

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 11th December 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director Environment and Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety
Housing and Environmental Sustainability

SUBJECT: Pride in Place, Impact Fund

WARD(S) Widnes Wards

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the recently announced Pride in Place Impact Fund (PiPIF) and the considerations around how to deploy this funding within the required timescales.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board

- 1. Acknowledge the £1.5million allocation being made available and note that the Chief Executive has signed the associated memorandum of understanding on behalf of the Council.**
- 2. Approves delegated authority to the Executive Director for Environment and Regeneration (in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Community Safety and Housing and Environmental Sustainability) to progress projects that meet the strategic objectives of the fund, with specific projects to be determined by Executive Board.**
- 3. Note the timeline for submission of key documents to MHCLG (first submission in February 2026) and that the Council will act as Accountable Body for the funding).**
- 4. Approves delegated authority to the Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property (in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services) to arrange for all required documentation to be completed to the satisfaction of the Director, Legal and Democratic Services in relation to any necessary proposed project activities.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 In the 2025 Spending Review, the Government announced funding for up to 350 places as the cornerstone of their support for communities. This included 95 places selected for the PiPIF. The funding will be delivered by local authorities and targeted at areas 'in need' with the aim of building strong, resilient, prosperous, and inclusive communities.
- 3.2 Whilst the Pride in Place Programme will target transformation over the longer term there was a recognition for immediate support to ensure other areas are able to deliver visible improvements to high streets and improve places and spaces of community value. The PiPIF is intended by Government to provide that support and an allocation of £1.5million has been committed to Halton.
- 3.3 Working with local stakeholders, including the local MP, Government has outlined that local authorities are best placed to manage investment that will increase pride in these neighbourhoods, which in turn will draw in private investment, creating economic growth and opportunity.
- 3.4 The funding will be devolved directly to Halton Borough Council and the main driver is that funding is used to achieve visible impacts by March 2027. There are three overarching themes that the funds can be deployed on:
- a. Community spaces: creating, extending, improving or refurbishing existing community facilities and enabling community organisations to take control or ownership of underused but valued local assets.
 - b. Public spaces: enhancing the physical environment in public spaces - examples of initiatives include new or improved green spaces or public squares, improved outdoor play, sports and leisure spaces, installing street furniture, public art or wayfinding.
 - c. High street and town centre revitalisation: making these areas more attractive and welcoming places where people congregate and which encourage economic activity. Examples of initiatives that could be funded are shop frontage improvements, adaptations that bring premises back into use, streetscape improvements, public art, trails and wayfinding, and creating or improving the infrastructure for regular markets.
- 3.5 The guidance outlines that local authorities will act as the accountable body for the PiPIF, working with local stakeholders to identify and invest in themes that meet local need, collaborating to

determine outcomes that will deliver the most benefits to local residents and breathe new life into the areas in which they live.

- 3.6 To maximise the impact of the PiPIF and broaden its reach, local authorities are encouraged to explore opportunities to leverage funding and/or seek match funding for initiatives. Where possible, this may help to unlock additional support and accelerate progress on shared priorities for local pride.
- 3.7 The £1.5million capital funding allocation is intended to be deployed over the 2025-26 and 2026-27 financial years. Funding is broken down equally across the two years, 50% in 2025-26 and 50% in 2026-27 and it has to be fully committed by March 2027.
- 3.8 Initial key roles and responsibilities in the delivery of the programme will include:
- Officer lead – Director EEP
Member leads – Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Sustainability and Portfolio for Community Safety
Monitoring and Compliance – Programmes Office, HBC
Project Development and Delivery – Regeneration Team, HBC, plus partners
- 3.9 On 17th April 2025 Executive Board approved the Widnes Town Centre Regeneration Framework. Delegated authority was given to pursue further investigations into identifying associated project areas and opportunities. Officers have been pursuing this workstream since and are aware of a range of options that align with the PiPIF. Early opportunities could include:
- Strategic acquisitions
 - Environmental enhancements and Enforcement
 - Improvement of spaces in public use
 - Public art
 - Lighting and CCTV upgrades
 - Public realm
- 3.10 PiPIF reporting must be completed online using a MHCLG digital tool. In February 2026, local authorities will be asked to submit:
- a progress summary, including stakeholder and MP engagement.
 - an initial spend forecast for the period September 2025 to March 2026 across the 3 PiPIF objectives.
 - an initial spend forecast for the full periods September 2025 to March 2027 across the 3 PiPIF objectives.

Local authorities will be asked to provide financial reporting in May 2026, October 2026 and June 2027. These reports will collect actual

spend, commitment levels and forecasts under the 3 PiPIF objectives.

- 3.11 As well as financial reporting, local authorities will be asked to provide the following in May 2026, October 2026 and June 2027:
- number of PiPIF metrics achieved under each objective.
 - a progress update including details of engagement undertaken with stakeholders.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The potential investment described in this report will align with the Council's strategic policies contained in the Local Plan, the Mersey Gateway Plus Regeneration Strategy and the Local Transport Plan.
- 4.2 The Framework aligns with existing local and national policy objectives, supporting economic growth, sustainability, and community well-being. Its implementation may require updates to planning policies, investment strategies, and partnership agreements to ensure effective delivery.
- 4.3 Consideration will also need to be given to how the Framework interacts with emerging policies, including those related to housing, transport and environmental sustainability.
- 4.4 Ensuring alignment with the Local Plan and broader strategic priorities will be essential to securing funding and stakeholder support.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Local authorities will be paid their 2025-2026 PiPIF allocation following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with MHCLG.
- 5.2 The allocation is to be spent over 2025-26 and 2026-27. Funding is broken down equally across the two financial years, 50% in 2025-26 and 50% in 2026-27.
- 5.3 The PiPIF allocation is 100% capital funding. Funding must be fully committed by March 2027.
- 5.4 The 2026-2027 allocation will be paid in the period April - June 2026, subject to submission of a satisfactory February 2026 return.
- 5.5 Any uncommitted funding as of 31 March 2027 or funding that is committed by that date and then subsequently unspent must be repaid to MHCLG.

- 5.6 There is no match funding requirement; however, opportunities for drawing in additional funding should be considered to add value.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES:

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Possible positive implications depending on which opportunities are implemented and under what themes in due course.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

Potential for job creation and inward investment depending on which opportunities are implemented and under what themes in due course.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Possible positive implications depending on which opportunities are implemented and under what themes in due course.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

Possible positive implications depending on which opportunities are implemented and under what themes in due course.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

Any spending will be aligned to relevant environmental policies and building regulation standards.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

Projects could help to create a range of enhancements in the built environment for local people to enjoy depending on which opportunities are implemented and under what themes in due course.

7.0 Risk Analysis

- 7.1 With any funding and regeneration programme there are risks associated with uncertainty arising from various aspects of the process, such as securing further funding, material availability and fluctuating prices, severe weather, securing regulatory consents, environmental factors and from unexpected issues when work starts (such as contamination, uncharted utilities) and delays in recruitment etc.

These risks are impossible to eradicate and are dealt with through a robust risk register which is regularly reviewed in conjunction with clear mitigation plans. If any of these key risks arise in project delivery, the consequence usually translates into increased costs and extended programmes for completion of the works.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 The PiPIF intends to be positively impactful for local people, and equality and diversity implications will be considered in the development of individual project plans, and it is likely that Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken at the appropriate times.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The development of a Delivery Plan will look to ensure that proposals make a positive contribution towards the Council's commitment to achieving "Net Zero" emissions, supporting the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

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

Executive Board 17th April 2025 – Ref 119 – "*Widnes Town Centre Regeneration Framework*"