

REPORT TO: Environment & Urban Renewal PPB

DATE: 2nd December 2020

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community & Resources

PORTFOLIO: Physical Environment

SUBJECT: Liverpool City Region Town Centre Fund

WARDS: Halton Lea

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform the PPB on the agreed programme for the £1m Town Centre Fund investment for Halton Lea.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Metro Mayor announced a £1m Town Centre Fund allocation for each of the Liverpool City local authority areas in summer 2018. The purpose of the fund is to stimulate plans for Town Centres that will generate a long term sustainable approach to revitalising the high street. The objectives of the fund are:-

- Place making & place renewal
- Increased Footfall
- Sustainable vitality of town centre
- Job Opportunities

3.2 In Halton, it was agreed this investment would be in the Halton Lea ward. This area provides a town centre with the retail offer at Trident, Shopping City and the wider area. Halton Lea had benefited from being a demonstrator site in the Healthy New Town initiative which had developed a master plan for Halton Lea in 2018. The Town Centre Fund provides the opportunity to deliver on some of the objectives set out in the master plan.

3.3 An action plan for Halton Lea Town Centre Fund was agreed with the Combined Authority in February 2020, initially for delivery by the end of the calendar year however, the programme has been extended to 31st October 2021. The programme has nine projects and generates £601,875 of match funding in addition to the £1m.

3.4 The nine work streams for Halton Lea Town Centre Fund are:-

3.4.1 **Re-location of Halton Hospital Services**

This project delivers an outpatient suite in Shopping City. Halton Hospital will be the client, refurbishing Unit 42 (formerly B&M) and shifting outpatient appointments for a number of clinical areas. There will be community consultation delivered by the Clinical Commissioning Group ahead of services moving. This project will provide access to outpatient services at a venue with free car parking, bus access and a wider offer of access to services and retail. It re-purposes former retail accommodation and provides a sustainable use of space. The Town Centre Fund is providing £350k to the project.

3.4.2 **Third Sector Hub**

This project will enable the Citizen's Advice to re-locate from Halton 5 (former Grosvenor House) to a retail unit. Halton 5 has potential re-development to residential hence, there is low security of tenure for Citizens Advice in its current location. This project will see them relocated into quality accommodation enabling easier access to Citizens Advice services, a high demand service in Halton. Citizen's Advice want to work with partners to facilitate co-delivery in the space generating a hub concept. The Town Centre Fund is providing £100k to enable the delivery of the project which again re-purposes former retail space providing a sustainable use of the space and widening the offer in traditional retail space.

3.4.3 **Roof Top Garden**

This project will convert the top two levels of orange/red car park (the one located by The Range and The Box) to provide a community garden space. Design work has been commissioned and a working group of stakeholders are steering the project with the ambition to open by Easter 2021. The Well Halton initiative has been key to project realising investment of £75k from the National Gardening Scheme. This project is quite a departure from the projects they normally fund which is stately gardens however, they are excited to support this innovative scheme in an urban setting. The roof top garden will incorporate growing areas with community space and involve a range of partners who will be involved in use of the space. Community Shop will utilise the roof top garden to provide outdoor growing space and support their volunteers. It is also hoped to include a schools programme around where food comes from. The project may commence with a modular approach with further elements being added in a staged approach. The Town Centre Fund is providing £45k to support the project.

3.4.4 Culture HQ

This project supports the wider programme of Halton becoming the Borough of Culture from November 2020. Culture HQ will provide a presence in Shopping City by occupying a former retail space to enable the delivery of an arts, heritage and culture community engagement programme. This project supports the re-purposing of retail space to diversify the offer in a traditional retail environment. The Town Centre Fund is investing £90k in the project.

3.4.5 Wayfinding

This project is looking at ease of access to assets in Halton Lea with particular focus on pedestrians. The north side of Shopping City is poorly served with pedestrian access; a scheme of pathways and a safe crossing point is being explored. How people can navigate between the retail space, the hospital estate, Town Park green space and surrounding housing is a key area of focus aiming to improve ease, visibility and connectivity. The longer term ambitions for regeneration in Palacefields and the hospital estate requires a collaborative long term plan that considers future changes and the wayfinding in the area to understand connectivity. This work stream will also seek to facilitate the development of a partnership wayfinding strategy. This project is being supported with £200k of Town Centre Fund investment.

3.4.6 Wellbeing Hub

This project builds on the pop up delivery experience for Children's Centre and Public Health services. In recent years the teams have delivered a range of initiatives and activities from a mental health pop up shop, early signs & symptoms, health checks, children's centre activities etc and what has been apparent is the significant reach achieved to harder to reach residents. This project aims to deliver a range of wellbeing services to support access to services and engagement to test if a more static presence sustains the reach. If it does, should there be longer term service redesign on the location of services to retail spaces which would again re-purpose traditional retail spaces and broaden the offer. The Town Centre Fund is supporting this delivery with a £77k contribution. The timeframe for this work stream has been re-visited given the impacts and pressures from Covid on services. Should the project be undeliverable the funding will be allocated to the wayfinding work stream.

3.4.7 Community Shop

This project will improve access to Community Shop and visibility. Community Shop, Halton's first social supermarket offering food and

household goods for sale at 70% lessRRP opened in December 2019. It is sited in Priory House to the north side of Shopping City and is poorly served by pedestrian access. The project will improve pathways to support access to the site, in particular disabled access, a wrap around the building to increase visibility and signage to the shop. The Town Centre Fund is providing £50k for these works which will connect Community Shop with the wider town centre offer.

3.4.8 The Box Grants

This project aims to stimulate new businesses by providing support to new traders in 'The Box', the Shopping City space similar to markets. Grants are available to cover the hire charge for the space for up to six months and connecting traders into growth hub support to enable business development and sustainability. The projects aims to support a minimum of five new traders with £8k of Town Centre Funds allocated.

3.4.9 Third Sector Grants

These grants offer third sector organisations the opportunity to try delivering their services or activities in traditional retail space. This builds on the experience referred to in 3.4.6 of achieving significant reach when delivering in the retail environment. The grants will fund up to £1k of costs to third sector organisations who wish to trial operating in the retail environment and share their experience. This supports the potential re-purposing of retail space supported, this element has £5k of Town Centre Fund investment.

3.4.5 The remaining £75k of Town Centre Fund is resourcing programme management and communications delivery.

3.5 The Combined Authority is gathering community perceptions on impacts of the Town Centre Fund investment; this commenced with an engagement event in October 2019, a similar event will be held post-delivery of the programme to capture any shifts in perception. Individual projects will also be gathering evaluation and impacts which will be compiled into an overall report at the end of the programme.

3.6 The Halton Lea Town Centre Fund programme compliments the Council's regeneration approach to Town Centre's. Runcorn Old Town is the focus of the Future High Streets fund and Town Deal programmes.

3.7 The Council is considering longer term strategic approaches for Halton Lea and will present an options paper to Members early in 2021.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Healthy New Towns Master Plan

Halton Lea benefitted from being a demonstrator site in the Healthy New Town Commission which provided a master plan for the ward in 2018. The Town Centre fund programme enables some of the objectives set out in the master plan to be realised which facilitates the ability to look at the mid and longer term priorities.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The £1m is allocated by the Combined Authority; the programme has match funds of £601,875 to contribute to the overall programme. The match is not new money rather the amount the projects are also contributing to realise delivery. However, there are intervention rates on this fund hence, Halton must evidence all match funds to enable the full £1m to be claimed.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Part of the Town Centre Fund programme delivery is focussed around access to Children's Centre services. The wider programme delivery is accessible to all cohorts of Halton's Community.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

The Town Centre Fund will generate opportunities for self-employed Traders, support volunteers through its work with the third sector and skills development with the Roof Top Garden project and Community Shop delivery.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The relocation of hospital services into the retail environment will support an ease of access to hospital services assisting residents in attending appointments and managing long term health conditions. A number of other projects in the Town Centre Fund contribute to the holistic approach to supporting a healthy community.

6.4 A Safer Halton

The projects set out in the Halton Lea Town Centre Fund Action Plan aim to improve the offer in the Halton Lea ward and how residents can

navigate between those offers such as health, retail and open space. Improving wayfinding and access to services contributes to a safer environment.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The Town Centre Fund is investing in occupying some vacant retail units to improve the retail environment and create a diversity in offer for visitors. The Wayfinding stream of work aims to connect assets within the footprint and create a safe east/west pedestrian and link around Shopping City complex.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

The £1million Town Centre fund is sourced by the Strategic Investment Fund (SIF) through Liverpool City Region. Halton's projects are providing agreed match funding of £601,875 which must be realised in order to draw down the full million.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972.

None under the meaning of the Act.