
Meeting of the Cabinet – 6th January 2020

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

Towns Fund – Dudley Driverless Vehicles Consortium – Extension of Agreement

Purpose

1. To advise members of the request submitted by the Dudley Driverless Vehicles Consortium (DDVC), to extend the current agreed period of time to develop proposals for the Dudley Hippodrome site, given the projects close connection with the proposed development of additional Educational establishments as part of the Towns Fund initiative for Dudley.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended:-
 - That Cabinet extend the existing agreement with Dudley Driverless Vehicles Consortium to develop a proposal for a driverless vehicle route and hub on the site of Dudley Hippodrome and adjacent land until September 2020.
 - That Cabinet confirm that this extension will facilitate a comprehensive and co-ordinated submission of Dudley's bid for Towns Fund resources during Summer 2020.

Background

3. During September 2019, Dudley Town Centre was one of 100 centres invited by Government to bid for the £3.6billion Towns Fund. Government wishes to see the establishment of a Town Board to prioritise and drive investment and to seek long term economic and productivity growth through investment in connectivity, land use, skills and enterprise infrastructure.

During December 2018, Cabinet agreed to work with the Dudley Driverless Vehicles Consortium (DDVC), in order to develop proposals for a driverless



vehicles route and hub on the site of the Dudley Hippodrome and adjacent land. The matter was to be reviewed following the expiration of 12 months from the date of approval.

In relation to the Towns Fund bid, it is intended to progress the development of a proposal that will see two further Educational buildings developed adjacent to the soon to be commenced Institute of Transformational Technologies. One of the buildings will focus on the delivery of higher level qualifications in transformational transport technologies. As a consequence, there is a significant 'fit' between proposals for the Driverless Vehicles Hub and the proposal for Town Fund resources.

Towns are expected to develop a well-evidenced Town Investment Plan by Summer 2020, which sets out a clear understanding of the area, focusing on its assets, opportunities and challenges. The amount of investment from the Towns Fund will be determined based on the strength of the Town Investment Plan amongst other relevant factors. The Town Investment Plan should set out investment priorities that could drive economic growth, supported by clear evidence.

The Investment Plan will be assessed on its ability to generate other funding sources and initiatives. It is clear that the DDVC proposal is highly complementary and will serve to make the Town Fund bid stronger.

Since December 2018, no other credible proposals have been submitted to the Council relating to the refurbishment of the former Dudley Hippodrome building. It is considered therefore, that extending the timeline relating to the DDVC proposal will facilitate a much more comprehensive and competitive proposal for Towns Fund resources while identifying a long term and positive use for the site in question. Accordingly, it is recommended that the DDVC proposal be provided with additional time, until September 2020, in order to develop proposals for the site in question, to bring it in line with submission of the Towns Fund Investment Plan.

It is proposed that ongoing work as part of the Innovation in Democracy pilot be utilised to inform effective consultation with our communities as part of the development of the Town Investment Plan. Dudley People's Panel, which is funded through the national Innovation in Democracy Programme, is giving 50 members of the public the opportunity to deliberate on the future of Dudley and Brierley Hill Town Centres. The panel's recommendations will be available in mid-December 2019 and will be able to provide members with insight that can inform the developments to be delivered through the Town Fund.



Finance

4. None as a result of this report

Law

5. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides the Council with power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions

Equality Impact

6. There will be no negative impact on people with protected characteristics as a result of this report. The development of the Town Investment Plan will be undertaken with full regard to the requirement for equality impact assessment

The development of a Town Investment plan will have beneficial impacts on local children and young people who will benefit from investment into economic development and skills training in Dudley. Children and young people will be consulted as part of development of proposals and their involvement sought in the process.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

7. There may be an impact on the Council's ability to service the Town Fund Board and associated Governance arrangements which will be considered during the allocation of capacity funding

Commercial/Procurement

8. There are no negative impacts on the Council's Commercial or Procurement arrangements at this stage. However, the development of Investment Plans and their subsequent implementation may well provide opportunities for local businesses in future.

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

9. The development of Towns Fund proposals will assist to make the local economy more robust while providing higher skills training to local people, increasing the potential to access higher paid work and assisting to make local communities more resilient.

At this stage, there are no detrimental impacts on local communities. This is a matter that will be fully considered as part of the development of investment plans and indeed its implementation.





Alan Lunt

Deputy Chief Executive

Contact Officer: Alan Lunt
Telephone: 01384 814150
Email: alan.lunt@dudley.gov.uk

Appendices

None

List of Background Documents

Report to Cabinet – 6th December 2018 – ‘Dudley Hippodrome – Assessment of Expressions of Interest Received’

