Report to: **Hastings Town Deal Board**

Date of Meeting: **17 September 2020**

Report Title: **Project assessment and prioritisation process**

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Background

1. The board agreed to try to focus towns fund investment on a small number of big ambitious projects. It is recognised that these projects need to be innovative but have a sustainable business model.

2. To date we have received 100s of ideas, via EOIs, accelerated funds, Facebook and social media comments, emails and partnership discussions. It would be unmanageable to assess all these as a whole board.

3. There is also a significant risk of conflict of interest within the board and lead authority on approx. 75% of the EOIs and formal applications.

4. The levels of detail which have been submitted vary significantly between organised groups with well developed projects to ideas and concepts submitted from individuals and residents. We do need to remember that we have time to develop and deliver project beyond the next 2 years, and these less worked up ideas need to be considered on a level playing field.

5. We will be learning from the 1st cohort of towns and there are significant resources related to this, which is available to all town board members on the towns hub website: https://townsfund.org.uk/

6. Of particular relevance are a couple of blog posted on project prioritisation during August, appendix 1 or via the following links: Project-prioritisation-from-long-list-to-short-list

   Project Prioritisation 101

7. Our suggested process, is based on the above good practice

8. Since June officers have been developing a range of tools to asses projects, and these, together with documents and tools developed and made available via the towns hub (and which can be found on the above website) will be utilised to aid assessment of the projects.

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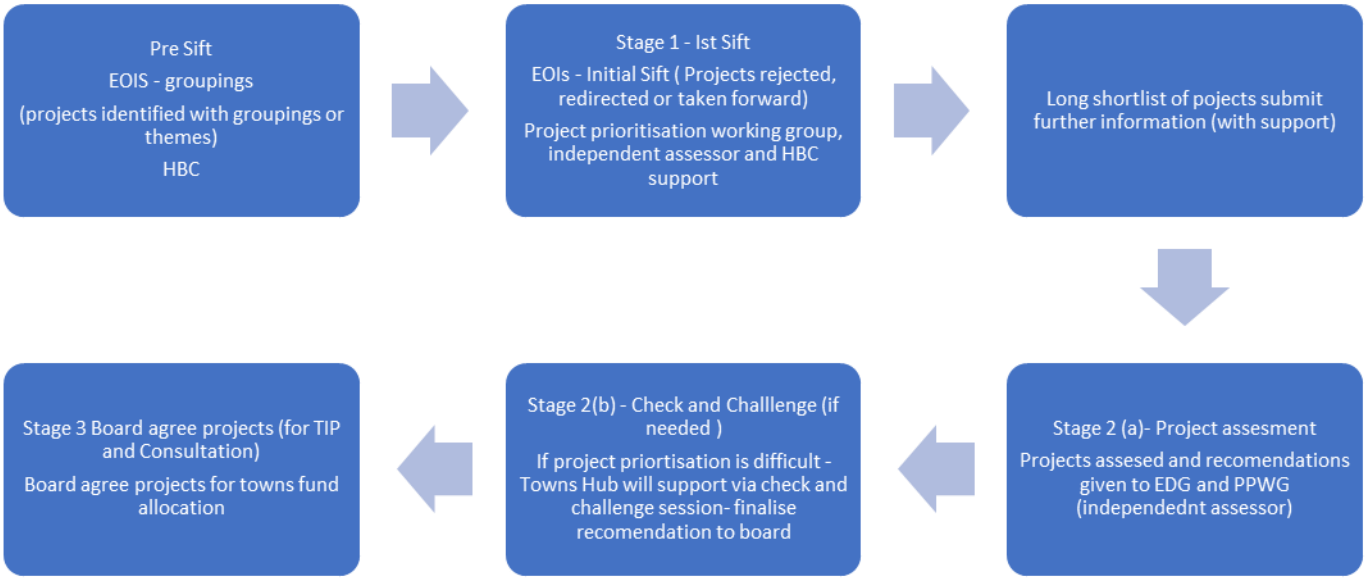
9. However, the key element to assessment and especially prioritisation is developing our theory of change, and identifying which specific issues or challenges we, as a board, agree to focus this investment on.

10. Aiding and informing this process is the workshop we will be undertaking today, and the various evidence and pieces of work which have been undertaken recently related to:

    a. Local Plan
    b. Coastal Prospectus
    c. Hastings and Rother Task Force Review
    d. East Sussex Economy Recovery plan
    e. And the feedback from the SWOT sessions we have and are undertaking
    f. Survey and consultation around the local plan.

Project Assessment and prioritisation process overview:



Step	Narrative
Pre Sift	Undertaken by HBC officers with ESCC officer support Group by theme, agreed challenges and spatial area. Identification of projects which may be revenue funding Identification of projects which could be 'quick wins', or 'shovel ready' or already in development which can be delivered by existing programmes or funded by other more suitable schemes No rejections at this stage
Stage 1 – Sift Part 1	Undertaken by PPWG and Independent assessor Part 1 HBC officers recommend the following to the working group: 1) rejected and reasons for 2) projects already being delivered 3) projects which are quick wins and can be achieved through partnership or existing

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	programmes 4) projects more suited to alternative funding streams or programmes
Part 2	Independent Assessor and PPWG agree the following: - Rejections due to non-fit with Appendix A, challenges and location, revenue - Projects identified which could be funded via other funding streams - Projects identified for more information needed - Project lead organisations identified/follow up actions identified. Maximum of 20 projects between £1m and £7m each *(projects can be a combined programme incorporating a number of schemes though needs to have a lead partner identified, for example – town centre public realm incorporating a range of projects collectively costing £5m from towns fund)
Stage 2(a)	Independent assessment of projects Proposed Projects presented to EDG and PPWG for discussion and agreement
Stage 2 (b)	If PPWG/EDG or independent assessor unable to decide on project prioritisation – towns hub 'Check and Challenge session' to support decision making
Stage 3	PPWG/EDG recommend projects to Board for discussion/ratification and endorsement
Next steps	TIP part 2 completed Consultation DRAFT presented to December 14th board for agreement. Consult for 1 month Final TIP agreed January board – for submission.

Independent assessment

11. Given the potential risk of conflict of interest we are currently out to quotation for an independent consultant to assess projects ideas and EOIs. They will aid the board in project prioritisation process as set out above. The closing date for this tender is the 25th September 2020.

12. The independent assessor with be working with the proposed project assessment and prioritisation working group (PPWG) at stage 1. They will be solely assessing the more detailed applications at stage 2(a) to ensure impartiality of the boards decisions.

Project assessment and prioritisation working group

13. Given the number of EOIs received we will be setting up a small subgroup which will be tasked with aiding the assessment and prioritisation of projects which will be recommended as being part of our Towns Fund allocation.

14. They will also aid our discussions regarding 'wrapper projects' and potential revenue spend. We are asking for volunteers (up to 6) in order to manage potential conflict of interest. Proposed Terms of reference are found in Appendix 2.

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15. This working group replaces the proposed themed working groups discussed in June. However, we may still need a theme 'champion' or sub group to sculpt a particular programme theme, (such as jobs and skills, culture, transport and public realm and others) if this is needed. This will be identified though our key challenges and agreed theory of change and will be informed by the projects which will be identified as being worked up at stage 1 of assessment.

Timelines

16. Working back from the need to produce a draft town investment plan for consultation by the 14th December deadlines are as follows:

Stage	By when?
EOI close date	25/09/20
Pre-sift	30/09/20
1st Sift	6/10/20
Further information deadline	25/10/20
Independent Assessment	5/11/20
EDG/PPWG meeting to agree recommendation of projects to board	Before 11/11/20
Board endorsement	11/11/20 board (TBC)
Draft Consultation TIP agreed	14/12/20
Consultation – publish draft TIP and ask for comments etc	14/12-14/1
Final TIP agreed	21/1/21
TIP submitted	31/1/21

Additional Information

Appendix 1 – Blog project prioritisation
Appendix 2 – TOR project prioritisation working group

Officer to Contact

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