



Report to Cabinet

Subject 21st Century Towns Funding

Date 11th July 2005

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1. Purpose of report

- To seek Cabinet approval for retention of £10,000 in current year's town centres budgets, following withdrawal from the 21st Century Towns funding bid.

2. Background

21st Century towns is a bid based funding programme administered through Greater Nottingham Partnership. It focuses on physical regeneration of town centres across the Greater Nottingham area. Co-ordination of a bid to the scheme for all Greater Nottingham authorities is being led by Broxtowe Borough Council.

Gedling Borough Council submitted a bid under the initiative, through Broxtowe Borough Council, based on the understanding that the initiative would fund physical works in public areas such as notice boards, seating, and paving improvements. This was felt to fit well with projects likely to arise in town centre action plans currently being developed.

It had also been understood that the gearing factor for the bid would be 5:1 (i.e. for every £1 put in by the Council, £5 would be provided by Greater Nottingham Partnership if the bid was successful). No mention was made of any required private sector contributions.

On this basis, a resource development bid was submitted last year for inclusion in 2005/06 budgets. This proposed a £10,000 contribution from the Borough Council, with a view to securing an additional £50,000 from the initiative. The bid was approved and £10,000 was duly included in budgets for the current year.

In further discussion with Broxtowe Borough Council in late May however, it became clear that criteria for the bidding scheme had not been entirely

transparent, in spite of previous clarifications agreed with Greater Nottingham Partnership staff. In particular, it became clear that the gearing factor would be much less than the 5:1 as originally understood, and that significant levels of private sector investment would also be needed.

To progress, therefore, would require additional Gedling Borough Council funding and contributions from local business towards works which may not have fitted well with the Council's original objectives in submitting the bid.

I therefore discussed the issue with the Portfolio Holder for Development and Economic Regeneration and with the Deputy Chief Executive. We agreed that, in these circumstances, it would not be appropriate to progress the bid. I therefore advised Greater Nottingham Partnership and Broxtowe Borough Council accordingly. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the £10,000 budgetary provision still to be spent on town centre improvements this year notwithstanding that the original purpose behind the provision (to lever in additional external funding for such improvements) will not now be met.

3. Proposal

As outlined above, the £10,000 contribution was intended to go towards physical works to improve town centres.

While the failure to secure the originally expected external funds will clearly impact on the amount of work that can be done, withdrawal of the remaining £10,000 would mean that little, if any, of physical works arising from the town centres action plans currently being developed could be delivered.

This could include work to improve and replaced notice boards, previously requested by Members, and various projects suggested for inclusion in draft action plans for Arnold and Netherfield town centres, including replanting/landscaping of flower beds, making vacant units more attractive and improvements to signage.

All such works align very closely with the Council's priority to "enhance the physical environment of the Borough".

We will, of course, continue to seek other match funding opportunities in order to try to boost the amount of money which could be invested in improving the town centres, but it is considered that in any event the £10,000 budget provision should be used to fund as much work as possible.

4. **Resource Implications**

Retention of the £10,000 at this point would be resource neutral, since the amount is already included in 2005/06 revenue budgets.

5. **Recommendations**

Cabinet is **recommended** to retain £10,000 budget for 21st Century Towns to contribute to delivery of town centre action plans, for the reasons set out above.