

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: District Centres Subgroup – 6 March 2019
Subject: Future High Streets Fund
Report of: Strategic Director (Development)

Summary

This report provides background information on the Future High Streets Fund that has recently been established by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. It sets out the process that is proposed to follow in responding to this funding opportunity and asks for the Sub group's endorsement to this approach.

Recommendations

To note the report

To note the intention to make submissions to both rounds of the fund.

To note the intention to submit a bid for Withington District centre in 2019 and to set in hand work to develop a further bid for the funding round expected to take place in 2020.

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Wards affected: All

Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1.0 Background to the Fund and Bidding Criteria

- 1.1 In December 2018 Government announced its intention to establish a £675 million Future High Streets Fund to “help local areas make their high streets and town centres fit for the future.” Subsequently on 13th February Government published Supplementary Guidance to local authorities which provided more detailed information on the eligibility criteria for the first round of the Fund and set out how expressions of interest would be assessed by the Department. Copies of the Call for Proposals and the Supplementary Guidance are attached at appendix 1 for members’ information.
- 1.2 The Guidance indicates that while the fund may contribute up to a maximum of £25 million to each successful place, it is expected that a range of projects will come forward of different sizes and that many of them will be of significantly smaller scale. The Government have indicated that there will be two rounds of the fund, both of which will have a two stage application process. Phase 1 will involve an Expression of Interest phase where there will be an assessment of the overall need for the funding, the nature of the challenge faced by the centre and the vision for the future. Successful bids will be invited to proceed to Phase 2 where there will be an amount of revenue funding made available to work up project proposals in more detail. Ultimately funding decisions will be based on project plans and business cases. Expressions of Interest for the first phase of the first round are requested by 22nd March 2019. The second round will not take place before 2020.
- 1.3 The guidance indicates that Government:
- “expects places to come forward with proposals that cover high streets or town centres as defined as areas that exhibit high levels of social and economic activity, that contain a variety of uses and functions and act as important service centres for extensive catchment populations. Small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance are not regarded as high streets for the purposes of this fund. The fund is not directed at central business districts of major city centres.”*
- 1.4 The guidance also indicates that large local authorities are able to make more than one bid to the fund. In Manchester’s case, with a population well over 500,000, we are able to make up to four submissions to the two rounds of the fund.

2.0 Manchester’s Proposed Approach

- 2.1 Following internal discussions it has been agreed that a first round expression of interest will be submitted for funding to Withington District Centre. Withington has been selected as it is a very strong example of the Our Manchester approach. There is a locally established and led - Withington Regeneration Partnership who already have an organised group committed to improving the centre, they have engaged wider partners and have prepared previous bids for funding. The Manchester bid will build on the work undertaken to date and work with the local community to revitalise Withington

Village as a hub for services and community activity through a series of physical interventions.

- 2.2 Work will also be undertaken to work up proposals for the second round of bids which will develop some clear criteria for internal selection. We would intend to use the footfall data being provided through our work with the Institute of Place Management and a range of other data sets to identify suitable candidate centres for the second round.
- 2.3 There is a requirement for bids from local authorities to have the support of the Local Enterprise Partnership. A report is therefore being submitted through the Combined Authority to gain endorsement for all the Greater Manchester bids to the fund.

3.0 Conclusion

- 3.1 The Future High Streets Fund provides an opportunity to bid for additional Government resources to strengthen the role of local district centres. The work of the sub group will assist in the development of bids to the fund and members will be kept updated on progress of the submission.