

**Subject: Towns and High Street Innovation Programme****Report of: Principal Housing and Infrastructure Manager****Portfolio: Housing, Land and Development**

Report Summary

The Towns and High Streets Innovation Programme has a focus on achieving lasting transformational change by supporting the development of long-term investment proposals and testing new approaches to high street re-purposing at scale within focused areas. It will provide investment for one Town and/or High Street area per Local Authority area – Wallsend, Ashington & the inner east area of Newcastle.

The overall objectives of the programme are increasing footfall, supporting new uses for buildings, helping local businesses to grow and create jobs, and encouraging follow-on investment from the private sector and Government.

The focus of the approach is on:

- i. Leadership and partnership - developing a compelling shared vision for the future, with strong strategic leadership to make the vision a reality.
- ii. Investing in a model for change - developing and testing new models for sustainable high street transformation, learning from evidence of what is working in other areas, while capitalising on the distinctive strengths and opportunities of each individual high street.
- iii. Stimulating long-term investment - transformational change in high streets requires very substantial investment, with the private and public sectors working closely in tandem to provide the resources needed to deliver the future vision in each target high street.

The type of interventions the programme will support include:

- Development of a long-term vision and strategic plans for re-purposing and investment for the three high streets / town centres.
- Business case development for specific projects (e.g. permanent repurposing of buildings and unused spaces; creating green / public spaces; connectivity between high streets and local communities).
- Testing new approaches to high street re-purposing and business adaptation, delivered at scale in target areas alongside a small number of pilots providing a short-term boost to high street vibrancy (e.g. pop-up activities, events) may also be supported.
- Business advice and support - Focused on business adaptation, innovation, sustainability and growth in response to pandemic recovery and wider changes (e.g. high street decline, changing consumer trends).
- Infrastructure improvements - Capital investment in buildings to enable empty buildings to be brought back into use.

The purpose of this report is to request the approval of £1.9 million for both the Towns & High streets delivery plans for Ashington and the Inner East of Newcastle and £1.94 million for Wallsend. £260k will be retained by NTCA for evaluation, programme management and publicity.

Recommendations

The Chief Executive Officer is recommended to

- a. approve £1.9 million for the Ashington Towns & High Streets Delivery Plan
- b. approve £1.9 million for the Inner East Towns & High Streets Deliver Plan

c. approve £1.94 million for the Wallsend Towns & High Streets Delivery Plan

1. Background Information, Proposals and Timetable for Implementation

Proposal Name	Inner East Delivery Plan	Wallsend Delivery Plan	Ashington Delivery Plan
Lead Organisation	Newcastle Council	North Tyneside Council	Northumberland Council
Timescales	March 2022 – June 2024	March 2022 – June 2024	March 2022 - 2024
Grant / Loan amount requested	£1.9m	£1.94m	£1.9m
NTCA Budget Implications:	This forms part of NTCA's Investment Fund	This forms part of NTCA's Investment Fund	This forms part of NTCA's Investment Fund

1.1 The NTCA's flagship Towns and High Streets programme is based upon three pillars, which have been identified nationally as central to long-term place-transformation:

- Leadership and partnership: developing a compelling shared vision for the future, with strong strategic leadership to make the vision a reality.
- Investing in a model for change: developing and testing new models for high street transformation, learning from evidence of what is working in other areas, while capitalising on the distinctive strengths and opportunities of each individual high street.
- Stimulating long-term investment: transformational change in high streets requires very substantial investment, with the private and public sectors working closely in tandem to provide the resources needed to deliver the future vision in each target high street.

1.2 The business case for this project was approved by Cabinet in March, and this report provides an update on the development of detailed local delivery arrangements. These delivery plans – for Ashington, the Inner East of Newcastle and Wallsend have been submitted, externally appraised and approved by Technical Officers Group..

Ashington

1.3 The revitalisation of Ashington Town Centre will support a number of wider economic growth objectives for the town, including maximising opportunities resulting from the Northumberland Line, the relocation of Northumberland College, the creation of mixed used opportunities at Portland Park and wider aspirations for improvements to Ashington as part of a Levelling Up bid.

1.4 The project has been developed with the support of the Ashington Town Board, which has been operational for over a year and undertaken extensive consultation and calls for projects as part of the wider regeneration of Ashington. This development work has enabled a detailed delivery plan to be developed which identifies three priority interventions for the High Streets and Towns Innovation Programme. These include improvements to Wansbeck square to improve connectivity and to enable the square to be used for community-led cultural uses, targeted business support and a programme of events and festivals.

Newcastle Inner East

1.5 This project in the Inner East of Newcastle will focus on the following areas - Chillingham Road, Shields Road, Heaton Road (low traffic Neighbourhood), Heaton Park Road (low traffic Neighbourhood) and Welbeck Road (West section to Roman Avenue)

- 1.6 The plans for the Inner East of Newcastle are at an earlier stage and the initial focus of activities will be developing an Investment Plan, which will be informed by community engagement and co-design, alongside establishing a Transformation Board to oversee the development and delivery of the plan. Initial proposals for the Inner East Towns and High Streets programme include 1:1 business support alongside a Green Streets pilot which will provide support for businesses to reduce their carbon footprint, connectivity improvements and bringing back into use empty properties to create a shared space for community and business uses.

Wallsend

- 1.7 The town is best known for being a manufacturing powerhouse, at the centre of industrial growth on the River Tyne throughout the 19th Century and had a worldwide reputation for ship building; it currently plays an important role in the ambition to grow the Offshore Energy Sector. Segedunum is part of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site, with the attraction opening over 20 years ago and having the potential to be a thriving visitor attraction and unique destination.
- 1.8 Drawing from the Wallsend Masterplan, which involved consultation and co-design with the community and businesses, the High Streets and Town's Programme will:
- create a new active travel route incorporating artwork and installations between the town centre and Segedunum
 - support to businesses with a dedicated town centre business advisor
 - Include a shop front improvement grant scheme with specific design standards to enhance the look of the High Street
 - develop and support a programme of events and festivals
 - create a higher profile for Segedunum by establishing a retail/exhibition offer within the town centre.
- 1.9. As part of the programme, we are keen to share the learning from across the three areas and will be commissioning baseline analysis, alongside an evaluation to inform future investment in our High Streets and Towns.

2. Potential Impact on Objectives

- 2.1 This project relates to supporting economic activities which are set out in the Corporate Plan, as the funding is enabling us to meet our stated ambitions to revitalise towns and high streets in the North of Tyne.

3. Key Risks

- 3.1 The risks associated with this application have been mitigated through funding conditions. Each applicant has provided a cost plan and a Subsidy Control assessment for their Towns & High Street's delivery plan.

4. Financial and Other Resources Implications

- 4.1 The resources for the Towns and High Streets Programme are identified from NTCA's Investment Fund. It has been agreed that year 1 funding will be provided in advance for the programme with year 2 funding released subject to each Local Authority providing an audit statement and a progress report provided to Technical Officer's Group. UKSPF has a High Streets & Towns theme which may be used to support these proposals.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The comments of the Monitoring Officer are included in the report.

6. Equalities Implications

6.1 NTCA is committed to driving equality and diversity in housing. The measures contained within this paper will help the NTCA meet its duties under the Equality Act 2010, particularly around advancing equality of opportunity for those with protected characteristics, particularly with regard to socio-economic background.

7. Inclusive Economy Implications

7.1 The project sets out a range of interventions that will grow the economy of the North of Tyne in an inclusive manner providing opportunities for community growth as well as supporting the wider inclusive economy work of the combined authority by providing thriving High Streets & Towns and encouraging businesses on these to sign up to the Good Work Pledge.

8. Climate Change Implications

8.1 The proposals have a number of measures to support our climate change objectives including improving active travel routes and promoting these to residents and supporting businesses to reduce their carbon footprint.

9. Consultation and Engagement

9.1 The scheme was consulted on as part of the development of the programme and constituent delivery plans.

10. Appendices

10.1 None

11. Background Papers

11.1 NTCA Cabinet Paper 22 March 2022 & 19 July 2022.

12. Contact Officers

Vicky Cuthbertson, Principal Housing and Infrastructure Manager, Vicky.Cuthbertson@northoftyne-ca.gov.uk

11. Sign-off

1) Mayor and Portfolio holder Yes	2) Director/SMT Yes	3) Chief Finance Officer: Yes	4) Monitoring Officer: Yes	5) Head of Paid Service: Yes
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