

ANGUS COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 30 APRIL 2024

LONG-TERM PLAN FOR TOWNS - ARBROATH

REPORT BY ALISON SMITH, DIRECTOR OF VIBRANT COMMUNITIES AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

1. ABSTRACT

This report asks Angus Council to note the letter received from the UK Government making an award of £20 million for the Long-Term Plan for Towns Fund (LTTP) for Arbroath. It seeks approval for Angus Council to act as the Accountable Body for the LTTP Fund for Arbroath. It also asks Members to note the approach and timeline to establish a Town Board, appoint a Chair and to develop a 10-year Vision and initial 3-year Investment Plan.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES

2.1.1 This report contributes to the following priorities in the Angus Council Plan 2023-28:

Caring for the Economy:

- We will be more commercial in our approach to contracts and support growth of business locally whenever possible through a community wealth building approach

Caring for our Place

- Engage with communities to support their ambitions to deliver on local aspirations

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Policy and Resources Committee is asked to:

- (i) Note the letter dated 19 March 2024 from UK Government offering £20 million funding for the Long-Term Plan for Towns Fund (LTTP) for Arbroath;
- (ii) Agree to Angus Council acting as the Accountable Body for the Long-Term Plan for Towns Fund for Arbroath;
- (iii) Note the timeline to notify UK Government of the plan to establish a Town Board by 1 June 2024, appoint a Chair in June 2024 and prepare a 10-year Vision and initial 3-year Investment Plan by 1 November 2024;
- (iv) Agree that, subject to approval of recommendation (ii) above, engagement to raise awareness of the LTTP Fund and to invite interest in becoming part of the Town Board and/or to be Chair of the Board will commence on 1 May; and
- (v) Note that a further report will be presented to Angus Council on 20 June 2024 providing an update on progress with the establishment of the Town Board, seeking elected members' recommendations for Chair of the Board and seeking nominations for Angus Council elected member representation on the Town Board.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 The Long-Term Plan for Towns (LTTP) was published on 1 October 2023 (see Background Note 1 below) and sought to invest £1.1billion into 55 towns across the UK, including seven towns in Scotland, to each be awarded £20M. The Plan recognises that through the UK Government's existing programmes and lessons learned from other countries, the need for longer term funding certainty, building local partnerships, having a clear plan for delivery, joint working between

central and local government and involving people and communities from the outset are key to success and these have been embedded in the Plan.

- 4.2 On 6 March 2024 it was announced that Arbroath was one of twenty additional towns to be awarded £20 million from UK Government (one of 3 in Scotland announced through this round of funding). The Chief Executive subsequently received a letter from the Minister for Levelling Up dated 19 March 2024 confirming the award of endowment-style funding and support worth up to £20 million with a flat grant profile over 10 years.
- 4.3 UK Government Officers have recommended using the “Long-Term Plan for Towns - Guidance for Local Authorities and Town Boards” published on 18 December 2023 (see Background Note 2 below) issued for Wave 1 towns to commence preparations for the development of a Town Board, to establish the governance of the Board, and for the development of a Vision and initial 3-year Investment Plan however with the caveat that there may be changes to this Guidance.
- 4.4 A toolkit for Scottish Town Boards was published in February 2024 (see Background Note 3 below). The Long-Term Plan for Towns is designed to help local areas make the most of all powers and tools at their disposal. As part of designing an Investment Plan, UK Government expect all Town Boards, supported by the local authority, to demonstrate how they are using powers, where they apply. This toolkit of powers is a comprehensive but non-exhaustive list of levers available to Towns Boards in Scotland under the three themes of the Long-Term Plan for Towns. The Scottish Government and Scotland’s Towns Partnership have also published a number of other materials that Scottish Town Boards may find helpful when developing their Long-Term Plan. e.g. information on the Town Centre Action Plan and the Town Centre First Principle. [Long-Term Plan for Towns: toolkit for Town Boards in Scotland - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

4.5 **Selection of Arbroath**

The UK Government methodology for the selection of eligible towns is set out in their methodology note (See Background Note 4 below). In Scotland and Wales, local authorities are ranked across 6 metrics – skills, pay, productivity and healthy life expectancy (as in England), as well as historic population changes and access to services deprivation.

5. **CURRENT POSITION**

- 5.1 The LTTP Guidance of December 2023 and correspondence subsequently received by the Council in March 2024 sets out that a Town Board must be established to lead on delivery of a Vision and Investment Plan. While Angus Council is expected to be Accountable Body for the Fund i.e. responsible for funding and executing plans, the Town Board is responsible for developing the Long-Term Plan with the local community. This report asks Members to agree to Angus Council acting as the Accountable Body. Further details on what being the “Accountable Body” entails are detailed below.
- 5.2 The Board should comprise cross representation of public, third and private sector representatives, for example, Community Council Chair, Retailers Group Chair, key local employers of all sizes, Football Club director, Dundee and Angus College, NHS Tayside, MSPs (constituency and/or list), Angus Alive, Faith Groups, Youth Groups, Arts and Heritage Groups, Charities etc. Guidance states that up to 5 elected representatives, including the MSP, MP, community councillor and elected members can serve on the Town Board. 5 is the suggested maximum to ensure the Board has a balance between elected and non-elected members. The Town Board must include the constituency MP and a Senior Officer of Police Scotland.
- 5.3 The Guidance states that the Town Board should be chaired by a local businessperson or community leader who is prominent in the community and has a passion for the area. The Chair cannot be an Angus Council elected member, MSP, MP or community councillor. The Chair is appointed by the local authority in conjunction with the MP. The Chair is a voluntary role with no remuneration although reasonable expenses can be reimbursed.
- 5.4 The Guidance states that the Local Authority or a community group as agreed with the Chair, should act as secretariat to the Town Board. Town Board Governance requirements are attached at Appendix 2. Angus Council officers will also be required to provide financial and legal support as Accountable Body. Other officers may be required to support the Board at meetings but will not be members of the Board nor have any voting capacity.

- 5.5 In the letter of 19 March 2024 from the Minister for Levelling Up, we were advised that the Town Board needs to be established by 1 June 2024. UK Government have since confirmed that submission of a plan to set out how and when the Town Board will be finalised will be sufficient to meet the 1 June deadline.
- 5.6 The Minister also advised in the same letter that a 10-year Vision and initial 3-year Investment Plan must be led and developed by the local community and submitted to UK Government by the Town Board no later than 1 November 2024. The Plan may, but does not have to be, approved by Angus Council given their role as Accountable Body prior to submission but does require approval by both Angus Council and UK Government to allow the release of funding.
- 5.7 At the time of writing this report we have not yet received any update to the Guidance for this year and it has been recommended therefore to continue to follow the 2023 Guidance. In this guidance there were three investment themes, which at this stage seem unlikely to change. In 2023, the UK Government's expectation was that Town Plans would bring forward improvements under three broad investment themes (with examples from published guidance):
- Safety and security e.g. new and improved security infrastructure such as CCTV and streetlighting, additional hotspot policing and local authority wardens.
 - High Streets, Heritage, and Regeneration e.g. preserving and improving heritage sites in the town, creating and maintaining parks and green spaces and establishing Business Improvement Districts.
 - Transport and Connectivity e.g. making the town centre more walkable and accessible.

Interventions under these themes already assessed as having a strong case for investment, value for money and benefit to cost ratio can be included in the Investment Plan. Any "off menu" interventions will require an outline business case to be provided. The UK Government will assess plans as they come in and release capital and revenue funding to Angus Council as Accountable Body once plans are approved.

- 5.8 It is not expected that the Town Board will be an implementing body therefore actions arising within the Investment Plan will most likely require direct delivery or project sponsor support from the Council and other partners.
- 5.9 Where an intervention would commit Angus Council to future expenditure beyond the Long-Term Plan for Towns Fund (for example ongoing maintenance costs), Town Boards must engage with Angus Council and seek agreement prior to submission. The council may need to formally agree through committee to deploy powers or interventions where they interact with council responsibilities (for example, planning permission for a new cycle path).
- 5.10 As well as being a member of the Town Board, the Guidance advises that MPs should be individually involved in reviewing the Long-Term Plan prior to submission. Each Long-Term Plan must list the MPs involved in the Town Board and whether each are supportive of the final Long-Term Plan submitted. Town Boards may also wish to share their Long-Term Plan with the local MSPs, although there is no requirement to do so.

While one or more MPs not supporting the Long-Term Plan will not prevent the UK Government considering it, the Government is keen to see broad local consensus for the interventions put forward. In the absence of such agreement, Ministers reserve the right to defer sign off until broad consensus is secured.

5.11 Funding

- 5.12 The LTTP Guidance states that of the £20 million funding available, 25% will be for revenue and 75% for capital spend.
- 5.13 Funding will be released over a 7-year period, with flexibility to spend it over 10 years. Towns will have the flexibility to rollover funding into future years until the end of the programme, and the intention to roll over investment can be included within the initial three-year Investment Plan, by opting not to forecast utilising the full profile year-on-year. Equally, if a Town Board underspends within year, that money can be rolled into the next financial year with the certainty that the next tranche of funding will follow. This flexibility does not extend to towns being able to draw down funding more quickly; however the local authority may seek to use a confirmed revenue funding stream agreed by the Board to borrow against, subject to normal considerations for prudential borrowing, and the flexibility provided by the additional confirmed capital income should they wish to front load investment. At the end of the first three-year investment plan cycle, for FY27/28,

there will be a built-in 'check-in' point with UK Government, to analyse delivery across the first three years alongside the submission of the next three-year investment plan.

- 5.14 There is an opportunity to use the Participatory Budgeting approach, something that can be explored with the Town Board once established.

5.15 Resource

The UK Government confirmed in the letter to the Chief Executive on 19 March 2024 that £50k capacity funding will be made available to Angus Council in April 2024 to cover for example, running community engagement, costs to convene a Town Board including staff costs, to support the Town Board in developing Long-Term Plans and/or to provide technical expertise to the Town Board for project development, business cases etc. This money has now been received.

It was also confirmed that a further £200k will be released once the Town Board is established. It will be up to the Town Board to determine how the £200k capacity funding is to be used but the expectation of UK Government is that local authorities will use an element of this funding to support their programme management and financial and legal oversight as Accountable Body. It could also be used to support partners who are helping to support and deliver the Town Plan.

5.16 Eligible Area

The first wave of towns approved for LTTP funding were sent a map showing a town boundary based on the ONS Scottish localities boundary. It was anticipated that this will also happen for wave 2 towns and that it will be for the Town Board to confirm the area to be covered by the Long-Term Plan. The Guidance available states however "Alterations to the boundary should not bring in additional, separate population centres (i.e. different towns) and must remain contiguous."

For each of the fifty-five towns announced in the first tranche of the Long-Term Plan for Towns, the Department for Levelling Up's Spatial Data Unit, in collaboration with the Office for National Statistics, have developed a set of tailored, technical [data packs](#) published on 1 April 2024 on gov.uk. Work is ongoing to compile the equivalent packs for the additional twenty towns confirmed at the Spring Budget including Arbroath and these will be shared in the coming weeks.

6. PROPOSALS

- 6.1 The approach required to set up a Town Board is very similar to that required to establish LEADER Local Action Groups previously and the role Angus Council had as Accountable Body for LEADER funding (a European funding programme which supported rural community and business projects). Similarly, officers have had experience of development of the Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The approach set out in the Long-Term Plan for Towns reflects the required policy shift to community led models of place-based interventions.
- 6.2 The deadlines given to establish a Town Board and develop the Investment Plan show there is a need to move quickly and, whilst council officers would act in advisory capacity, significant work is required at the early stage to support the community development and engagement to ensure the principles of equalities and engagement with a wide range of demographics and interest groups.
- 6.3 UK Government have now confirmed that submission of a plan to set out how and when the Town Board will be finalised will be sufficient to meet the 1 June deadline if it is not possible to have the Town Board in place by the deadline. It is therefore proposed that engagement will commence on 1 May, subject to approval at committee that Angus Council and agree to be Accountable Body and note the letter received from the UK Government making an award of £20 million for the Long-Term Plan for Towns Fund (LTTP) for Arbroath, to raise awareness of the Fund and invite interest in becoming part of the Town Board and/or Chair. This will be done through two face to face events and one online event and, PR to ensure engagement is inclusive and communication is far reaching. It is proposed that events will take place over the first 2 weeks of May. UK Government have advised that a Chair should be appointed first and then the rest of the Board selected. UK Government do not expect or require that the appointment of the Chair is a matter for a Council Committee decision, though some places have taken this approach. It is recommended we adopt this approach to ensure an open and transparent recruitment and appointment. Open recruitment for a Chair will be advertised from 1-17 May. The selection process is currently being finalised but based on experience elsewhere, it is likely to consist of an assessment of a written submission to be Chair against set criteria and potentially interview.

The local MP is also required to be engaged in the process. A recommendation for Chair will be presented at the meeting of Angus Council on 20 June 2024 seeking approval of the preferred candidate. It will then be for the appointed Chair to work with Angus Council to agree the Town Board membership. UK Government will be informed of the Plan before 1 June and the final Board members and Chair confirmed after the decision of Council (following consultation with the MP) on 20 June 2024.

6.4 The indicative timeline is as follows: -

- Commence PR and engagement including calls for interest in joining Town Board – 1 May 2024
- Deadline for expressions of interest in joining the Town Board and applications for Chair – by 17 May 2024
- Appointment of project staff – May 2024
- UK Government informed of plan for appointing a Chair and Town Board– by 1 June 2024
- Angus Council agree Chair of the Town Board at its meeting on 20 June 2024
- Town Board appointments in conjunction with Chair – by end of June 2024
- First Board meeting to agree Terms of Reference, project assessment criteria, governance and procedures - summer 2024
- Draft initial 3-year Investment Plan considered by Town Board - Sept 2024
- Report draft Investment Plan to Angus Council for approval – 7 November 2024
- Town Board finalise initial 3 year Investment Plan and 10 year vision and submit to UK Government – by 1 November 2024

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The local authority will be the accountable body for funding and executing plans and the Council's statutory finance officer (Director of Finance) will be responsible for certifying that expenditure incurred complies with the terms of the grant funding. Final details of the full grant terms and conditions are at the time of writing awaited.

7.2 The expectation is that all costs associated with administration and support for the Town Board and delivering the projects eventually agreed will be met from the funding provided by the UK Government. Staff time will be required to establish the Town Board before a dedicated officer can be appointed and staff will be required to attend Town Board meetings in a non-voting capacity. Officer input and expertise will likely be required to develop details of projects. Sub-groups are likely to be set up to develop and consider projects within the investment themes and Council officers' time will be required to support this.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 The following risks have been identified and will be mitigated as detailed below: -

A risk of not being able to meet the deadlines given to set up a Town Board and prepare an Investment Plan. Officers have raised this risk with UK Government in light of the work required and resources available as well as competing priorities.

A risk to the Council in being the Accountable Body. We do not yet fully know what this entails and what the requirements and expectations will be. Final details of the full grant terms and conditions have not been provided and it is not known if they will be. Officers continue to liaise with UK Government officials and raise queries as they arise. They are also working with and learning from wave 1 towns and the relevant Local Authority officers.

A risk that the public are not engaged in the project or volunteers do not come forward to be members of the Town Board. This will be managed through wide reaching engagement and communication and targeted approaches.

A risk that the benefits of the £20M are not fully realised or evaluated- a detailed Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will be developed.

A risk that projects are not shovel ready - a project mandate will be prepared for all potential projects to be included in the Investment Plan and these will be scrutinised by the Board to ensure deliverable projects are included.

A risk regarding inflation and construction costs, which will continue to be reflected in updated cost for projects including high optimism bias levels.

A risk of a strain on council resources to support the work required. This will be managed by ensuring funds are drawn down to support council resources and prompt recruitment of a new officer using the available capacity building monies.

A risk that given the capital heavy nature of the funding most of it will need to be on works rather than services. Care will be needed to avoid capital projects creating additional legacy revenue costs for the Council, or others, to meet on an ongoing basis. Capital investment could however reduce the Council's ongoing running costs depending on how it is used.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct environmental implications from establishing the Town Board and developing the initial 3-year Investment Plan and 10-year Vision however there may be from individual projects. Environmental impacts will be considered as part of the development of projects and business cases.

10. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS AND FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY

10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached.

11. CONSULTATION (IF APPLICABLE)

11.1 The Director of Finance and the Director of Legal, Governance and Change have been consulted in the development of this report.

NOTE: The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are: (list them below)

Background Documents

1. Guidance - Our Long-Term Plan for Towns - published 1 October 2023
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-long-term-plan-for-towns/our-long-term-plan-for-towns>
2. Guidance – Long-Term Plan for Towns. Guidance for Local Authorities and Town Boards – published 18 December 2023
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65831b8a23b70a000d234d47/LTPFT_Guidance.pdf
3. Guidance – Long- Term Plan for Towns: toolkit for Town Boards in Scotland – published 5 February 2024
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/long-term-plan-for-towns-policy-toolkit-for-scotland/long-term-plan-for-towns-toolkit-for-town-boards-in-scotland#:~:text=The%20Long%2DTerm%20Plan%20for,using%20powers%2C%20where%20they%20apply>
4. Selection of Towns methodology note
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/long-term-plan-for-towns-towns-selection-methodology-note#:~:text=Local%20authorities%20were%20selected%20according,local%20authorities%20were%20then%20selected>

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List of Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – EIA
- Appendix 2 – Town Board – Governance Requirements