

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

31 MARCH 2022

SHERWOOD LEVELLING UP

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Members on the Sherwood Levelling Up opportunities and to seek flexibility to use positive variances in salary due to vacancies to support delivery of the Sherwood agenda.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 Members will be aware of the [Levelling Up update](#) provided to the Economic Development Committee held on 23 March 2022.

Sherwood Parliamentary Constituency Levelling Up Fund

- 2.2 Members will recall that the LUF is a £4.86 billion capital fund to invite proposals from local authority areas for individual projects or a package bid (similar to the Towns Fund) consisting of multiple projects. District Councils within two-tier areas are eligible to submit bids for each constituency area (up to £20m per area) which lies wholly or partly within their boundary. – in our case ‘Newark’ and ‘Sherwood’. County Council’s with transport powers are eligible additionally to submit one transport bid (up to £50m). All bids should have the approval of the relevant authority responsible for delivering them. For example, transport bids submitted by district councils should have the approval of their relevant transport authority.
- 2.3 Round One LUF bids were invited in July 2021 for projects that were “well advanced” and “capable of delivery and spend starting this [2021/22] financial year”. NSDC submitted a Newark Constituency LUF bid for the Newark Southern Link Road (SLR). As detailed elsewhere on the agenda this was successful in securing £20m, with NSDC being one of only 13 authorities nationally to have secured a signed Memorandum of Understanding with the Department for Transport. We are the only District Council in the country to have done so.
- 2.4 The [Levelling Up White Paper](#) was published on 2 February 2022. The White Paper offers further detail on Devolution and current and future funding opportunities. The White Paper does not offer any detail on any round two of LUF (either timetable or content), stating “Details of future rounds of the fund will be set out soon.”
- 2.5 The White Paper is helpful in setting out a defining mission for the government to “break that link between geography and destiny” and setting out a list of key objectives as follows:
1. Boosting productivity and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging;
 2. Spreading opportunities and improving public services, especially in those areas where they are weakest; restoring a sense of community,
 3. Local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost; and,
 4. Empowering local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.

- 2.6 The above objectives align with the work already undertaken by the Council and its partners, who have at the heart of our intent a willingness to reduce geographic economic, social, and health inequalities. This is further explored in the update below from the first meeting of the Sherwood Levelling Up Board.

Nottinghamshire County Council Levelling Up Fund

- 2.7 It remains the intention that Nottinghamshire County Council will submit a round two LUF bid which seeks to secure the reopening of the Robin Hood Line in the form of a likely Shirebrook-Ollerton hourly service, extending the current Nottingham-Mansfield Woodhouse service between Nottingham and Ollerton. Any proposals will include the reopening or provision of new stations at Warsop, Edwinstowe and Ollerton. Officers continue to work closely with colleagues at NCC, Mansfield, Bassetlaw, and Ashfield as the feasibility work develops.

Sherwood Levelling Up Board

- 2.8 The Council and over 40 of its public, private, and voluntary sector partners conveyed for a first Sherwood Levelling Up Board in November 2021. This group focused on identifying the current challenges for the area, the activities, projects, and programs that are already taking place which could be capitalised upon, and what the future agenda and deliverable projects may look like. Initial projects references are around Ollerton Town Centre (and associated public sector and public transport hubs), Forest Corner, Thoresby Vale (linking also with Blossom Homes), Sports and Recreation (possibly in partnership with colleagues from Nottingham Forest, the YMCA, and Active4Today), and creation of new employment (Clipstone & Rainworth). All projects will be identified, developed, and refined through the Sherwood Board which is effectively acting as a steering group at the current time.
- 2.9 Following the publication of the Levelling Up White paper and associated objectives it is proposed to reassemble the Sherwood Board immediately after the Easter break. The Board will be invited to build further on previous discussions, identifying activities, assets, and projects which could form part of what is currently referred to as a 'Sherwood Place Prospectus'. Such a prospectus would be framed such that it would allow this Council, as an accountable body, to apply for future LUF and other funding opportunities. NSDC and NCC Members will also be invited to contribute with a session scheduled prior to the Easter break.

Commissioning

- 2.10 Members will recall previous decisions to create additional posts to assist our Levelling Up and Regeneration agendas. This has included the creation the Business Manager Regeneration and Housing Strategy and 3 no, new Senior Regeneration Officers (two within the Housing team and one within Economic Growth). The Business Manager role has now been recruited to, as has one of the three Officer posts. To ensure momentum is maintained it is proposed to commission a multi-disciplinary 'Sherwood Place Prospectus' team to drive the work now required, in addition to utilising agency support for internal program management utilising any staffing underspends. The full team will be in place by Easter.

3.0 Equalities Implications

3.1 Each project and fund is required to specifically address equalities and access implications as they are developed. This will be captured in detail through the scheme and any relevant Business Case and assurance submissions.

4.0 Digital Implications

4.1 There are digital implications within many of the plans and projects identified, with the need to ensure appropriate digital infrastructure, skills and future innovative and creative employment opportunities being key to many objectives. Each project will be required to identify this as they progress.

5.0 Financial Implications (FIN21-22/3136)

5.1 The multi-disciplinary ‘Sherwood Place Prospectus’ consultancy team referred to in paragraph 2.11 is anticipated to cost up to £125,000. Spend will be funded from the £125,000 of Levelling Up Fund capacity funding received from central government in June 2021.

5.2 As also referred to in paragraph 2.11, there are currently two vacant senior regeneration officer posts: one within the Housing team and the other within Economic Growth. It is proposed that the temporary savings in 2022/23 from these posts remaining vacant be used to procure additional support.

5.3 The current full-year 2022/23 estimated salary plus on-costs of each senior regeneration officer is £47,609.

Vacant post in	Committee	Grade and spinal column point (SCP)	Estimated full-year 2022/23 salary and oncosts (£)
Housing	Economic Development	NS12 – SCP 32	47,609
Economic Growth	Homes & Communities	NS12 – SCP 32	47,609
			95,218

5.4 This Committee’s approval is required to enable Economic Development Committee to procure additional support if, as is proposed, this is to be part-funded from the temporary saving in 2022/23 from the housing-based senior regeneration officer post remaining vacant.

6.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

6.1 The Levelling Up Agenda is of such scope and breadth that it will significantly contribute to delivering all of the Council’s Community Plan objectives.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that:

(a) the update be noted;

(b) the underspend associated with the Senior Regeneration Officer vacancies held within the Housing, Health & Regeneration and Economic Growth & Visitor Economy Business Units be made available to secure additional resources to allow the development, production, and submission to Government of a Sherwood Prospectus.

Reason for Recommendations

To continue the development of the Sherwood Levelling Up agenda.

Background Papers

Sherwood Levelling Up White Paper, 2022.

For further information please contact Matt Lamb on Ext. 5842.

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