularly if the funding for the pre-development works remain unspent or uncommitted by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.
- 3.5 The grant will be paid in quarterly instalments in arrears and the LCRCA will determine the methodology for recording and monitoring of the funding and costs. In terms of reporting within 30 working days of completion of the pre-development works the Council must produce a report to state how the grant has been utilised, how the outputs have been achieved and any changes to the project arising from the works. In signing the GFA the Council will remain entirely responsible for risks and liabilities in delivering the works.
- 3.6 Other provisions relate to Freedom of Information, Data Protection, Confidentiality and Publicity which are all standard and can be easily complied with.
- 3.7 The LCRCA have confirmed that funding of £350,000 has been allocated to Merseytravel in connection with Phase 1 Early Contractor engagement for the decommissioning and reprovision of the Woodside Ferry Terminal Pontoon. A provision of the GFA ensures that the Council must work collaboratively with Merseytravel to ensure the works are carried out in a co-ordinated manner. Merseytravel have been requested to agree to a reciprocal obligation to the Council.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Funding of up to a maximum of £1,460,900 will be allocated based on eligible costs to support the Pre-Development Works. This grant is split between £1,275,000 for the development activities comprised within the Pre-Development Works and £185,900 for project management support. An estimated breakdown has been provided for each of the project elements but funding may be moved between headings with the prior agreement of the LCRCA should the need arise and following a consideration of the impact on the overall project outputs.
- 4.2 The Grant Funding Agreement specifies that all Pre-Development Outputs must be completed by no later than 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 (Input from Matthew and or Colin please on the provisions of the GFA)

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 There are no significant impacts in terms of staffing, ICT or assets. The projects can be implemented within existing resources.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 The implementation of the projects will involve risks a number of associated risks and will be the subject of individual risk assessments in due course. In terms of pre-development activity, for which the grant funding relates, the main risk is the delivery of the activities by the spending deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and the risk of slippage or unforeseen matters arising. This risk can be mitigated by utilising the funding allocated to project management and the deployment of experienced project managers to this task.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 Following the comprehensive and high level consultation undertaken in relationship to the Birkenhead 2040 Framework, site specific consultation exercises are planned for each of the design stages of the works and will inform the solutions to be taken forward to implementation. These events will follow best practice and sufficient time will be given to this important process.
- 8.2 Additional public consultation will also take place as part of the planning process, including at the pre-application stage.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2. Whilst there are no equality implications arising directly from this report, the associated actions arising from the delivery may need to assess any equality issues and mitigate any negative impact that may emerge.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 A central theme of the project interventions facilitated by the grant aid relates to the provision of attractive active travel corridors linking areas and favouring pedestrians and cyclist in particular. By facilitating non car-based travel there will be resulting reductions in Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), particulate matter (PM) and CO<sub>2</sub> compared to the 'Do Nothing' scenario, thus helping to tackle climate change and improve air quality.
- 10.2 High quality active travel routes will be created between Birkenhead town centre, via Argyle Street to the waterfront at Woodside as well as in the direction towards Hind Street mitigating the severance created by the existing fly-overs. This area in

particular is currently very unattractive to pedestrians and cyclists with no clear routes and limited connectivity. As part of the movement strategy active travel and bus movement will be prioritised and integration with the wider active travel network will be facilitated. This clearly supports the sustainable transport ethos of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework the emerging Local Plan.

- 10.3 Complementing the physical interventions the pre-development funding enable the design of a programme of behavioural change engagements and social media campaigns to encourage greater use of active transport and to change perceptions of the locations concerned and increase significantly footfall in the area.

## **REPORT AUTHOR:**

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 GFA

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

### **Birkenhead 2040 Framework**

[Birkenhead 2040 Framework | www.wirral.gov.uk](http://www.wirral.gov.uk)

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Economy Regeneration and Development Committee.</b>	