

Urgent Decision Taken on Behalf of Cabinet

Report to the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Report submitted by: The Executive Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:
Mid Rossendale; Pendle Rural;

Public Realm Improvement Grant

Contact for further information:
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Executive Summary

This report requests that the county council provide grant funding towards public realm improvement schemes, as requested separately by Pendle Borough Council and Rossendale Borough Council. The grants will facilitate important public realm improvement works and improve accessibility to the Town Centre areas. Both schemes will also enhance further investment opportunities and provide a catalyst for economic growth and regeneration.

Reason for Urgency

This decision is urgent and cannot await the next meeting of Cabinet on the 3rd of December 2020. The reason for this is that the funding is required urgently due to a shortfall in budgets for both schemes, which require investment with immediate effect in order for these schemes to progress. This decision is therefore being taken on behalf of Cabinet by the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport.

Recommendation

The Leader of the County Council and the Deputy Leader of the County Council and Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport are asked to approve the following grant allocations, both being subject to appropriate Grant Funding Agreements being drawn up and in place:

1. Grant of up to £150,000 to Rossendale Borough Council
2. Grant of up to £200,000 to Pendle Borough Council

This decision should be implemented immediately for the purposes of Standing Order C29 as any delay could adversely affect the execution of the county council's responsibilities for the reasons set out above.

Background and Advice

The county council has been approached separately by Pendle Borough Council and Rossendale Borough Council and requested to provide financial assistance to facilitate the delivery of two important town centre public realm improvement schemes.

The urgent public realm works will be in addition to the current capital investment programmes in both of the town centres, which are aiming to stimulate footfall, spend and vastly improve the aesthetics of place whilst providing a safe, secure and accessible environment.

It is also envisaged that the additional and new investment to potentially be funded by the county council, subject to approvals, will assist in post COVID-19 economic recovery programmes focussing upon kick-starting further growth, jobs and investment. This funding will also be important in supporting town centre regeneration, access to services, and longer-term investment and redevelopment activity. A readily, fully accessible town centre environment will help to deliver such recovery programmes.

The county council's financial contribution will unlock, facilitate and ensure the delivery of the two projects in a timely manner thereby assisting both town centres with their ambition to improve accessibility, also making them more attractive for residents, businesses and visitors.

The outline details of each scheme proposal is summarised below:

1. Barnoldswick Town Centre

The scheme will include the renewal of flagged public realm paving, widening of pedestrian access and improved drainage systems. Further access improvements will include the installation of studs at the new smooth crossing points being created across the set paving for blind and partially sighted people improving safety and accessibility. These works will provide improved pedestrian access (particularly for vulnerable road users), remove trip hazards and obstructions, enhance the streetscape using high quality durable materials, provide sustainable construction utilising locally sourced materials (from Whitworth Quarry, Rossendale) and locally based contractors/suppliers, whilst developing the heritage aesthetic of the town centre.

The county council has been requested to provide grant assistance to allow the existing works on site to be completed. Barnoldswick Town Council and Pendle Borough Council have raised £201,000. The county council's commitment will be up to circa £200,000 as match funding to the project.

Works are ongoing, having been tendered by Pendle Borough Council to a private contractor, and which are projected to complete in December 2020. Pendle Borough Council is currently monitoring works and has confirmed that the existing programme provides good value for money and is a high quality investment.

2. Rawtenstall Town Centre

The scheme will involve a contribution towards the completion of the Rawtenstall town square which sits adjacent to a multi-million pound scheme to refurbish the Old Town Hall and create the new Bus Station; the latter undertaken in partnership with the county council and the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership as part of Spinning Point Phase 1. The scheme will help to revitalise the town square, creating an outside meeting point, which is particularly important during Covid, whilst also supporting the visitor economy. It will transform a neglected piece of landscape into a unique town square at the heart of Rawtenstall town, to offer a variety of amenity spaces from hard landscape areas for events and soft landscape spaces, stimulating further investment.

The scheme to enhance the square will complement the adjacent Spinning Point investment and the county council's grant of up to £150,000 will be matched against Rossendale Borough Council's funding of £150,000.

A Concept Design is in place and project delivery is expected to be between November 2020 and March 2021. The construction contract will shortly be issued to tender, with final preparations being made to the design and bill of quantities.

Each scheme grant allocation will be facilitated and governed by a Grant Funding Agreement between the borough council's and the county council, which will include appropriate measures to protect the county council's investment.

The county council's is supporting the schemes proposed, to assist in the economic recovery linked to COVID, economic impact and in respect of footfall increase and improved accessibility linked to improved public realm. Both schemes also provide a high level of match funding and as such, the investment provides value for money invested.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

Financial

There are no unallocated grants available for these allocations so they may need to be funded by additional borrowing – the cost of which will be £26,250 per year over 20 years.

Due diligence work to establish the gap funding requirement of each will form part of the grant funding agreement to be drawn up.

There is also potential for these schemes to fit within the criteria for the county council's Lancashire Economic Recovery Grant programme, for which bids are currently being considered. Should the projects be approved within this programme, the need for borrowing could potentially be removed.

Legal

The county council will draft and enter into grant funding agreements with the relevant borough councils in order to ensure that the monies and the county council's interests are adequately protected.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
None		
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
N/A		

Urgent Decision Taken on behalf of Cabinet: Declarations

Leader of the County Council

Public Realm Improvement Grant

Original recommendation, as set out in the report, approved without amendment. Yes/No *

Original recommendation amended and decision as follows: Yes/No *

I have a pecuniary/non-pecuniary interest in this matter. Yes/No *

If an interest is declared please give details below:

.....
Leader of the County Council

23 November 2020

Chief Officer

I certify that this is an appropriate and accurate record within the terms of Standing Order C30(2) and (3) of the decision taken by the Cabinet Member.

.....
Senior Democratic Services Officer

23 November 2020

*Delete as appropriate

This decision is to be taken by more than one Cabinet Member and all relevant Cabinet Members must be in agreement with the decision

Urgent Decision Taken on behalf of Cabinet: Declarations

Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Public Realm Improvement Grant

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