

CABINET - 17TH OCTOBER 2019

Report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration Lead Member: Councillor Hunt

Part A

ITEM 7 FUNDING BID: SHEPSHED PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

Purpose of Report

To seek Cabinet approval for the preparation of a bid to secure funding which would enable public realm improvements in the centre of Shepshed.

Recommendation

That Cabinet approves the preparation and submission of a 'business case' bid to the LLEP (Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership) for funding of £600,000.

Reason

To comply with Section 8.3, Paragraph 7 of the Council's Constitution which limits delegated officer authority for preparation of funding bids to a maximum of £200,000.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

The Corporate Plan includes the strategic priority 'Creating a Strong and Lasting Economy'. It says the Council will encourage new businesses to towns and villages and develop masterplans for Loughborough and Shepshed.

A Town Centre Masterplan for Shepshed was produced in 2013 which outlines the need and opportunities for public realm improvements. In order to undertake feasibility, design and delivery of public realm schemes significant new funding is needed.

Section 8.3, Paragraph 7 of the Council's Constitution states that appropriate officers have delegated authority to prepare funding bids and secure grants up to £200,000. Therefore, for bids of over that amount Cabinet approval is required.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

The LLEP will consider bids for large scale capital funding during October / early November 2019. Subject to Call-in, Cabinet approval to submit a bid would be actioned immediately.

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

Financial Implications

In order to be able to submit a bid to the LLEP to secure funding, the applicant (and any partner organisations) must be able to demonstrate at least 50% 'match',

comprised primarily of a financial commitment but which can include assets and staff / volunteer time.

The Council already has capital allocated towards public realm improvements in Shepshed town centre:

- £600,000 from the Capital Plan (for town centre public realm)
- £12,200 from the Capital Plan (legacy unspent from the previous Shepshed shop fronts improvement grant scheme).

It is intended to utilise these allocations as 'match' in order to be able to submit a bid of £600,000 to the LLEP, the total combined project being a sum of £1,212,200 for Shepshed town centre improvements.

It should be noted that if an offer of funding is made, there is no obligation to take up the offer, and even if the offer is agreed, there is no requirement to spend all of the money offered [money is drawn down on an 'as needs be' basis].

Accordingly, there are no budget implications beyond potential use of capital existing allocations to match a potential offer of funding.

Risk Management

There are no specific risks associated with this decision.

Key Decision: Yes

Background Papers: Shepshed Town Centre Masterplan 2013.
LLEP Business Rates Pool Project Pipeline Business Case pro-forma.

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Part B

1. Background

- 1.1 The local authorities in Leicester and Leicestershire have formed a Business Rates Pool to support projects that drive productivity and help grow the local economy. The Business Rates Pool ensures any surpluses generated from business rates are transferred to the LLEP for investment back into schemes and projects in the LLEP area rather than paid back to Government. As a member of the Business Rates Pool, Charnwood Borough Council can apply for funding which is administered by the LLEP.
- 1.2 The LLEP asked for informal Expressions of Interest to be made for funding from the Business Rates Pool's 'large capital projects pot' in May 2019. An expression of interest was made for funding to support public realm improvements in Shepshed town centre. The Council has now been invited to prepare and submit a formal Business Case bid for consideration by the Business Rates Pool Board.
- 1.3 The Shepshed Town Centre Masterplan identifies areas within the town centre which would benefit from public realm improvements. These improvements would not only create an enhanced streetscape but also lead to regeneration which can help stimulate higher footfall of residents and visitors using the town centre. This in turn can lead to better trading conditions for businesses and encourage new business investments in the town.
- 1.4 The Masterplan is available as a Background Paper to this report.

2. Submission of a Funding Bid to the Business Rates Pool

- 2.1 The Business Rates Pool provides an opportunity to potentially double the finance available for public realm improvements in Shepshed, adding to capital allocations already made by this Council.
- 2.2 If a bid to the Pool is successful it will enable the Council to progress initial feasibility and design consultancy work and then the implementation of physical public realm enhancements in the town centre.
- 2.3 Leicestershire County Council (LCC) withdrew capacity in 2019 which had previously been available to lead on highways related public realm projects in towns across the county. If this Council is successful in securing funding from the Business Rates Pool it will enable it to progress public realm schemes in Shepshed which at present have stalled due to rising costs and this lack of capacity at LCC.
- 2.4 In order to be successful in securing Business Rates Pool funding it will be necessary to complete a business case for evaluation. An example of the pro-forma to be completed when submitting a business case is also available as a Background Paper to this report.
- 2.5 It is proposed that a sum of £600,000 is asked for from the Business Rates Pool.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 Residents, business and visitors will benefit from improvements to the public realm of Shepshed town centre. The Business Rates Pool provides an opportunity to potentially secure additional funding which would enable schemes to commence (subject to consultations with councillors, the local community and stakeholders).

Appendices

None.