

## BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Report of:** Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen, Leader of the Council

**To:** Cabinet 14<sup>th</sup> October 2019  
Council 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019

**Author:** Robert Campbell, Inward Investment Manager

**Subject:** Breckland Town Delivery Plans

**Purpose:** To approve allocation and spend of up to £392,000 to commission delivery plans for each of Breckland's five market towns

### **Recommendation(s):**

- 1) Cabinet recommends to Full Council to approve allocation and spend of up to £392,000 to allow commissioning of delivery plans for Breckland's five Market Towns.
- 2) Subject to a successful funding application, Cabinet recommends to Full Council to approve acceptance of up to £196,000 from the Norfolk Business Rates Pool (BRP) to support the project and authorises the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to approve the terms of the grant and enter into the grant agreement.

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Breckland's Corporate Plan 2019-2023 has an ambition to ensure that 'our five market towns and their surrounding areas are great places in which to live, work, visit and invest'. Breckland Council has a key role to play in driving and delivering this ambition. However, the council is not the only 'player' with influence to bring in seeking to achieve the aims set out within our corporate plan. Successful delivery requires all of the strategic planning and delivery undertaken by the three tiers of local government and other major delivery partners, across the whole socio-economic scope of work, to be as well coordinated as possible, ensuring that the work accurately reflects the priorities of local residents and businesses
- 1.2 Breckland faces significant economic and societal challenges that are driving up and impacting on current and future demands being faced by the different tiers of local government. Equally, greater co-ordination of partners with influence to bear on market towns within the district brings with it opportunities to deliver better outcomes for residents, communities and business.
- 1.3 Whilst there have been town plans commissioned in the past, these have tended to focus solely on the physical development of town centres. The Breckland Local Plan and the various Neighbourhood Plans across Breckland focus on planning policy and land allocation. Furthermore, whilst the Council has been proactive in terms of housing and employment land allocation and supporting housing and jobs development, local services can be heavily impacted by physical development in the District's market towns and surrounding rural areas.
- 1.4 Part of the challenge is that Breckland Council does not deliver many of the services which impact on people's quality of life. Healthcare, social care, education, community safety and many other services are delivered by other bodies which operate within different

governance, often within national policies and nationally set budgets, which are not easy to flex to deal with local needs.

1.5 Consequently, in order to drive forward the ambition set out within the council's corporate plan, the authority wishes to work in partnership with a range of stakeholders and embark on the process of commissioning a series of 'town delivery plans' – one for each of the market towns in Breckland.

1.6 The development of town delivery plans would represent a significant effort by the council to bring together, in a delivery partnership, all major public sector strategic planning and delivery which impacts on Breckland's residents and businesses. The involvement of other partners in the project will be key, given that Breckland Council does not have complete control over all of the matters that affect market towns and their population.

1.7 The objectives of the project will be:

- To ensure that the developed towns plans are inclusive of all major delivery which impacts on local people's lives, including:-
  - o Affordable Housing
  - o Community Cohesion
  - o Economic Growth
  - o Education and Employment Skills
  - o Environment
  - o Health Services
  - o Leisure and recreation facilities supporting a healthy lifestyle
  - o Local well paid job opportunities
  - o Planning and delivering the infrastructure to support future growth
  - o Public Safety
  - o Quality of the public realm, including in town centres
  - o Social Care
  - o Sustainability of market towns
  - o Transport and highways
- To ensure that local residents, businesses and voluntary organisations have a strong, effective and continuing voice concerning the priorities in their local town plan.
- To ensure that the developed Town Plans are deliverable and well managed through a strong governance model.
- To recognise that Breckland Council needs to work in effective partnership with a number of other key public bodies if the town plans are to be effective.
- To recognise that some priorities will require the three tiers of Local Government and other key public bodies to develop and deliver a number of new projects; and that this is likely to require additional funding to be secured.
- To recognise that some priorities will require the three tiers of Local Government and other key public bodies to improve how delivery and coordination of delivery is undertaken – it cannot be 'business as usual'.

1.8 It is proposed to undertake a first town plan as a pilot project, with a view to reflect on the learning from that project before embarking on the other four plans. This is the approach which has been taken in Cambridgeshire and officers understand that significant learning

has been gained through their pilot project for St Neots, which is being applied to three further town plans for Huntingdon, Ramsey and St Ives.

1.9 The stages of development of each town plan will be based around:

**a. Understanding the current situation**

Building a comprehensive evidence base which details and reviews how each town functions from a socio-economic perspective. Therefore, it is expected that the evidence base will provide a combination of socio-economic profiling together with how the town presently functions in terms of infrastructure, transport, high street retail and services, housing, and local public services, including education and health & social care.

**b. Reviewing and summarising the current published plans**

The Town Delivery Plans should take account of and be consistent with local planning documents including the Breckland Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans (where they are developed) and Government targets including housing, health and crime.

The current Breckland District Council Corporate Plan 2019-23 will provide the current and future strategic role that the Council seeks to have with the community and relevant partner organisations that the Council can work with to achieve the outcomes sought.

**c. Validating (and updating) the current plans through public engagement**

Compare the priorities expressed by local residents and local businesses with the current delivery plans of the Councils and other major public bodies – to ascertain what needs to be changed in terms of policy, strategy and delivery.

**d. Develop costed proposals for new proposals and projects that can add significant value to the matters identified locally through engagement and evidence collation**

It is anticipated that the process of developing an action plan associated with each town will identify a series of potential projects that may support or address matters raised through the collation of evidence and local engagement. The resourcing and delivery of each individual project will then be explored as part of the next stage of the process beyond the creation and publication of the plans. Delivery will be dependent upon the co-ordination of a range of partners, not just the district council in isolation.

**e. Publish the town plan and work with partners to co-ordinate delivery**

Upon completing of the town plans, the ambition is for authority to work alongside key partners to adopt the recommendations contained within each plan, and move forward with a cross-partner approach to delivery. Furthermore, regular maintenance of the delivery plans will include opportunities for the regular review in conjunction with the key partners involved, updating and revalidating of the delivery plans so that they continue to reflect local resident and local business priorities.

**1.10 Governance**

If the principle of coordinating delivery across a partnership of key delivery agencies is to be successful, then robust governance arrangements will need to be negotiated and agreed.

The Council would engage with a number of key agencies at a very early stage in the project to set up a formal delivery partnership board adequately served by support resource. These would include representation, as appropriate, from:-

- Town Councils
- Breckland District Council
- Norfolk County Council
- New Anglia LEP
- Social Housing Associations
- Education Learning Trusts
- Environment Agency
- Health CCGs
- DWP
- Norfolk Constabulary
- Highways England
- DfT
- Rail Franchisees
- Selected private sector delivery organisation
- Local Business groups
- Local Voluntary Organisations

#### 1.11 Use of consultancy services

The Council, in consultation with the major delivery partners, would engage specialist consultants to support work contributing to the delivery plan development process. Support activities are likely to include:-

- Building the socio-economic evidence base;
- Review of current plans;
- Public consultation;
- Delivery plan proposals including support in identifying key projects for further exploration;
- Advice on developing the governance structure.

#### 1.12 Timescales

It is proposed that the pilot town delivery plan would be developed during 2020, with the timescale for the subsequent plans to be agreed once learning from the pilot project has been reviewed. The process of preparing all five plans will likely conclude by 2021-22.

It is emphasised that this is a substantial undertaking by the Council and that is it only the first step in a major effort to better reflect local town priorities in setting delivery priorities, and so the beginning of a long term transformational programme.

## 2.0 OPTIONS

- 2.1 Cabinet recommends to Full Council to approve allocation and spend of up to £392,000 to allow development of delivery plans for Breckland's five market towns, Attleborough, Dereham, Swaffham, Thetford and Watton. Cabinet also recommends to Full Council, that subject to a successful funding application, to approve acceptance of up to £196,000 from the Norfolk Business Rates Pool (BRP) to support the project and authorises the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to approve the terms of the grant and enter into the grant agreement.

2.2 Cabinet recommends to Full Council not to approve the allocation and seek alternative proposals for the strengthening of public sector planning and delivery in Breckland's market towns.

### 3.0 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

3.1 The proposal provides a means of undertaking a comprehensive review of market town delivery priorities underpinned by strong public engagement and an opportunity to build a sustainable delivery governance model.

### 4.0 **EXPECTED BENEFITS**

4.1 The alignment of the major public bodies towards a single strategic delivery plan for each market town provides an opportunity to significantly increase the effectiveness of available delivery funding.

4.2 Strong, well developed, town delivery plans have the potential to act as a basis from which additional central government grant funding can be sought to enable the delivery of key town projects.

4.3 An increase in local democracy by providing residents and local businesses with a more effective voice in setting local town delivery priorities, taking into account the number of public bodies involved in significant local service delivery.

### 5.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

#### 5.1 **Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues**

5.1.1 The project will support the Council's priority of protecting the District's environment.

#### 5.2 **Contracts**

5.2.1 All consultancy will be procured in accordance with Council Standing Orders and Public Procurement Regulations.

#### 5.3 **Corporate Priorities**

5.3.1 The project will support all objectives of the current Breckland Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023, which are summarised as:

- Strive to ensure each of our five market towns and their surrounding areas are great places in which to live, work, visit and invest.
- Work with our partners to deliver an overarching approach to preventing ill-health.
- Support the growth of local businesses in order to help local people into new or higher-paid employment.
- Maximise the effectiveness of the Council's resources to the changing needs of local people and the challenges we face.

#### 5.4 **Crime and Disorder**

5.5.1 It is proposed that a key partner in the preparation of the town plans will be the Norfolk Constabulary, therefore enabling the council's priority of supporting in the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour, to feed into the town plans preparation process.

## 5.5 **Financial**

5.5.1 A Proforma B, which sets out the financial implications of this report and the funding strategy, is contained within the appendices. Please note that should the Norfolk BRP bid be unsuccessful then it is proposed that the entire project will be funded from Council funding.

## 5.6 **Health & Wellbeing**

5.6.1 It is proposed that a key partner in the preparation of the town plans will be the NHS and Adult Social Care, therefore enabling the council's priority of supporting in health and wellbeing in the district, to feed into the town plans preparation process.

## 5.7 **Reputation**

5.7.1 The project strengthens the council's reputation for working in partnership with different organisations to delivery effective services which meet local community needs.

## 5.8 **Risk Management**

5.8.1 The project will include a risk register to ensure that the allocated resource is managed effectively.

## 5.9 **Safeguarding**

5.9.1 The project will support the council priority of 'ensuring that the national policies for protecting children and vulnerable adults are effectively implemented across all areas of our business and that safeguarding is at the forefront of all we do.'

## 5.10 **Staffing**

5.10.1 The proposed budget allocation includes an allowance to fund a project management resource to support with the co-ordination and delivery of the project.

5.10.2 The project will be led by the Chief Executive, with the support of the Leader, in recognition of the importance of this undertaking.

## 5.11 **Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales**

5.11.1 Early consultation with senior representatives of town and county councils and other key public sector delivery organisations will be undertaken to ensure a strong level of buy-in and participation in what is a partnership project. We would expect a steering group to be set up to ensure effective management of the project, towards the setting up of the governance for each market town's delivery plan.

## 6.0 **WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED**

6.1 Although focussed on Breckland's five market towns, the project will impact delivery across the whole of Breckland District.

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Background papers: none.

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**Key Decision:** Yes

**Exempt Decision:** No

**This report refers to a Discretionary Service**

**Appendices attached to this report:**

Appendix 1 – Proforma B