

Report to: Cllr Paul Peacock, Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Performance and Finance
Cllr Claire Penny, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Economic Development

Decision Date: Insert Date *(complete at the time of approval)*

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Paul Peacock, Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Performance and Finance
Cllr Claire Penny, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Economic Development

Director Lead: Matt Lamb, Director of Planning and Growth

Lead Officer: Neil Cuttell, Business Manager for Economic Growth & Visitor Economy
Elaine Poon, Town Programme Manager

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open
Report Title	Long Term Plan for Towns Capacity Funding Usage
Purpose of Report	To provide an update on the spend of Long Term Plan for Towns' capacity funding usage to date and grant funding a Project Manager position at Lincoln College Group (Newark College)
Report Recommendations	It is recommended that you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the current spend of the £250,000 grant funding so far; and - Note the progress of Town Investment Plan, and endorse the grant funding of up to £123,000 to Newark College for the recruitment of a Project Manager as per recommendations from the Newark Town Board as an accelerated project
Alternative Options Considered	The FIN 24/25 capacity funding from the Long Term Plan for Towns is to assist with the development of the Town Investment Plan and any community engagement activities. The money cannot be spent on other purposes.
Reason for Recommendation	To utilise the Capacity Funding Grant following the direction and decision of the Newark Town Board.
Decision Taken	2 December 2024

1.0 **Background**

- 1.1 In September 2023 Newark and Sherwood District Council (the Council) were informed of an in-principle decision to award a £20 million 'endowment style' funding for Newark titled the Long-Term Plan for Towns Fund (LTPfT). It is required that a Town Board produces a 10 year vision for the town alongside a 3 year investment programme of intervention and activities.
- 1.2 An initial £250,000 capacity funding was awarded to the Council as the accountable body, to assist the Town Board with the preparation of a Town Investment Plan, including any additional community engagement activity. The Government guidance states that '*Town Boards should advise local authorities on how best to use this money to support the development of their Long Term Plan.*'
- 1.3 In addition, the Government guidance also states that the capacity funding can be used to build civic capacity in the town to help build local capacity and resilience within existing community organisations.
- 1.4 On 30 January 2024, a report was presented to SLT to update on the Long-Term Plan for Towns fund, including Capacity Funding, and SLT approved:
 - To approve the use of the Capacity Fund Grant of £50,000 in 2023/24 and £100,000 in 2024/25 to develop the Town Investment Plan for submission on or before 1st August 2024 using specialist consultant support.
 - To delegate authority to the Director of Growth and Regeneration and s151 Officer to utilise the remaining £100,000 capacity funding for 2024/25 as required in developing the Town Vision, Town Investment Plan, and individual project development.
 - To note the establishment of a refreshed Newark Town Board that will have required oversight of Towns Fund and the Long Term Plan for Towns Fund.
- 1.5 Since Autumn 2023, the Council has been working in partnership with Historic England to deliver a Newark Town Centre Masterplan and Design Code. The preparation of the Newark Town Centre Masterplan included extensive public consultation, which built the blueprint for the vision of the Town Investment Plan.
- 1.6 Building on the Newark Town Centre Masterplan consultation work, the Council appointed specialist consultants to assist the Town Board to prepare the Long Term Plan for Towns Towns Investment Plan, this has utilised £123,935 of the funding, £26,065 less than expected. The consultant has been working closely with the Town Board with monthly Board meetings to produce a 10-Year Vision and a 3-Year Investment Plan to produce a Town Investment Plan called 'We are Newark'.
- 1.7 On 19 July 2024, the Central Government informed the Council and the Town Board that they were no longer expecting the submission of the Town Investment Plan by 31 July 2024, as such the Town Investment Plan had not yet been finalised and the Town Board was awaiting further detail and guidance from Central Government before finalising the document.
- 1.8 On 23 July 2024, the Cabinet approved the delegation to the Portfolio Holders for Strategy, Performance and Finance and Sustainable Economic Development to endorse the final Town Investment Plan, with the following as example interventions in the 3-Year Investment Plan:
 - A community grant programme
 - A feasibility grant programme for Capital Projects
 - The focus on one/two key capital projects within 2024-2027
 - The creation of a BID manager (Business Improvement District)

- Town Centre Event Funding
- A resource allocation for Programme Management and assurance
- Agreement to roll forward Capital expenditure for projects that will require time for development and understanding of the Town Board

2.0 Capacity Funding

2.1 There is a remaining revenue budget of £126,065 from the Capacity Funding. The Newark Town Board agreed at the Board Meeting of 11 September 2024 to:

- *Approve a grant to Lincoln College Group (Newark College) of the remaining Capacity Fund for LTPfT of up to £123,000 to support the ongoing delivery of engagement activity for a fixed-term period of 2 years. The fund shall include the appointment of a Project Manager (c£36,000 + on-costs a year post) to create dedicated full-time capacity, a role which could expand into events and pre-BID set up should this be required in the future.*

2.2 While the proposed grant amount is £23,000 over the £100,000 approved in the previous SLT decision, the principle of the spend has already been endorsed by both the Cabinet in July 2024 and further approved by the Newark Town Board in September 2024.

2.3 Following the decision from the Cabinet on 23 July 2024 to delegate the decision to the Portfolio Holders for Strategy, Performance and Finance, and Sustainable Economic Development, we ask that you endorse the the Grant Funding of up to £123,000 to Lincoln College Group (Newark College) to support the recruitment of a Project Manager to carry out engagement activity on behalf of the Town Board (including BID activities) in advance of the adoption of the Town Investment Plan to continue the momentum generated by the engagement of various community groups and businesses by the Town Board.

2.4 This report seeks that you endorse the grant funding of £123,000 to Lincoln College Group.

3.0 Implications

There are no negative or detrimental implication for the recommendations proposed in this report for Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability.

3.1 Financial Implications (FIN24-25/7532)

3.1.1 As per paragraph 1.2, the Council was awarded £250,000 capacity funding in relation to LTPfT. This was received in two instalments £50,000 in May 2024 and £200,000 in September 2024.

3.1.2 To date, £105,581,67 has been spent, with £19,700 committed to complete the works commissioned to develop the Town Investment Plan. This leaves an uncommitted balance of £124,718.33.

3.1.3 If approval is given to progress with the payment of up to £123,000 to Lincoln College Group, there would be £1,718.33 remaining as contingency.

3.2 Legal Implications

3.2.1 The Council is the Accountable Body for Newark Towns Fund and therefore has responsibility for providing assurance in respect of funding decisions and proper allocation of public funds. Any financial decision must be approved by the S151 Officer from Newark and Sherwood District Council as the Accountable Body; in this respect reference is made to the Financial Implications section of this report. As Accountable Body the Council would only normally refuse a decision of

the Newark Towns Fund Board if it were not procedurally valid, illegal, or would lead to the available budget being exceeded.

It is for project sponsors to provide evidence any subsidy control requirements are adhered to; the Council as Accountable Body also needs to satisfy itself of any subsidy control requirements in discharging this function. The Lincoln College Group has confirmed that the grant is in compliance with the Subsidy Control Act, as the Lincoln College will be providing a free service, it is not considered an economic activity (see paragraph 15.16 of the [statutory guidance](#).)

In this case, if the grant is not financing an economic activity of the College then it will not be a subsidy. Further, even if it was an economic activity and therefore the payment did amount to a subsidy, the subsidy might be treated as Minimal Financial Assistance, meaning the Council can make the award without needing to comply with the majority of subsidy control requirements. As the award is over £100,000, if it is categorised as a subsidy it will need to be published on the national transparency database.

3.3 Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Cabinet

- [23 July 2024](#), pg 171-173

Newark Town Board

- [11 September 2024](#)
- [Assurance Framework and Terms of Reference](#)