

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 20 November 2023

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Hastings Towns Fund - Grant Funding Agreement with Hastings Borough Council

Purpose: To approve East Sussex County Council, as the scheme delivery partner, entering into a grant funding agreement with Hastings Borough Council in relation to the Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections project.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Approve East Sussex County Council, as the scheme delivery partner, entering into a grant funding agreement with Hastings Borough Council in relation to the £9,754,458 of Town Fund allocated for the delivery of the Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections project: and**
 - (2) Delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Assistant Chief Executive, to negotiate and agree the terms of the grant funding agreement between Hastings Borough Council and East Sussex County Council.**
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1 Background Information

1.1. The town of Hastings was awarded £24.4m from the Government's Towns Fund programme in November 2019. The aim of the funding programme is to drive the economic regeneration of Hastings to deliver long term economic and productivity growth through investment in urban regeneration, infrastructure, and connectivity.

1.2. Hastings was one of 101 towns eligible to bid for up to £25 million from the Towns Fund, with Hastings Borough Council (HBC) designated as the lead organisation for managing the development of the Town Deal, including the Town Investment Plan (TIP). The programme, which was built around seven project themes, offers Hastings an incredible and exciting opportunity to drive forward sustainable growth and prosperity, ensuring that Hastings will continually thrive as a healthy, vibrant, and innovative seaside town that attracts people to visit, live, and work in.

1.3. The Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections project will build on the character of Hastings as an energetic and creative coastal community to support resurgence of its centre as a thriving, well-connected and healthy place. This will be achieved through the delivery of high quality, relevant and catalytic public realm initiatives, bringing nature into the town and promoting active travel.

1.4. The County Council supported HBC in the development of a business case for £3.38m of Towns Fund for the first phase of the Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections. This was approved by the Towns Deal Board in September 2022. In early 2023 the Towns Deal Board identified further funding available to the project. The County Council supported the development of a secondary business case for an additional £6.91m to include a wider project boundary. This business case was approved in May 2023, and after HBC spend, there is a total of £9,754,458 secured, in addition to £400k match funding from the Local Growth Fund.

2 Supporting Information

Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections project

2.1. The scheme focusses on the Havelock Road and Harold Place corridor supporting the ease of movement from the rail station as a key gateway into the town, through the heart of the town centre and across the A259, which runs parallel to the seafront promenade, to the beach beyond. This will be achieved by removing vehicular carriageway and reallocating road space for pedestrian and cycle infrastructure as well as improvements to the junctions to encourage safe and permeable movement at either end of the corridor.

2.2. A central, adaptable public space will be created at the confluence of Havelock Road, Queens Road, Harold Place and Robertson Street, known as 'Albert Circus' or 'The Haven', to provide a focal point which can accommodate a range of events, activities and festivals across the year. The town centre's public realm will be improved along the Havelock Road/Harold Place corridor, as well as in Wellington Place towards the Albert Road underpass.

2.3. This will be complemented with increased tree planting and the introduction of biodiverse ecologies that brings together urban, and coastal landscapes that reflect Hastings' character.

2.4. The proposals have been developed to date to RIBA2 stage (Royal Institute of British Architects concept design stage) to reflect the need for improvements in the town centre identified through previous consultation exercises with stakeholders, taking account of the views and ideas that came forward through the development of the Hastings Town Deal on the town centre, active travel and increasing biodiversity, and also more recent engagement with key stakeholders on the challenges and opportunities in the town centre.

2.5. Elements of this scheme include, but are not limited to, the enhanced pedestrian footways, Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS) planting, segregated two-way cycle lane which is compliant with the Government's Local Transport Note 1/20 on cycle design, one-way bus lane with new bus stops, alongside the potential re-routing of a one-way bus route along Queens Road.

Grant Funding Agreement

2.6. Following their successful Towns Fund bid, Hastings Borough Council has entered into a grant funding agreement with the Government to receive their £24.4m Towns Deal allocation.

2.7. The County Council, acting as a delivery partner for the Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections element of Hastings' Towns Deal package, will be required to enter into a grant funding agreement with Hastings Borough Council to enable the £9,754,458 of Towns Fund funding allocation to be defrayed to enable delivery by the end of the Towns Fund funding period on 31 March 2026.

2.8. The County Council has completed the concept design stage for the Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections project and has procured transport consultants, ARUP to begin the preliminary designs and public consultation and engagement elements of the programme; a Key Decision was taken by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport on 22 September 2023 to carry out a direct procurement award. Current cost estimates indicate that the Towns Fund allocation will fund the design and delivery of the scheme, however exact details of costs will be achieved through detailed design development and in discussions with Hastings Borough Council.

2.9. East Sussex County Council has reviewed the draft grant funding agreement from Hastings Borough Council. To address financial risks, additional clauses have been proposed to ensure both parties (Hastings Borough Council and East Sussex County Council) agree that if the intended scope of the project may result in overspend, methods of amending and de-scoping the project, to ensure an overspend is not incurred and the integrity and core outcomes of the project are maintained, will be agreed.

Programme Delivery

2.10 The current delivery programme for the project will see preliminary design, engagement, public consultation, and the development of the detailed design continue throughout 2023/24, with planning applications to be submitted Spring 2024. Detailed design and construction to be procured through the East Sussex County Council Highways Contract is programmed to commence in April 2024 with construction due to complete by March 2026.

3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1. In 2019 Hastings Borough Council successfully secured £24.4m from the Government's Towns Fund programme towards driving the economic regeneration of Hastings to deliver long term economic and productivity growth, through investment in urban regeneration, infrastructure, and connectivity. The Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections project builds on the character of Hastings and will deliver a high-quality public realm improvement that will support revival of its centre whilst also bringing nature into the town and promoting active travel.

3.2. The County Council, acting as the scheme delivery body, will be required to enter into a grant funding agreement with Hastings Borough Council to defray the funding allocation to the County Council, progress the consultation, detailed design and construction by the end of the Towns Fund period on 31 March 2026. A grant funding agreement will also reiterate precisely what the body is being asked to do and provide reasons for proposed course of action.

3.3. The Lead Member is therefore recommended to approve East Sussex County Council entering into a grant funding agreement with Hastings Borough Council in relation to the £9,754,458 of Towns Fund allocated to the Borough Council for the delivery of the Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections project; and delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy, and Transport, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Assistant Chief Executive to negotiate and agree the terms and conditions of the grant agreement.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Godfrey Daniel (Hastings - Braybrooke and Castle)

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

[Hastings Town Investment Plan](#)

[Town Centre Public Realm & Green Connections — Hastings Town Deal](#)