

Future High Streets Fund

Final Decision-Maker	Policy & Resources Committee
Lead Head of Service/Lead Director	William Cornall, Director of Regeneration & Place
Lead Officer and Report Author	William Cornall, Director of Regeneration & Place
Classification	Private
Wards affected	All Wards

Executive Summary

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) launched a funding prospectus in December 2018, the Future High Streets Fund, which provides £675m of funding to help local areas make their high streets and town centres fit for the future.

There is a two stage bidding process, with initial expressions of interest needing to be submitted by 22nd March 2019.

This report makes the following recommendations to;

Delegate authority to the Director of Regeneration & Place to develop and submit an expression of interest to the fund, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Policy & Resources Committee	13 February 2019

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 At the last budget, the Government set out a package of support for high streets -“Our Plan for the High Street”:

- Cutting business rates by a third for up to 90% of retail properties for two years, to provide upfront support for high streets.
- **Supporting the transformation of the high street, by creating the £675m Future High streets Fund to help local areas make their high streets and town centres fit for the future.**
- Consulting on planning reform to make it simpler to create more homes, jobs and choice in town centres, and trialling the register of empty shops.
- Setting up a High Streets Task Force which will support local leadership with expert advice on helping local high streets to adapt and thrive.
- Strengthening community assets, including the restoration of historic buildings that make our high streets special, supporting community groups to use empty properties and providing business rates relief for public toilets and local newspapers.

1.2 It is the second bullet point that the prospectus and this report relate. The prospectus is attached at **Appendix A** to this report, but the report states that the purpose of the monies available is to “renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability”. Bids are expected to be as follows:

- For a maximum of £25m but more typically between £5-10m per town centre.
- Single, transformative proposals, covering just one town centre or high street.
- Co-funded by public and private sector additions.
- Must be for town centre areas that are facing significant challenges.

1.3 Key themes within successful bids are expected to be:

- Investment in physical infrastructure.
- Acquisition and assembly of land including to support new housing, workspaces and public realm.
- Improvements to transport access, traffic flow and circulation.
- Supporting change of use including (where appropriate) housing delivery and densification.
- Supporting adaption of the high street in response to changing technology.

1.4 There will be two separate rounds of funding, the first of which invites expressions of interest by 22nd March 2019, whereby bidders are expected to set out the nature of the challenge faced as well as their vision for the future they hold for the high street or town centre. Successful bids will be

notified in the summer of 2019 and then invited to submit detailed business cases late 2019 / early 2020. I.e. it is a two stage bidding proposal, with the expression of interest being the gateway to shortlisting. It is also indicated that any schemes that are "shovel ready" could be fast tracked.

- 1.5 There will be a second round of funding, but this will not be opened before 2020.
- 1.6 Officers held a briefing session on the prospectus on 30th January 2019 with the following members;
 - The Chair & Vice Chair of P&R.
 - The Chair & Vice Chair of SPS&T.
 - The Chair & Vice Chair of HCL.
 - The Chair & Vice Chair of CHE.
 - The three High Street Ward Councillors.
- 1.7 The direction of travel that was agreed at the briefing was as follows;
 - It was appropriate for this Committee (P&R) to have oversight of any bid made.
 - That it would be appropriate to submit an expression of interest.
 - That the expression of interest to be submitted should be focussed upon the challenges faced by and our strategic vision for Maidstone town centre but relate broadly to the delivery of at least one of our (Maidstone) Town Centre opportunity sites.
 - That it would be acceptable for any expression of interest submitted to be published on the Council website.

2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to review the prospectus at Appendix A and then either:
 - Chose not to submit an expression of interest to the fund, or;
 - Delegate authority to the Director of Regeneration & Place to develop and submit an expression of interest to the fund, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee.

3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The preferred option is to delegate authority to the Director of Regeneration & Place to develop and submit an expression of interest to the fund, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee. This is because the monies potentially available could help realise the Council's strategic ambitions for Maidstone town centre.
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4. RISK

4.1 There will only be a modest amount of officer time required to prepare and submit the expression of interest. If the Council is successful in passing this gateway, the prospectus indicated that revenue funding will be available to support the production of the business case required for phase 2.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 As previously detailed in terms of the Member briefing.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 This Committee will receive a further report in the summer if the expression of interest is successful.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Council has recently agreed an outcome in its Strategic Plan for our town and village centres to be fit for the future, if we were successful in this bid this would help deliver our ambitions for the town centre.	[Head of Service or Manager]
Risk Management	Detailed in the report.	
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	[Section 151 Officer & Finance Team]
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Director of Regeneration & Place.
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Local Government Act	

	<p>1972, section 111 enables the Council to do any thing which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions. The recommendation in this report will contribute to the achievement of the objectives within the strategic plan as outlined in the Report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new Strategic Plan aligns with the Council’s general duty, as a best value authority, to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness – section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999. • 	Head of Mid Kent Legal Services
Privacy and Data Protection	<p>No implications at this point in the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Data Protection Officer
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals. 	[Head of Service or Manager]

Crime and Disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommendation will not have a negative impact on Crime and Disorder. 	[Head of Service or Manager]
Procurement	N/A.	[Head of Service & Section 151 Officer]

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: The Future High Streets Fund prospectus.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.