

Report to: Hastings Town Deal Board

Date of Meeting: 17 September 2020

Report Title: Emerging project ideas and EOI report

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Regeneration Manager

Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update on the Accelerated fund proposals
2. To provide an overview of EOIs received up to date with emerging projects

Recommendation(s)

1. To note and for discussion the range of EOIs and projects in development
2. To note the update on the accelerated funds progress and feedback from government, along with projected timelines

Reasons for Recommendations

1. Submission to MHCLG for accelerated fund proposals took place on the 14th August. Further clarity on timescales has been received.
2. EOIs have been open since June 2020 and this report attempts to categorise them and link them with the towns fund intervention framework, our emerging theory of change and existing policies, initiatives or major programmes of work.

Accelerated fund update

3. Overview of the Accelerated fund process is in Appendix A.
4. Out of 24 applications 4 projects were recommended for approval by the EDG as the strongest in terms of:
 - Strategic fit
 - Alignment with intervention framework
 - Deliverability
 - Value for money
5. This package was endorsed by 14 members of the board, with no objections, prior to submission. Delegated authority was also given to the co-chairs and the EDG to agree further details and negotiate any deviation from original submission. It is noted that several board members were conflicted.
6. All but two of the original 24 applications were from Board members.
7. Section 151 officer also endorsed the projects, and these were submitted to the government on 14th August 2020 with decision expected by end of September 2020.
8. The 4 projects are as follows:

White Rock Baths (part of The Source Park)

Re-develop the remainder of the site that has been derelict for decades. The funding will be used refurbish and re-open the units around the outdoor courtyard, transforming them into unique market-style retail and food outlets.

Employment, Events and advice hub at East Sussex Colleges Group Station Plaza building

This will repurpose part of the ground floor to offer a; one-stop shop employability/job seeking centre where job centre plus, employers, careers advisors and employability organisations can all provide help to those needing a job or skilling in a new job, a conferencing/training facility and a tourism training hub for students.

Increasing the number of electric vehicle (EV) charging points

Installation of additional fast electric vehicle charging points in seafront and town centre car parks. This will allow opportunities for visitors with electric vehicles to travel more confidently to our town as well as contribute to ambitions in the Council's Climate Emergency Strategy.

New retail, training and outdoor space at 'Hastings Commons' located in the Lower Alley behind Claremont

This project will continue the ongoing improvements to the alley area and add to the ever growing independent and quirky America Ground, Rock House and Observer building quarter.

Project ideas received from the EIO process - overview: (as at 1 September 2020)

9. The Expression of interest form went live on the HBC website in late June and due to be closed.
10. It was publicised via the council's social media and was also picked up via a press release with Hastings Observer.
11. In the appendix we have given the project description overview from all the EOIs we have received to date and from other sources as listed below:
 - Facebook comments
 - comments on the Hastings Observer website
 - comments on the My Town government website
 - original comments when the programme was launched
 - all accelerated fund applications (even those which were not assessed due to ineligibility)
 - all officer and direct emails related to project ideas we have received
 - all 'live' or previous bid ideas generated by HBC from the past 4 years

EOI:

12. 56 EOIs have been received as at 1 September. Of these a number are at project concept stage, some are from organised/recognised groups and some are from residents.
13. In addition to EOIs we are also including pipeline applicable projects which have recently been considered for other funding opportunities (however we can only include these projects where we have the details -partnership work is ongoing here to build this pipeline):
 - a. All accelerated fund applications (24)
 - b. Get Britain building Hastings applications (where we have the details) 4
 - c. Recent past bids which included capital programmes such as:
 - i. Past funding bids such as:
 1. Coastal Communities bids
 2. ACE/HE bids
 3. Homes England bids
 4. CHART CLLD capital bids

5. Local Growth Funds
6. Growing Places fund applications
7. Active transport ideas/bids
8. Programmes and recent feasibility studies into significant regeneration programmes such as – DESTI-Smart (Electric tram/transport) and Bohemia (culture/Leisure and Housing)

- ii. We are also considering sites within our local plan which are identified for development – such as town centre sites.

14. This equates to approx. 100 project ideas.

15. Given the programme timelines for the TIP submission the call for EOIs closes on the 25th September. The closure of the call will be publicised widely.

16. The EOI form is a deliberately surface level document designed to enable anyone, whether they just have an idea they want to share or a more worked up proposal. We will use this initial information to then conduct a project prioritisation and assessment process, more detail of which can be found in Agenda item 5.

17. The majority of EOI's received fall within the Local transport and urban, regeneration and land use categories within the Intervention Framework structure in the government's 'Further Guidance document'. Approximately a fifth of EOI's sit under enterprise/skills infrastructure and arts, culture and heritage.

18. There is a real mix of EOI's submitted in terms of the size, scope and type of project. Although there are a number of key themes coming through including green travel (cycling improvements, electric bus/park and ride, walking, seafront tram), green landscaping of public realm, green transport (double up as visitor attractions) and visitor attractions/placemaking.

Officer to Contact

Hannah Brookshaw

Regeneration Manager

Appendix A – Accelerated fund process

A summary of the accelerated funds process undertaken in Hastings

Introduction

1. The accelerated fund announcement was made on the 1st July 2020.

2. Strong focus was given that the fund would only support the following:
 - Capital only projects
 - Projects which would complete by the 31st March 2021
 - Projects which were NOT phases of larger schemes (i.e. they could stand alone)
 - Projects were encouraged which resulted in:
 - i. Improvements to or new parks, green spaces and sustainable transport links
 - ii. Improvements to town centres including repurposing empty commercial properties
 - iii. Demolition or site remediation where this will have an immediate benefit
3. Given Hastings town deal board has not agreed on any shovel ready programmes for the main scheme a limited call was made for project ideas.
 - This involved writing to all HBC councilors and HBC staff asking them to send the message through to their networks. Emails were also sent to the Town Deal Board asking them for project ideas and suggestions. Other organisations were also asked to spread the word:
 - i. Business Improvement District conducted a survey to identify potential projects
 - ii. Heritage Action Zone board meeting was advised and asked for projects
 - iii. Chamber of Commerce publicised a call for projects
 - iv. Coastal Users Group and Grants Advisory Panel (advisory bodies of the Foreshore Trust) were also asked for projects
 - v. Officers also reviewed all EOIs which have been submitted via our website for the larger towns fund to identify
 - vi. Dedicated approaches were made by board members and council officers:
4. The deadline for expression of interests was 12noon on July 22nd 2020.
5. The projects need to be submitted in a letter to government on the 14th August 2020.
6. We have been advised that with regard to governance this will be incorporated into our submission of our Town Investment Plan, were we will need to articulate how the projects funded by these monies support our vision and response to recovery in Hastings.

Assessment of applications

7. The Town Deal Board has not been constructed to consider a grants programme, but rather work on a strategy which incorporates an agreed range of projects which align with our theory of change. As such no formal grant assessment or mechanism is enshrined within it's terms or reference or governance. As such the process for assessment was outlined in an email to the board on the 6th July.

8. Once it was clear that a number of applications involved HBC and due to conflict of interest within the council officers (as there are a number of HBC projects) Philip Johnson, Director of Locate East Sussex was asked to independently assess all the projects, along with HBC Town Deal project team senior officers.
9. The assessment team met via Microsoft Teams 22nd July and an initial assessment was undertaken. The assessment looked at the following questions:
 - Was the project a phase within a larger programme?
 - Did it include revenue?
 - Could it be delivered in time?
 - Was it located in the correct area?
 - Was the initiative impactful enough to show some immediate change or was the project better to be built up for the town investment plan?
10. As the submission to government also needs Section 151 Officer approval a meeting was had with the Chief Finance Officer, the Managing Director and the leader of the council on the 23rd July, to agree the recommendation of any projects which may involve council assets prior to this paper being written, and to ensure delivery is not held up by the council processes.
11. A total 28 applications were submitted. Two were not submitted in the correct format and one was submitted after the deadline so 24 projects were assessed, with a total ask of £4,211,500. Over 4 times the amount of funding available.
12. Fifteen of those projects submitted were not eligible within the accelerated call. This was due to six main factors:
 - The project was clearly a phase of a larger scheme and would be difficult to identify as a stand-alone project
 - The project would not be delivered within the timescale
 - The project included revenue costs
 - The project did not add any additionality to the programme (i.e. part of owners repairs and renewals responsibility)
 - Insufficient detail identified to assess fully
 - The project needed considerable further development and fit with a wider town strategy and investment plan.
13. In assessing the applications, the assessment team attempted to ensure they were assessed in terms of the organisations' ability to deliver their proposals, how closely the proposed activities match the priorities of the accelerated fund and the wider town fund ambitions and value for money.
14. Following a full assessment process, the assessment team, HBC senior leadership agreed, along with support from the EDG, agreed to recommend and submit the 4 strongest projects listed in the main report.