

Swindon Town Deal Board

Cabinet

Date: 1st July 2020

Author: Leader of the Council
Head of Strategic Growth and Place

Wards: Central, Eastcott, Gorse Hill and Pinehurst; Mannington and Western, Rodbourne Cheney

Parishes Affected: Central Swindon North, Central Swindon South

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request authorisation for use of capacity funding allocated by Government to Swindon Borough Council (a total of £173,029) for the purpose of setting up a Town Deal Board and developing a Town Investment Plan.
- 1.2 Authorisation is also sought for the Council to accept the role of Accountable Body for the Towns Fund, as Lead Authority for Swindon, and to put in place the required governance arrangements
- 1.3 Government has advised that Swindon Town Deal Board needs to complete its Town Investment Plan for submission by 31st July 2020 and in order to facilitate this the Board needs to utilise the capacity funding.
- 1.4 The Town Investment Plan will act in support of the Council Vision to 2030, to develop Swindon's cultural, retail and leisure opportunities and excellent infrastructure and well managed housing growth which supports and improves new and existing communities.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Authorise the setting up of a Town Deal Board as detailed in this report subject to the following:-
 - 2.1.1 Swindon Borough Council will act as the Accountable body,
 - 2.1.2 The Board Members will agree to abide by the Council's code of Conduct (attached at Appendix One),
 - 2.1.3 The Board Members will agree to be bound by the Council's whistleblowing policies.
 - 2.1.4 The Council will act as the administrator for the Board, with meetings being held in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 and included on the Council's website,

Swindon Town Deal Board

Cabinet

Date: 1st July 2020

- 2.2 Authorise the Head of Strategic Growth and Place, in consultation with the Corporate Director of Finance and Assets and the Leader of the Council, to authorise expenditure of capacity funding of £173,029 by the Swindon Town Deal Board as agreed by the Board.
- 2.3 Authorise the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to agree Heads of Terms with the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) in order to receive project funding for specific projects as identified and by the Town Deal Board and agreed by MHCLG.
- 2.4 Authorise the Corporate Director of Finance and Assets (S.151 Officer) to provide a return to government on the progress of the Town Deal Board as required by guidance.

3. Detail

Background

- 3.1 In 2019, Swindon was one of 101 places given the opportunity by the Government to bid for funding of up to £25 million as part of the Government's £3.6 billion Towns Fund. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government issued the Towns Fund prospectus in November 2019 in order to create Town Funds Boards.
- 3.2 The aim of the Town Funds Board is to help increase economic growth with a focus on regeneration, improved transport and better broadband connectivity, skills and culture. The Towns Fund aims to drive economic regeneration in Swindon to deliver a legacy of long-term economic growth and increased productivity. In achieving those aims, it will fund schemes that deliver urban regeneration, skills and enterprise infrastructure and/or connectivity.
- 3.3 Swindon Borough Council was asked by Government to set up a Town Deal Board with the following purpose and capacity funding of £173,029 was provided to the Council to facilitate this:
 - 3.3.1 To develop and agree an evidence based Town Investment Plan
 - 3.3.2 To develop a clear programme of interventions
 - 3.3.3 To coordinate resources and influence stakeholders
- 3.4 The Government requirements were for a Town Deal Board comprised of Local Authority Members, Local Enterprise Partnership, Members of Parliament, plus a number of other key public, private and community/voluntary sector partners, with a Chair from the private sector.
- 3.5 The Council was asked to convene this Town Deal Board with a view to the Council acting as Accountable Body for future substantive funding, also to

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Philippa Venables, 07824 550469, pvenables@swindon.gov.uk.

Swindon Town Deal Board

Cabinet

Date: 1st July 2020

receive and manage the £173,029 capacity funding immediately available from Government. The Council would also host agendas and minutes on the Committee Services site.

Swindon Town Deal Board

- 3.6 The Town Deal Board has been convened and its membership is on the Council's Committee and Member information web pages. The Board met and made recommendations regarding engaging suppliers to develop a Vision and a Town Investment Plan – it is recommended that Swindon Borough Council uses the capacity funding to fund this accordingly, in alignment with the criteria set out in the Towns Fund Prospectus:
- 3.6.1 Convening Town Deal Board
 - 3.6.2 Running business and wider community engagement events
 - 3.6.3 Developing Town Investment Plans
 - 3.6.4 Providing technical expertise for business cases
- 3.7 The Board wishes to use the Government capacity funding to buy consultancy to develop the Town Investment Plan described below.
- 3.8 The Board is required to develop a Town Investment Plan for submission to Government by 31st July 2020. This plan must comprise, among other elements, a list of recommended projects that will align with and deliver outcomes in accordance with the Vision and Strategic Objectives created by the Board. It will also comprise detail on stakeholder and community engagement. To this end three subgroups have been formed to further the activity:
- 3.8.1 Vision and Strategic Objectives group
 - 3.8.2 Community Engagement group
 - 3.8.3 Project Appraisal group
- 3.9 The Town Investment Plan will be submitted to Government on 31st July 2020 for review and approval. Should the Plan be approved, this will form the basis of a Town Deal and allow the successful project promoters to create business cases which will be submitted to Government and appraised using standard Treasury methodology in order to release funding from a Swindon allocation of up to £25m.
- 3.10 Once the Town Deal is agreed, funding for the first financial year will be released to the Lead Council. The Heads of Terms and any other conditions will be attached as a MOU, to be signed by the Chair of the Town Deal Board, the Chief Executive of the Lead Council and MHCLG Ministers.
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Swindon Town Deal Board

Cabinet

Date: 1st July 2020

- 3.11 The role of the Council as an Accountable body will involve:
- 3.11.1 Monitoring and evaluating the delivery of individual Towns Fund projects
 - 3.11.2 Submitting regular monitoring reports to MHCLG
 - 3.11.3 Receiving and accounting for Towns Fund allocation
- 3.12 MHCLG has stated that the full data requirements referred to in paragraph 3.11 will be released in due course

Governance Arrangements

- 3.13 Government has advised that Town Boards should be convened by the Council. The governance and decision making structures of the Town Deal Board should be made public by the Council and should align with the governance arrangements of their principal local authority, including around whistleblowing, conflicts of interest and complaints. This is to include how stakeholders will be engaged, how decisions are made, how the funding will be utilised, and how it will support the Board to develop the Town Investment Plan. The Board will also be required to adhere to the Nolan Principles and will therefore ask its Members to agree to abide by the Council's Code of Conduct. Therefore, to facilitate good governance, Cabinet is asked to approve
- 3.13.1 The appointment of a senior officer to authorise payments agreed by the Board from money held on its behalf by Swindon Borough Council. Any exercise of such authority shall be in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member, currently the Leader of the Council.
 - 3.13.2 The adoption of the Code of Conduct, its recommendation to the Board and the authorisation to the Chief Legal Officer to apply it.
 - 3.13.3 That the Council provides the platform for making the Board's agendas and Minutes available for public scrutiny
 - 3.13.4 The government's further guidance on Town Funds included a note on Governance principles (appendix 4 to the guidance) and this is included at Appendix Two of this report.
- 3.14 The Government issued guidance in June 2020 entitled "Town Fund: Further guidance" which provided additional information as to how a Town Deal Board agrees a Town Deal. It also provided that the Town Fund would work to address growth constraints and to ensure a recovery from the impact of Covid-19. The guidance also requires that Council provides a 6-monthly update to government on progress, which will be scrutinised and signed off by the Corporate Director of Finance and Assets (s.151 officer).

Swindon Town Deal Board

Cabinet

Date: 1st July 2020

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Council could decide to decline the offer of a Town Deal and the £25m opportunity. However, this could have an adverse effect on delivering the Council's Vision, Priorities, and Pledges.
- 4.2 The Council could decide to fund this activity from other sources; however, the current Government capacity funding has already been allocated.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 Any costs as a result of the recommendations in this report will be reviewed following receipt of additional guidance.
- 5.2 Functions set out as part of accountable body requirements will need to align with existing council grant management processes and performance management of major schemes.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.3 Legal and Human Rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. It is considered that the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel are compatible with convention rights.

Climate Change Impact

- 5.4 Whilst projects agreed under any Town Deal may have a possible climate change impact, this proposal would not bring a change in service delivery. Officers believe that there is no expected effect on the Council's carbon footprint.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.5 None

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.6 No Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has been undertaken as this report does not propose any change in services. The Council's representatives on the Board are invited to make the Board aware of the need to ensure that proposals take into account the needs of the nine statutory protected groups as well as the Council's resolution to include children in care and care leavers as a protected group (Cabinet Minute 54, 4th December 2019 refers).

Risk Management

- 5.7 The Council's standard risk management processes will apply.

Swindon Town Deal Board

Cabinet

Date: 1st July 2020

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Corporate Director of Finance and Assets (s151 officer) and Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix One: Code of Conduct
8.2 Appendix Two: Town Funds prospectus and guidance

9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan

- 9.1 This is not a key decision and is not included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for June 2020.