

Report To:	SCRUTINY PANEL B	Date:	7 NOVEMBER 2019
Heading:	SCRUTINY REVIEW: TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION		
Portfolio Holder:	NOT APPLICABLE		
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	NO		
Subject to Call-In:	NO		

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Scrutiny Panel B Members with an introduction to the Scrutiny Review: Town Centre Regeneration. The topic was added to the Scrutiny Workplan 2019/20 in July 2019, and was further endorsed at the Council's State of Ashfield Debate in October as a beneficial topic for scrutiny to review.

This report sets out some of the funding opportunities available to Ashfield, the partners the Council works with regarding economic growth, and regeneration ambitions for Ashfield.

Recommendation(s)

Scrutiny Panel B Members are recommended to:

- Note the information contained in this report
- Discuss and approve review terms of reference
- Consider information needed to progress the review

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

Town Centre Regeneration was added as a topic for review to the Scrutiny Workplan 2019/20 at the July meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The topic was further endorsed at the October 2019 State of Ashfield Debate.

Alternative Options Considered

No alternative options have been considered at this stage of the review.

Detailed Information

Scrutiny Review: Town Centre Regeneration

Town Centre Regeneration was added as a topic for review to the Scrutiny Workplan 2019/20 by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July, 2019. With upcoming funding opportunities for Ashfield and a renewed focus on economic growth and town centre regeneration, Committee Members felt the timing was ideal to conduct an effective review.

In conducting the Scrutiny Review: Town Centre Regeneration, Committee Members indicated the following should be considered:

- Funding opportunities available to Ashfield
- The process of applying for funding and preparing business cases
- How funding could be used in Ashfield
- How the Council works with key partners regarding economic growth and town centre regeneration

The Scrutiny Review: Town Centre Regeneration was further endorsed at the Council's State of Ashfield Debate in October 2019 as an opportunity for Scrutiny Members to be engaged in the Council's town centre regeneration priorities.

Funding Opportunities for Ashfield

Towns Fund

On 6 September, 2019, Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick MP announced 100 places had been invited to develop proposals for a new generation of multi-million-pound Town Deals. The towns eligible for support from the multi-billion Towns Fund include places that have not always benefitted from economic growth in the same way as more prosperous areas.

The Towns Fund has been established to improve connectivity, provide vital social and cultural infrastructure, and boost economic growth – with communities having input into how the money is spent.

Examples of initiatives that may be supported through the Towns Fund include:

- Regenerating town centres
- Improvement to travel and public transport
- Digital infrastructure
- Further education facilities and adult learning
- Cultural and social infrastructure, such as parks, libraries, art centres, and youth services

30 places within the Midlands Engine are among the announced 100 places, with both Kirkby-in-Ashfield and Sutton-in-Ashfield named as being supported to develop Town Deals, with up to £25 million available for each town.

The Council is awaiting the publication of a prospectus from the Government providing guidance on the process and eligibility for funding.

Future High Streets Fund

The Future High Streets Fund has been set up to support the renewal and reshaping of high streets and town centres. The Fund will serve two purposes: to support local areas to prepare long-term strategies for their high streets and town centres, and to provide expertise and hands-on support to local areas. The Fund will support local area projects including:

- Physical infrastructure investment, including improving public and other transport access, improving flow and circulation within a town, congestion relieving infrastructure, investment in further infrastructure needed to support new housing and development, and the regeneration of heritage high streets
- Investment in land assembly, including to support the densification of residential and workspace around high streets in place of under-used retail units

In December 2018, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government released a prospectus providing further information on the Future High Streets Fund.¹

The Future High Streets Fund forms a central part of the Government plan for high streets, which also includes the formation of a High Streets Task Force, strengthening community assets, consulting on planning reform, and cutting business rates for retail properties.

The prospectus sets out how the Future High Streets Fund will operate as a two-round fund with two stages to the application process. Phase one called for local authorities to submit expressions of interest by March 2019, setting out their challenges and strategic approach to regenerating town centres. Following phase one, expressions were assessed against criteria outlined in the prospectus, moving on to phase two and the development of comprehensive business cases.

In August 2019, it was announced by the Government that an additional 50 towns would benefit from the Future High Streets Fund, with Sutton-in-Ashfield named and included in phase two of the process.

During phase two, shortlisted places will receive some funding from Government to support the development of high street strategies and business cases for proposed projects.

Ashfield District Council will submit an early business case draft in March 2020, with a finalised business case to be submitted in June 2020. Successful bids will be announced by Autumn 2020. The Future High Streets Fund is a competitive process with only limited funding available.

Partnership Working

With various funding opportunities available to Ashfield, partnership working will be of vital importance as the Council proceeds with funding applications, business cases, and project plans.

Midlands Engine

The Midlands Engine is a coalition of Councils, Combined Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Universities, and businesses across the region, actively working with Central Government to build a collective identity to best represent the Midlands as a competitive and compelling place.

¹ Future High Streets Fund: Call for Proposals, *Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government*, December 2018.

As a coalition, the Midlands Engine has identified five priority areas of focus:

- Connecting the Midlands through maximising new technologies to deliver a radical transformation of the Midlands transport network
- Tackling the mismatch between business skills needs and the skill level of Midlands residents
- Growing International Trade and Investment in existing and new markets
- Increasing Innovation and Enterprise, creating an environment where our science and innovation strengths can be maximised
- Shaping Great Places by promoting the Midlands as a great place to live, visit, learn, and work

East Midlands Councils

Ashfield District Council is one of the 46 local authorities in the East Midlands that make up the membership of East Midlands Councils.

East Midlands Councils represents the interests of local councils to Government and national organisations. East Midlands Councils supports local councils with advice and services and works to enable local councils to work together on key issues of common concern.

As set out in their terms of reference, East Midlands Councils has the following role and purpose:

- A consultative forum for local government in the East Midlands
- Represents the interest of local councils to National Government and other organisations
- Enables local councils to work together on key issues of common concern
- Supports the improvement and development of local councils and their workforce
- Brings together political group leaders
- Makes appointments to national and regional bodies
- Provides a reporting and governance mechanism for regional local government partnerships
- Establishes and maintains an effective relationship with the national Local Government Association

As a member authority of East Midlands Councils, Ashfield District Council receive various benefits and opportunities.

- Leadership on behalf of councils in the East Midlands, working closely with National Government, business, health, and the third sector
- An employers' organisation for local authorities in the East Midlands
- A forum to influence Government strategies and investment plans
- Governance of the East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership

Local Enterprise Partnerships and D2N2

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) is a locally-owned partnership between local authorities and businesses. A LEP can play a central role in deciding local economic priorities and undertaking activities to drive economic growth. There are currently 38 LEPs operating within England.

D2N2 was established in 2010 and is one of the largest LEPs in England, covering an area with a population of more than two million people. D2N2 has a vision of a more prosperous, better connected, and increasingly resilient and competitive economy. The purpose of D2N2 is to support and encourage economic growth within the region.

Vision 2030 is a strategic economic plan developed by D2N2 as a blueprint for growth, increasing productivity, raising earnings, narrowing inequality, and sharing prosperity across the region. *Vision 2030* is a comprehensive strategy for the D2N2 region, built on D2N2's extensive evidence base and consultation work.²

D2N2 previously helped finance the £1.8million refurbishment of Sutton Indoor Market with a £375,000 contribution, as well as the redevelopment of Ada Lovelace House with a £147,000 contribution.

Next Steps

To progress the review, Scrutiny Panel B Members should give consideration to further information required and potential timescales for the review process. Members should also consider discussing and approving terms of reference for the review outlining the following:

- Review rationale
- Key objectives of the review
- Indicators of success
- Review methodology
- Information and evidence required

² Vision 2030, D2N2, 2019.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

The Scrutiny Review: Town Centre Regeneration aligns with various key priorities outlined within Ashfield District Council's Corporate Plan 2019-2023, particularly aligning with the Economic Growth and Place priority.

Economic Growth and Place

- Re-invigorating and re-purposing town centres
- Making use of external funding to improve town centres
- Facilitating physical regeneration projects
- Facilitating economic growth around transport hubs

The review also coincides with other Corporate Plan Priorities of; Health and Happiness, Cleaner and Greener, and Innovate and Improve.

Legal:

There are no legal implications resulting from this report. Any legal implications resulting from the Scrutiny Review: Town Centre Regeneration will be addressed as part of the review process.

Finance:

There are no financial implications resulting from this report. Any financial implications resulting from the Scrutiny Review: Town Centre Regeneration will be addressed as part of the review process.

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	None.
General Fund – Capital Programme	None.
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	None.
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	None.

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
None at this stage of the review.	None at this stage of the review.

Human Resources:

There are no HR implications resulting from this report. Any HR implications resulting from the Scrutiny Review: Town Centre Regeneration will be addressed as part of the review process.

Equalities:

There are no equalities implications resulting from this report. Any equalities implications resulting from the Scrutiny Review: Town Centre Regeneration will be addressed as part of the review process.

Other Implications:

None.

Reason(s) for Urgency

None.

Reason(s) for Exemption

None.

Background Papers

- Future High Streets Fund: Call for Proposals, *Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government*, December 2018.
- Vision 2030, *D2N2*, 2019.

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