

**Report of Director of City Development**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 16 December 2020**

**Subject: Morley Town Deal**

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|--|---|
| Are specific electoral wards affected?<br>If yes, name(s) of ward(s): Morley North & Morley South wards                                      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Has consultation been carried out?   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Will the decision be open for call-in?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?<br>If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:<br>Appendix number: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

**Summary**

**1. Main issues**

- In 2019 Morley was selected as one of 100 towns across England to be eligible for investment of up to £25m from the Towns Fund programme. The Towns Fund is a national government funding programme focused on 'levelling up' places across the country through interventions focused across a broad range of areas including connectivity, regeneration, employment and skills, green space and wider improvements.
- Nomination to the national programme had not been subject to an open bidding process, and neither the Council nor other local stakeholders have previously been in a position to consider or put resources behind a comprehensive plan for regeneration of Morley. This however represents a significant and unforeseen opportunity to deliver on Best Council Plan and Inclusive Growth Strategy priorities for the city, in so far as they relate to Morley.
- A Morley Town Deal Board has been established in line with Council governance procedures to provide oversight, input and ownership to the development of a Town Investment Plan, a strategy for the economic growth of Morley which will act as a bidding document for Towns Fund investment.
- The Town Investment Plan document is a bidding document which will seek funding from government of up to £25 million to support the Council and delivery partners in Morley to deliver an exciting and ambitious series of projects in the town, to have a

combined impact on the connectivity, the town centre environment, community health, and the jobs and skills of the local population.

- This is a valuable opportunity to secure investment and deliver regeneration in South Leeds, to leverage wider investment in the city and to enable positive social and economic impacts to be realised.
- Through the Morley Town Deal Board an emerging vision and priority objectives have been developed. These have been informed through consultation and engagement activity to establish key priorities for investment and to seek views on proposed projects in the town. This engagement activity has been supplemented by an in-depth socio-economic analysis, which has explored areas of challenge and opportunity in Morley.
- This Vision sets out an ambition to deliver a vibrant, well-connected town which builds upon its industrial heritage to create a healthy, sustainable and successful place for people of all ages. Through the delivery of a suite of key projects, the Vision seeks to connect Morley to skills and employment opportunities, maximise the positive impact of the town's heritage buildings, create and upgrade the quality of greenspace and uplift the town centre economy.
- A final list of projects for inclusion in the Town Investment Plan will be formed in late December and early January. An intermediate list has been developed, and a process of due diligence is underway to assess the deliverability, impacts and strategic fit of proposed projects in order to refine this list.
- The deadline for submission of the Town Investment Plan is 31 January 2021. The Draft Town Investment Plan will be presented to the Morley Town Deal Board in December 2020 and it will be asked to agree the Plan and recommend it to the Council as lead accountable body for the Towns Fund bid in Morley for submission to government. Due to the very constrained timescales associated with the bidding programme, delays and uncertainty caused by Covid 19 and the Executive Board reporting and meeting cycle it will not be possible to present a final Town Investment Plan to Executive Board prior to submission in January. However, a summary of key issues and the ambition of the Town Investment Plan is detailed in this report, and a final Investment Plan will be published in January 2021.
- On this basis, delegated authority is sought from Executive Board to the Director of City Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development and the Chair of the Morley Town Deal Board, to submit the Morley Town Investment Plan to government.

## **2. Best Council Plan implications** (see the [latest version of the Best Council Plan](#))

- The Town Investment Plan for Morley will provide a major opportunity to bid for £25 million of funding to Leeds City Council to undertake a programme of investment and regeneration in this part of South Leeds.
- The combined impact of projects delivered through the Town Investment Plan will have wide ranging and substantial Best Council Plan positive impacts, including the delivery of inclusive growth benefits.
- This will encompass skills, employment and business growth outputs; positive environmental and climate change impacts; health and wellbeing benefits; supporting the city's COVID-19 recovery and wider impacts. These are detailed at 4.3 below.

### 3. Resource implications

- The Morley Town Investment Plan seeks to secure £25 million of capital funding to support a number of projects and interventions in Morley. Where revenue may be required in addition to Towns Fund capital this will be costed within project plans and a source of revenue funding identified and secured to fund this cost.
- The Town Investment Plan will act as a strategic business case document to bid for funding. In order to finalise a funding ask from government, and to agree funding terms, substantial project development work will be required over the next year. This will be led by the Council, and will require officer time to be committed to enable project development work to be undertaken.
- While this will represent a significant commitment of officer time and capacity, diverting from other areas of planned work, this is an opportunity to secure substantial investment in the regeneration of a key area of South Leeds.
- Project development work will be led by Regeneration officers, with support from officers in Planning, Highways and Transportation, Culture and Sport, Land and Property, Economic Development and wider services.
- Capacity funding has also been provided by government to support the development of the Town Investment Plan bid for Morley. £162,000 of revenue was offered to Leeds City Council to support this work and £93,183 has been committed to bid development work to date. Remaining capacity funding may be utilised to secure further external support and to underwrite officer time on this programme.
- The Council has already been granted £750,000 of capital funding from government for initial projects in advance of the Town Investment Plan submission. Schemes to upgrade town centre public realm and parks in Morley are now being brought forward.
- It should be noted that the wider budget pressures faced by the Council will undoubtedly constrain the opportunities that may be realisable through this fund, both in terms of potential for Council co-investment and for resourcing or revenue support to the bid. As such there will be no Council commitment to additional ongoing revenue of projects unless this can be funded through alternative sources or through sustainable income generation in relation to the developed projects.

### Recommendations

Executive Board is asked to

- a) note the content of this report, agree the emerging vision for a Town Investment Plan in Morley and the priority objectives of this funding programme;
- b) On the basis of recommendation from the Morley Town Deal Board, to delegate authority to the Director of City Development in consultation with the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development and the Chair of the Morley Town Deal Board to approve the submission of the Town Investment Plan to government in January 2021;
- c) Subject to the success of this bid, and on the basis that there will be a brief window for response to government's assessment of the Town Investment Plan, to delegate authority to the Director of City Development in consultation with the Executive

Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development to agree terms of a grant funding settlement;

- d) To delegate authority to the Director of City Development in consultation with the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development to agree partner contributions including in-kind and match funding, or wider arrangements in order to maximise the impact of the Towns Fund bid.
- e) In line with the timescales outlined at 4.5.4, agree that this decision be exempt from call-in, in order to meet the deadline for submission of the Town Investment Plan to government.

## **1. Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The report sets out the work that has been undertaken to develop an ambitious and visionary bid to the government's Towns Fund to support a programme of capital regeneration projects in Morley. These projects have the potential to deliver major inclusive growth benefits for the town and wider district
- 1.2 The report summarises the contents of the Draft Town Investment Plan, a bid document which will be submitted to government in January 2021, which has been informed through substantial public engagement and consultation
- 1.3 The report seeks a delegation from the Executive Board to the Director of City Development and the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development to approve for submission a final version of this Town Investment Plan

## **2. Background information**

- 2.1 In 2019 Morley was selected as one of 100 places across England eligible to bid for Towns Fund money to support the regeneration and 'levelling up' of the country. The process for identifying and selecting eligible places was undertaken by central government, and Morley was the only place in the Leeds district to be confirmed as part of the programme. The Council was not given any prior awareness or involvement in this process. Across West Yorkshire a number of other towns have been selected to bid.
- 2.2 Morley has a population of approximately 31,600 (2019) and accounts for approximately 4% of the Leeds population. Morley is a key local centre and is the location of two key employment hubs - - White Rose Office Park and Shopping Centre, and Capitol Business Park. The town is well connected to the city centre and is the outer edge of an economic corridor running from Leeds South Bank through Holbeck and Beeston and encompassing the White Rose cluster and Morley town centre. This corridor of economic assets and employment centres have a significant role in the economy of South Leeds, and the uplifting of Morley has the potential to generate wider inclusive growth outcomes in this part of the city.
- 2.3 In March 2020 a report was presented to the Council's Executive Board outlining an approach to developing a Town Investment Plan and the boundary of the area to be covered by this. In line with the government's Towns Fund guidance, the report outlined a governance structure that would be established to support the development of the Town Investment Plan, to be overseen by a cross-sector partnership Board; £162,000 of revenue had been made available to the Council to support this work.

- 2.4 Progress on establishing this board was delayed due to the impacts of the initial Covid 19 wave, and a period of uncertainty over timescales and the future of the Towns Fund process.
- 2.5 In June 2020 Towns Fund guidance was published and in August an open recruitment exercise was undertaken by the Council to advertise and appoint to the Morley Town Deal Board. This exercise resulted in the appointment of a Board constituting 15 representatives in line with the governance requirements set out in the Towns Fund Guidance. This sets out that the Board should include representatives from all levels of local and regional government; the private sector; community, voluntary and faith groups; and the local MP's office, with the Chair to come from the private sector. The Morley Town Deal Board has elected Gerald Jennings as Chair. Mr Jennings runs his own property consultancy and investment business and is also a Non-Executive Director at Yorkshire based businesses, Henry Boot Plc, The Ahead Partnership, PDR Construction and Social Group.
- 2.6 As agreed through Member Management Committee and in accordance with the Outside Bodies Procedure Rules the Morley Town Deal Board is a Strategic Partnership. The boundaries of the area of focus substantively sit within Morley North and Morley South wards and a member from each of these has been nominated to the Board by MMC, with a further nomination for the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development.
- 2.7 A series of Board meetings and focused sessions have been held in the period since the formation of the Morley Town Deal Board. Informed by an extensive consultation and engagement exercise and by a socio-economic baselining report, the Board have guided the development of a Town Investment Plan for Morley. The Town Investment Plan will aim to set out an ambitious vision for Morley which will encompass a funding ask of government of up to £25 million as well as joining up with wider planned projects and interventions in the town.
- 2.8 This represents a valuable opportunity to secure investment in Morley, with the potential to generate benefits for wider South Leeds.
- 2.9 As a pre-cursor to the Town Investment Plan, in August government also made available a separate capital grant of £750,000 for accelerated projects to make some initial positive impacts in the town, for delivery and spend this financial year. Following consultation with Ward Members the Council submitted proposals for pedestrianisation and public realm schemes at Queen Street and Morley Bottoms, parks improvements and delivery of new public artworks. Funding has been awarded and injected into the capital programme under delegated approvals. These projects are now at the detailed design stage and are programmed for delivery in the coming months.

### **3. Main issues**

- 3.1 The Town Investment Plan will act as a strategic document, setting out a business case to government for funding and outlining key projects that will be delivered in Morley and the outputs and impacts anticipated as a result of this delivery.
- 3.2 The submission deadline for Town Investment Plans to government is 31 January 2021. The Council, commissioned consultants and the Morley Town Deal Board are working within an extremely tight programme to develop the Town Investment Plan and a draft is not yet available to be viewed. The relationship of the reporting cycle for Executive Board, the constrained programme for development of the plan and the submission deadline means that this December meeting is the only

opportunity to set out the scope and likely content of the Town Investment Plan before submission. As such a delegation is sought to the Director of City Development in consultation with the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development to approve the final bid as may be recommended to them by the Morley Town Deal Board.

- 3.3 It is understood that Town Investment Plans submitted in January 2021 will be assessed by government over the following 2-3 months, and where successful will result in funding offers being extended to lead accountable bodies. There is likely to be a brief window during which this offer may be accepted by the Council, and no control over when such response will be received and on this basis a further delegation is being sought in advance to ensure that the Council can respond rapidly to this opportunity on behalf of the Morley Town Deal Board, to secure any approved funds. Delegation is therefore sought for the Director of City Development in consultation with the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development and on the basis of discussion with the Town Deal Board, including the Town Deal Board Chair, for the Council as accountable body to enter into heads of terms for any funding offer from government.
- 3.4 The Town Investment Plan will include a vision for Morley, a detailed evidence base with the outcomes of public engagement activity, and a series of projects that demonstrate how they address the evidence, needs and ambitions for the town, which will be delivered subject to government investment being secured.
- 3.5 The vision for the Town Investment Plan has been developed through the Town Deal Board, informed by two key areas of work commissioned by the Council through the revenue support made available for the programme and reported through the Morley Town Deal Board - the development of the socio-economic evidence base and public consultation.

### **Social and Economic Evidence**

- 3.6 A socio-economic baselining report has been produced by the Council's commissioned consultants Mott MacDonald, which sets out a comprehensive analysis of the areas of need and opportunity in Morley, forming an evidence base for government investment. It should be noted that this evidence is largely 'pre-Covid' and there are difficulties in reflecting the full impacts of the current public health crisis on the local economy through available quantitative evidence. Appendix 1 presents a summary of this baseline report.
- 3.7 This has established that Morley has a strong employment base of retail, financial and professional services with notable growth particularly in financial services employment. The town has a large working age population and provides a significant jobs market for the wider South Leeds catchment area and the region. This role in the wider economy is strengthened through strong connectivity, particularly in terms of rail.
- 3.8 The Towns Fund boundary for Morley contains both the White Rose Office Park and Shopping Centre, and Capitol Business Park. This is consistent with ward boundaries. These employment hubs create a substantial jobs base in this area of South Leeds as well as skills development and education provision. Improvements to transport infrastructure will make the White Rose more accessible, however there may be additional scope to strengthen the connectivity and local impact of these assets.

- 3.9 Morley has high labour market participation rates with higher levels of employment and economic activity than comparator locations.
- 3.10 While Morley is a relatively affordable location to live, with house prices on average lower than Leeds, there remains a need to provide affordable housing in Morley and across the city. As a town Morley has a number of assets that make it an attractive visitor location, particularly in terms of heritage buildings, including the Grade I listed Town Hall which is underutilised and has potential for investment.
- 3.11 However, while rail connectivity is strong, there remain public transport cold spots and the local job opportunities in Morley may be difficult to access for some wider South Leeds residents as a result.
- 3.12 While the retail employment base is strong, this is a sector facing a number of short term shocks and longer term underlying structural changes. In spite of Morley's strong labour market participation rates, the town has a lower skills base profile than the city as a whole. There are also fewer residents in the most highly skilled jobs.
- 3.13 Morley has a number of pockets of deprivation and there has been a recent steep rise in unemployment due to COVID-19. Unemployment has already risen steeply to more than double the rate pre COVID-19.
- 3.14 Morley's population exhibits poorer health indicators than the city as a whole, in particular relating to obesity, diabetes and cancer. In relation to this, the town also has a higher proportion of its working age population out of work due to long term sickness. In combination these health challenges impact on the ability of people to live full, active and independent lives, and has economic impacts in terms of productivity.
- 3.15 Morley's age profile is also older than the Leeds average, which implies a specific set of needs in terms of the local environment, housing, transportation and amenity provision.
- 3.16 In spite of the local asset base, there are a number of vacant or underused heritage buildings in the town centre as well as a number of vacant sites. This has a visual impact on the townscape as well as representing an under-utilisation of potential economic assets.

### **Public and Stakeholder Consultation**

- 3.17 Consultation and engagement work has been undertaken and is detailed more thoroughly under item 4.1. This engagement included public consultation through the on-line Commonplace platform, which has been promoted through Council communications channels as well as through stakeholder networks and the Town Deal Board. There have been 1,517 contributions to this consultation from 550 respondents and the site received 2,299 visitors.
- 3.18 The first phase of public consultation concluded in early November and highlighted key priorities for the community including; the quality and provision of greenspace, the quality of public realm, town centre retail vacancies, vacant and underutilised heritage buildings, road safety, community space, vocational learning opportunities, improved pedestrian and cycle routes, and train station accessibility and improvements.

### **Emerging Vision and Priority Objectives**

- 3.19 Following consideration of the evidence base and initial consultation and engagement responses a vision and clear objectives for the Town Investment Plan have been developed.
- 3.20 These will be further refined in advance of the finalisation of the Town Investment Plan, but provide a clear statement of ambition for the town and set out areas for potential focus and intervention.
- 3.21 The draft vision sets out an ambition to deliver a vibrant, connected town with an independent spirit, where the buildings of the past will help to pioneer an exciting and modern future, creating a healthy, sustainable and successful place for people of all ages.
- 3.22 From this four thematic areas have been formed. These relate to: skills and employment opportunities and business growth, Morley's historic buildings and townscape, the natural environment and health challenges, and the town's connectivity and public realm.
- 3.23 A series of priority objectives have also been developed, which respond to the challenges and opportunities set out in the economic evidence base. These include:
- a) Improving connections to employment hubs
  - b) Building on and diversifying local employment opportunities
  - c) Addressing skills gaps
  - d) Bringing heritage buildings into modern appropriate use
  - e) Creating economic anchors in the town centre and diversifying the town centre offer
  - f) Creating a network of parks and greenspaces
  - g) Improving the level of tree coverage
  - h) Improving health and wellbeing indicators
  - i) Improving connections between Morley train station and the town centre
  - j) Creating an inclusive, accessible and walkable town with high quality public realm.
- 3.24 The Vision and Priority Objectives are set out in Appendix 2.

### **Emerging Projects**

- 3.25 To deliver this vision and the objectives, an initial project longlist of 180 ideas was formed from the socio-economic analysis, public and stakeholder consultation and Town Deal Board discussions. This was refined through the removal of duplicate projects and overlapping projects, and the removal of projects that are beyond the scope of the Morley Town Deal. An initial packaging of projects has further reduced this to an intermediate list that covers the following broad areas:
- 3.25.1 The uplifting of Morley town centre, including the civic and heritage asset base and the leveraging of these assets for economic and social impact in the town. Projects are being developed focused on the sustainable future use of underused heritage buildings, the use of vacant or underdeveloped land in the town centre, public realm provision, and on supporting the arts, culture, retail and leisure offer in the town through capital intervention. The Town Hall



represents one such heritage asset, which has a prominent role at the heart of the town centre and where there is opportunity to leverage this building to generate economic activity and growth in Morley.

3.25.2 Connectivity improvements including active travel opportunities, the rail station and other public transport provision in the town. Projects are being developed focused on the connectivity of the town to economic centres and employment opportunities, cycle and walking infrastructure and rail station improvements including accessibility and ticketing machine provision.

3.25.3 Green space quality and provision including opportunities for tree planting, community gardens, pocket parks and active recreational infrastructure for the use of the Morley community. In parallel to this projects will seek to address health challenges and align with local health service provision where appropriate

3.25.4 Employment creation and economic resilience including schemes that may generate sustainable jobs and support local skills development, sectoral diversity and innovation. Projects are being developed focused on new innovation hubs, learning provision, employment workspace, and employer-led skills development.

3.26 The intermediate project list is set out in Appendix 2.

3.27 This list sets out those projects currently in scope and under consideration and a final list will come forward in line with these themes and with the Intervention Framework of the Towns Fund. Further stages of project prioritisation will consider further opportunities to package projects and will assess deliverability, value for money, cost, impacts and strategic alignment with the emerging Vision and Priority Objectives of the Town Deal.

3.28 A robust appraisal process will check and challenge projects to ensure the final Town Investment Plan comprises a programme of interventions which will provide maximum benefit to the town, reflecting local needs and desires and secure maximum Towns Fund investment whilst leveraging other investment and wider funding opportunities.

## **4. Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

4.1.1 A major consultation exercise has been undertaken in Morley to inform the development of the Draft Town Investment Plan bid for Towns Fund monies.

4.1.2 Locality (the consultancy arm of the national membership network for community organisations) was procured to support the Council and the Morley Town Deal Board to engage the Morley community in the development of a vision for the town. This work has been progressed both through a public open consultation and through focused stakeholder interviews.

4.1.3 Due to the ongoing social distancing guidance and the public health considerations brought about by COVID-19 it was determined that digital platforms would be utilised for public consultation. Consideration was given to maximising the reach of digital engagement to ensure all members of the community would be reached.

- 4.1.4 The Commonplace platform provided an online engagement tool based upon a map of Morley, which participants can place pins on to identify places of value to them and places which they are concerned about which could be priorities for Towns Fund investment. This was supported by a parallel marketing campaign, which drove traffic towards the site. Respondents were also asked some basic questions to get an early understanding of the perception of the strengths and weaknesses of Morley, and the community's priorities for investment.
- 4.1.5 In order to ensure this opportunity to provide feedback reached the widest and most representative audience in Morley hard copy leaflets were also printed and were displayed at the Town Hall and other town centre locations. These leaflets offered the opportunity for the community to respond in writing by post, as well as utilising the Commonplace platform.
- 4.1.6 There have been 1,517 contributions to this consultation from 550 respondents and the site received 2,299 visitors.
- 4.1.7 The government has also run an online consultation exercise using a website called My Towns. The Morley section of this site has received 27 comments and ideas, which have been included in the wider analysis of public engagement.
- 4.1.8 In parallel 15 stakeholder and resident interviews were undertaken, following a structured interview schedule. These were undertaken via digital platforms and captured in-depth feedback on the vision and priorities for investment in Morley. Resident interviews were undertaken to reach seldom heard from individuals and groups.
- 4.1.9 Wider community input was provided through an exercise undertaken independently by Churwell Primary School which explored the ideas and priorities for Morley primary school children. These ideas and considerations were captured as part of the wider analysis of community feedback and opportunities for further engagement with young people in the town are being explored.
- 4.1.10 In mid-November a second phase of consultation was launched, through which project areas were presented to the community for feedback and input. The information captured through this consultation informed the prioritisation of themes and projects for inclusion in the Town Investment Plan.
- 4.1.11 Detailed consultation will be undertaken at every stage of the process, and particularly during 2021 as projects are designed in detail, subject to the government's response to the submitted Town Investment Plan.

## **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

- 4.2.1 It is recognised that this bid and subsequent investment programme has the potential to create positive equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impacts.
- 4.2.2 In recruiting to the Morley Town Deal Board efforts were made to ensure that opportunities on this group were accessible to all residents and representatives of Morley, and reflected the governance requirements set out by government. Positions on the Board were promoted through social media channels, and through networks including the Council's equalities networks and groups.
- 4.2.3 Board recruitment will be reconsidered by the Morley Town Deal Board following the January submission date for the Town Investment Plan and membership may be supplemented or refreshed at this time with due consideration to the diversity and representativeness of this group.

4.2.4 The Town Investment Plan will comprise a number of proposed projects and interventions in Morley. These will be determined through engagement with the Board and through consultation and engagement as outlined above. An EDCI screening will be undertaken to assess potential impacts from proposed projects and as appropriate, further equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessments may be undertaken on specific projects. These assessments will be reviewed and updated through the process of developing projects during the development of the Town Investment Plan and through the detailed design process

### **4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

- 4.3.1 The Morley Town Deal offers a key opportunity for Leeds City Council to secure up to £25 million of funding to invest in an ambitious regeneration programme in this part of South Leeds with major Best Council Plan implications.
- 4.3.2 The Morley Town Investment Plan will deliver substantially against the Best Council Plan and Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy, with particular benefits at a local level in Morley, and wider impacts across South Leeds, the wider district and region
- 4.3.3 The Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy (LIGS) sets out an ambition to ensure all people and communities can contribute towards and benefit from our economy, tackling inequality and supporting all sections of our society into better jobs. The LIGS also sets out an objective to support people to live healthy and active lives, providing the necessary infrastructure to enable this, and to raise skills levels and increase productivity.
- 4.3.4 These ambitions are aligned to the overall objectives of the Towns Fund, and can be specifically realised through the Town Investment Plan for Morley. This Plan identifies low skills levels, low levels of greenspace provision, connectivity challenges and poor health outcomes as key areas of focus for the town. The Investment Plan seeks to address these challenges through a programme of projects and interventions which will create long term and sustainable change.
- 4.3.5 The Town Investment Plan for Morley will address health challenges through the provision and improvement of infrastructure which will enable the population of the town to live healthier and more active lives. In addition, specific interventions may be targeted at improving local infrastructure for the elderly, including the accessibility of the train station, housing provision and the town centre environment. This will build upon existing local strategies to create a dementia friendly town.
- 4.3.6 Morley also has lower overall skills levels than the wider district. Projects and interventions are being explored which may address this through employer backed programmes and local skills initiatives.
- 4.3.7 A key objective of the Town Investment Plan will also be to improve local economic resilience, supporting recovery from COVID-19. Projects and interventions will focus on supporting the creation of employment opportunities, and improving the accessibility of employment for the local community.

#### Climate Emergency

- 4.3.8 Morley has lower green space provision than many other parts of the city and has among the lowest tree canopy coverage. These deficits have an impact on health and wellbeing and on local air quality and the city's carbon emissions. The Town Investment Plan will explore opportunities to address this challenge through the provision of new and high quality greenspace, tree planting and encouraging modal shift.

- 4.3.9 The Morley Town Investment Plan will directly seek to address the quality and provision of green space and tree coverage in Morley, in addition to exploring opportunities to encourage modal shift and create green infrastructure routes from the town to wider economic centres
- 4.3.10 In addressing these areas of need the Town Investment Plan will have positive impacts on biodiversity and carbon emissions and will uplift the quality of the local environment for residents and visitors to the town.

#### **4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money**

- 4.4.1 The Morley Town Investment Plan seeks to secure up to £25 million of capital funding to support a number of projects and interventions in Morley. Where revenue may be required in addition to Towns Fund capital this will be costed within project plans and a source of revenue funding will be identified and secured to fund this cost.
- 4.4.2 However, it should be noted that the wider budget pressures faced by the Council will undoubtedly constrain the opportunities that may be realisable through this fund, both in terms of potential for Council co-investment and for resourcing or revenue support to the bid. As such there will be no Council commitment to additional ongoing revenue of projects unless this can be funded through alternative sources or through sustainable income generation in relation to the developed projects.
- 4.4.3 The Town Investment Plan will act as a strategic business case document to bid for funding. In order to finalise a funding ask from government, and to agree funding terms, substantial project development work will be required over the next year. This work will be led by Council officers, and this will require resource to be committed to enable project development work to be undertaken.
- 4.4.4 While this will represent a significant commitment of officer time and capacity, this is an opportunity to secure substantial investment in the regeneration of a key area of South Leeds.
- 4.4.5 Project development work will be led by Regeneration officers, with support from officers in Planning, Highways and Transportation, Culture and Sport, Land and Property, Economic Development and wider services.
- 4.4.6 Capacity funding has also been provided by government to support the development of the Town Investment Plan bid for Morley. £162,000 was offered to Leeds City Council to support this work and £93,183 has been committed to bid development work to date. Remaining capacity funding may be utilised to secure further external support and to underwrite officer time on this programme
- 4.4.7 Subject to the success of the bid for Towns Fund investment, Leeds City Council will be the recipient of up to £25 million in capital to spend against projects in Morley
- 4.4.8 Delivery of projects in Morley and the monitoring and evaluation of the Towns Fund programme will require significant officer resource. Where appropriate wider partners and private sector organisations will be drawn upon to support this work.

#### **4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

- 4.5.1 The submission of the Town Investment Plan does not immediately present any legal implications. The subsequent agreement of terms with government may,

through grant agreement, contractually oblige the Council and partners to deliver projects in Morley

- 4.5.2 The Town Investment Plan has been developed transparently and the meeting papers of the Town Deal Board have been published in the public domain through the modern gov platform
- 4.5.3 The Town Investment Plan will also be published and will be a publicly owned strategy for the regeneration of Morley
- 4.5.4 The deadline for submission of the Town Investment Plan to government is 31 January 2021. Call-in of the Executive Board decision recommended in this report would create a high risk that the Town Investment Plan would not be submitted by this deadline, as the call-in and scrutiny process - with potential requirement to report back to Executive Board on its outcomes - would extend the decision making timetable beyond the submission deadline, missing this opportunity to bid for and secure up to £25m in regeneration funds.
- 4.5.5 The decision to submit the plan under the arrangements set out in this report could not have been taken sooner as the constrained timescale for developing the Town Investment Plan has not allowed for any of the vision, outline scope or project detail to be developed and presented to prior meetings of the Executive Board. On this basis it is recommended that this decision be exempt from call-in.

#### **4.6 Risk management**

- 4.6.1 Primary risks through this programme relate to the delivery of projects and the potential revenue implications for the Council as lead accountable body for this Investment Plan. It will be critical to ensure that risks and liabilities to the Council are minimised, particularly where this may have a budget implication for the authority.
- 4.6.2 While these risks cannot currently be assessed due to the present stage of project development, a risk management plan will be produced in parallel to the Town Investment Plan. Revenue implications to the Council will be mitigated and it will be a key objective of project development to ensure interventions are revenue neutral.
- 4.6.3 More broadly it is clear that the development of a Town Investment Plan and subsequent detailed project development will require significant Council resource. This will be supplemented through consultancy support, funded through capacity funding received from government. In addition wider partners will be drawn upon to support project development where appropriate and relevant.

#### **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 The Towns Fund is an exciting opportunity for the Council, working closely with local Stakeholders and the Town Deal Board to secure significant funding for Morley, with the chance to achieve transformational uplift to the economic performance of the town and to benefit the wider community across multiple indicators including skills, health and employment access.
- 5.2 Timescales for the submission of a bid are constrained and it is therefore necessary to seek a delegation from the Council's Executive Board to the Director of City Development and the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development to approve a final Town Investment Plan for submission.

5.3 In spite of limited timescales it is clear that an ambitious and highly impactful bid can be developed which will have the potential to provide both local and regional benefits. This has strong strategic alignment with the Council's Best Council Plan, Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy, Leeds Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Recovery Framework and the declaration of a Climate Emergency.

## **6. Recommendations**

Executive Board is asked to

- a) note the content of this report, agree the emerging vision for a Town Investment Plan in Morley and the priority objectives of this funding programme;
- b) On the basis of recommendation from the Morley Town Deal Board, to delegate authority to the Director of City Development in consultation with the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development and the Chair of the Morley Town Deal Board to approve the submission of the Town Investment Plan to government in January 2021;
- c) Subject to the success of this bid, and on the basis that there will be a brief window for response to government's assessment of the Town Investment Plan, to delegate authority to the Director of City Development in consultation with the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development to agree terms of a grant funding settlement;
- d) To delegate authority to the Director of City Development in consultation with the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development to agree partner contributions including in-kind and match funding, or wider arrangements in order to maximise the impact of the Towns Fund bid
- e) In line with the timescales outlined at 4.5.4, agree that this decision be exempt from call-in, in order to meet the deadline for submission of the Town Investment Plan to government.

## **7. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

7.1 None.

## **8 Appendices**

8.1 Appendix 1: Socio-Economic Baseline Summary Report

8.2 Appendix 2: Morley vision statement and priority objectives

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.