Date: 18 MARCH 2019

Subject: TOWN CENTRE CHALLENGE: FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND PROSPECTUS

Report of: THE MAYOR

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides:
- An overview of the Future High Streets Fund prospectus
- Outlines the proposed submissions by the individual Greater Manchester Authorities and
- Seeks LEP support for the Expressions of Interest to be submitted by 22 March 2019

RECOMMENDATION

The LEP is requested to:
1. Note the report
2. Support the proposed bids outlined in Section 6 and Appendix 1
3. Request an update on the outcome of the bids to a future meeting.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Mayor’s Town Centre Challenge is being undertaken in the context of increasing concern about the future of town centres across the whole of the UK. The landscape of our town centres is changing rapidly, and 2018 has seen some major developments in both the pace and scale of these changes.

1.2 These challenges have been acknowledged by government and in July 2018 the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government asked Sir John Timpson to make recommendations about how to support local areas to respond. He made two main recommendations to the Chancellor and the Secretary of State: to set up a High Streets Taskforce to support local leadership and to establish a new fund to support the renewal and reshaping of high streets and town centres.

1.3 Government agreed with the recommendations and announced in the Budget 2018 that a new £675 million Future High Streets Fund would be set up to help local areas to respond to and adapt to these changes. The Fund would serve two purposes: to support local areas to prepare long-term strategies for their high streets and town centres, including funding a new High Streets Taskforce to provide expertise and hands-on support to local areas, and to co-fund projects with local areas.


1.5 Further guidance on the assessment criteria was published on 7 February. This clarified the number of bids each local authority can submit, based on the size of the local authority population. Manchester City Council can submit up to 4 bids, all other Greater Manchester authorities, up to 2.

2.0 FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND

2.1 The objective of the Fund is to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability.

2.2 In the first phase of the programme local authorities are required to define the specific challenges faced by their high streets, to set out their overarching strategic ambition for what the high street or town centre should become and what needs to be done to make this possible.

2.3 Identified need for investment is expected to fall under the following themes:
• Investment in physical infrastructure
• Acquisition and assembly of land including to support new housing, workspaces and public realm
• Improvements to transport access, traffic flow and circulation in the area
• Supporting change of use including (where appropriate) housing delivery and densification
• Supporting adaptation of the high street in response to changing technology

2.4 Funding will not be provided for surface-level projects that only make a difference to the appearance, rather than the use, of the area or those that would not have a long-term impact.

3.0 PROCESS

3.1 There will be two rounds of the Fund, both with a two-phase application process

• Phase 1 of application process: this is an Expression of Interest stage where Government will assess places on the need for funding, nature of the challenge and the vision for the future of the town centre. This phase will act as a light-touch process in order to reduce the burden on places and minimise wasted resource. As the first phase concerns identifying places to work with, Government will not have regard to specific schemes included in submitted proposals when assessing bids.

• Phase 2 of application process: for those who pass to Phase 2, there will be an amount of revenue funding available to work up project proposals. Funding decisions will be based on project plans and business cases. It is expected that the full business case development phase to take 6 to 12 months, with some places taking less time and receiving decisions on capital funding at an earlier stage. At the end of each places’ business case development phase it is expected that they will submit specific project plans and associated business cases which will be assessed against departmental and HM Treasury Green Book appraisal methodologies. Decisions will then be made on which places will receive capital funding and any further revenue funding as well as the level of this funding.

3.2 In the first round of the Fund, Government aims to co-fund projects and places that have already started to formulate a vision for the future of their town centres. Projects which are ‘shovel ready’ may be fast-tracked for funding. Government will make an announcement on the second round of the Fund in due course but it will not be before 2020.

3.3 There is no guarantee of further investment funding to shortlisted places if the proposals put forward at the end of Phase 2 are not
sufficiently developed or fail to demonstrate adequate value for money or deliverability.

3.4 An element of co-funding, either on a project basis or to deliver a local area’s wider strategy for the high street is expected. This co-funding could either be public (e.g. from local areas’ own budgets) or private finance (e.g. co-financing housing infrastructure).

3.5 The Fund will contribute up to a maximum of £25 million to each successful place. However, it is anticipated that there will be a range of project sizes coming forward, many of which are in the region of £5-10 million per town centre.

3.6 The timetable for Round 1 bids is;
   - 26 December 2018: Phase 1 opens and Expressions of Interest invited
   - 22 March 2019: deadline for Expressions of Interest
   - Summer 2019: announcement on places moving to Phase 2
   - Late 2019: first round of final business cases to be submitted
   - Spring 2020: all remaining final business cases to be submitted

4.0 ELIGIBILITY

4.1 It is recognised that local authorities are best placed to bid for the funding. Bids are therefore invited from unitary authorities, metropolitan districts, London boroughs and, where there is a two-tier system, from district councils, in England.

4.2 Bids covering town centre areas that are not facing ‘significant challenges’ will not be accepted. There is no definition of ‘significant challenges’. Bids are expected to cover high streets or town centres as defined as areas that exhibit high levels of social and economic activity. Small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance and proposals that cover entire city regions, rather than a single high street or town centre, will not be eligible for funding.

5. LOCAL SUPPORT

5.1 Projects are more likely to be successful if they tie into a broader economic market, linking to the delivery of emerging Local Industrial Strategies and any wider strategic vision for the area at various levels.

5.2 Expressions of Interest should therefore come forward with proof of engagement with, and support from, a number of stakeholders including the following (where applicable):
   - Mayoral and non-Mayoral Combined Authorities
   - Local Enterprise Partnerships
   - Other tiers of local government in the area
   - Business Improvement Districts
6. GREATER MANCHESTER BIDS

6.1 The importance of developing a strategic approach to the regeneration and re-purposing of our town centres is a high priority for the GMCA, as evidenced by the Mayor’s Town Centre Challenge, launched in November 2017.

6.2 The Town Centre Challenge provides a significant opportunity to secure the regeneration across Greater Manchester’s town centres and progress strategic development projects across GM by utilising the GM Mayor’s statutory powers to facilitate and drive regeneration, along with his convening powers, and resources with agreement of and conjunction with each of the Local authorities in Greater Manchester.

6.3 9 town centres (Farnworth, Prestwich, Royton, Rochdale, Swinton, Stockport, Stalybridge, Stretford and Leigh) have been nominated across Greater Manchester. Manchester City Council has not submitted nomination to Town Centre Challenge as it is seeking to deliver improvements across all of its centres.

6.4 Although each town centre is unique, with its own combination of challenges and opportunities, the Town Centre Challenge has identified some common themes that will need to be addressed across most town centres as work continues. These include;
   i) Viability and investment to deliver new schemes
   ii) Bringing key partners to the table
   iii) Need for specialist expertise or capacity
   iv) Public sector land and services to catalyse change
   v) Potential to use Mayoral powers
   vi) Marketing and promotion,
   vii) Influencing national agencies

6.5 Work is progressing in all of the TCC centres, however the Future High Street Fund is only one of the mechanisms that districts are using to drive positive change. It is the responsibility of each local authority to decide which of their centres should be the subject of bids to the Future High Streets Fund and whilst the majority of the proposed bids relate to TCC centres, Royton and Leigh are not being put forward in Round 1. Work is ongoing in these centres to develop the strategic frameworks to underpin bids for future investment.

6.6 Greater Manchester supports improvements in all of its town centres and welcomes the opportunity that the Future High Street Fund offers to progress strategic thinking by providing revenue support and potential capital investment.
6.7 For this reason Greater Manchester Combined Authority supports the bids put forward by the 10 districts to the Future High Street Fund unreservedly and, with TfGM, will provide whatever support it is able to ensure that the bids are successful.

6.8 Appendix 1 sets out the proposed Greater Manchester bids.

7. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 Recommendations are found at the beginning of the report.
### Appendix 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Town Centre</th>
<th>Proposal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolton</td>
<td>Farnworth</td>
<td>To progress the Farnworth Town Centre Masterplan to implementation. The purpose being to maximise the potential of Farnworth as the second largest centre in Bolton by promoting it as an attractive place to live, benefitting from excellent town centre services and convenient access across the city region by road and rail.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bury</td>
<td>Prestwich</td>
<td>The proposal is for the renewal of the core town centre offer including the 1960/70s shopping centre through transformational place-making and new uses to reinvigorate Prestwich into a vibrant destination promoting economic growth, introducing town centre living and capitalising on the public transport offer. The Council is seeking revenue co-funding to support the development of the masterplan to planning application and ‘shovel ready’ and capital co-funding investment to mitigate the viability gap identified by the work to date.</td>
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<td>Manchester</td>
<td>Withington</td>
<td>The bid will be to build on work undertaken to date and work with the local community to revitalise Withington Village as a hub for services and community activity through a series of physical interventions,</td>
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</table>
| Oldham   | Oldham      | The proposal will focus on 3 themes;  
• To increase employment and generate economic growth/regeneration  
• To address significant access constraints which are preventing wider development coming forward on sites which otherwise offer major opportunities for residential and commercial development.  
• To address poor and fragmented pedestrian movement in and around Oldham Town Centre |
| Rochdale | Rochdale    | To diversify the uses within the town centre, including the evening and leisure economy through the re-use and repurposing of vacant retail space.  
To improve infrastructure and address |
significant access constraints to and across the town centre to make the centre more accessible to surrounding communities.

To increase the resident population by unlocking major residential development sites within and around the town centre.

It is likely that a further centre in Rochdale will also be nominated in Round 1.

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<td><strong>Salford</strong></td>
<td><strong>Swinton</strong></td>
<td>Progression of the Swinton masterplan project to full business case to support project delivery. The project provides for the re-purpose and revitalisation of Swinton town centre and will provide much needed new homes, civic centre, leisure centre, shops, highway and public realm improvements.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stockport</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stockport</strong></td>
<td>The focus will be on Stockport town centre, in particular the Merseyway Shopping Centre.</td>
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<td><strong>Tameside</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stalybridge</strong></td>
<td>The proposal is to accelerate the delivery of the Residential led regeneration of Stalybridge Town Centre first outlined in the Gm Mayor’s Town Centre Challenge. Tameside Council believes that the presence of several residential development sites, coupled with the potential of the civic hall as a food and drink venue, means that, with the help of the Future High Street Fund, the introduction of more people living in the town, supporting and supported by an improved leisure, food and drink offer will mean Stalybridge will take its place alongside Saddleworth and Hebden Bridge as a thriving Pennine Town.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hyde</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hyde is Tameside’s second Market Town, however the centre has several key challenges. The proposal will enable the acceleration of the repositioning and modernisation of the Indoor and Outdoor Market’s, the consolidation of the retail offering into the core of the town, the refreshing of the office offering and the expansion of the leisure offering by extending the pool facilities. These improvements will help to close the viability gap for the delivery of more town centre residential property, and will future proof the centre ready to serve the new residential developments being</td>
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delivered on its outskirts.

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<tr>
<th>Trafford</th>
<th>Stretford</th>
<th>Stretford will be the focus of the bid.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wigan</td>
<td>Wigan</td>
<td>The foundation for the Wigan town centre bid is the Wigan Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) which establishes a single integrated plan for the town centre and identifies a series of interventions to deliver transformational change and regenerate the town centre.</td>
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